Hebron University

Faculty of Graduate Studies

English Department

The Speech Act of Refusal Produced by

Palestinian EFL Learners

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ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن استراتيجيّات الرّفض التي يستخدمها الطلبة الفلسطينيّون الذين يدرسون اللّغة الإنجليزيّة كلغة ثانية. شارك في هذه الدّراسة سبعة وثلاثون طالبا وطالبة، حيث طلب منهم ملء استبيان يتكوّن من عشرة مواقف صمّمت خصّيصا للحصول على استراتيجيات الرّفض، ومعرفة فيما إذا كانت تلك الاستراتيجيات مباشرة أو غير مباشرة.

لقد صمّمت هذه الاستبانة لقياس العوامل التي تؤثّر في استراتيجيات الرّفض. وهذه العوامل هي:

أوّلا: مكانة الشّخص الذي يقوم بالطّلب: هل هي مساوية، أو اقل أو أكبر من الشخص الذي يرفض الطلب.

ثانيا: العلاقة بين المتحاورين، متساوية أو مختلفة، بمعنى هل هم أصدقاء يعرفون بعضهم بعضا أم ليسوا كذلك.

ثالثا: وزن الطّلب وحجمه.

وللكشف عن إمكانيّة قيام الطّلاب الذين يدرسون اللّغة الانجليزيّة باستخدام أساليب وطرق الرّفض المستخدمة في لغتهم الأم، قام الباحث بتوزيع نفس الاستبانة مترجما للّغة العربيّة، على سبعة وثلاثين طالبا وطالبة يدرسون اللغة العربية.

وقد أظهرت النتائج ما يأتي:

أوّلا: نوّع المشاركون في أساليب الرفض حيث استخدموا طرق مباشرة وأخرى غير مباشرة. وفضل المشاركون الرفض غير المباشر وذلك من خلال (1)- بيان الأسباب، (2)- الاعتذار، (3)- التعبير عن عدم القدرة على القيام بالعمل المطلوب منهم.

ثانيا: تجنب المشاركون استخدام أسلوب الرفض الصريح المباشر: مثل "لا" .

ثالثا: كان لمكانة الشّخص الذي يطلب الطلب الأثر الأكبر في اختيار نوع الرفض وطريقته. حيث استخدم الأشخاص الأعلى مكانة أساليب مباشرة بشكل أكبر، في حين استخدم الأشخاص الأقل مكانة أساليب غير مباشرة بشكل أكبر للتخفيف من وقع الرّفض مثل: إعطاء بدائل، إمكانية القبول لو كان الطلب في زمن ماضي أو المستقبل، استخدام عبارات ملطفة مثل: كان بودي القيام بذلك.

رابعا: لم يكن هناك التأثير البيّن لحجم الطلّب ووزنه أو للعلاقة بين المتحدّثين في اختيار أسلوب

الرّفض ونوعه.

خامسا: وبعد مقارنة نتائج كلا الاستبيانين لوحظ أن طلاب اللغة الإنجليزيّة قد تأثروا بشكل كبير

باستراتيجيات الرّفض الموجودة في اللّغة العربية، حيث أن طلاّب اللّغة الانجليزيّة والعربية استخدموا أنماط

الرفض بشكل متقارب.

Abstract

This study investigates the refusal strategies produced by Palestinian learners of English at Hebron University. Thirty-seven Palestinian learners of English participated in a DCT (discourse completion test) which consisted of ten situations. The participants wrote refusals in English. The test was designed to test the social factors that affect the production of the speech act of refusal as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). These variables are: social distance (familiar or stranger), the status of the interlocutors (high, equal or low) and third the weight of the imposition, i.e. whether the refusal involves a high or low risk. To check whether or not the refusals made by the Palestinian learners of English were affected by the learners' L1 (Arabic), a translation of the DCT was given to 37 Arabic majors at Hebron University. The Arabic majors wrote responses in Arabic.

The findings of the study showed the following.

First, the participants varied their refusals. They used both direct and indirect refusal strategies. They proffered the indirect refusals by expressing (1) regret, (2) apology, followed by (3) an expression of inability to do the request.

Second, the participants avoided strong and clear refusals, such as " No".

Third, the power variable had a clear effect on refusals. More power people used more direct strategies than low power people who employed more indirect strategies to tone down the impact of refusals on their interlocutors' face. For example, low power interlocutors used more alternatives, more past and future acceptance, more adjuncts than those of high power.

Fourth, there was no clear effect of the other two variables: social distance between the interlocutors and the weight of imposition on choosing the refusal strategies.

Fifth, after comparing the refusals made by English and Arabic majors, it was found that English majors made refusals which were very similar to those refusals made in Arabic.

Dedication

To my parents

To my dear wife and children

Acknowledgment

I would like to particularly thank Professor Ahmad Atawneh, my advisor, for his support, encouragement and insight which he continually offered since I have started this work. I am also thankful to Dr. Hazem Najjar, the external examiner, and Dr. Ahmad Salameen, the internal examiner for their guidance and valuable suggestions. Special thanks are to Dr. Raghad Dwaik, the head of the English department at Hebron University, for her valuable contribution.

I am also grateful to those students in the Departments of English and Arabic at Hebron University who volunteered to respond to the role-playing situations.

Finally, yet, importantly, I am indebted to my family, father, mother, wife, children, brothers and sisters who have motivated me and given their endless support.

List of Tables

List of Figures

Table of Contents

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Knowing a language does not mean only the full mastery of its grammar and vocabulary. To be a confident user of a language means using it appropriately in the appropriate situation "context". This requires knowing its culture. It is not surprising that communicative competence, which is also referred to as 'pragmatic competence' should be focused on and given great attention in teaching a new language (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). In other words, speakers of any language should produce language that is acceptable not only linguistically, but also socially and culturally appropriate.

EFL learners are not expected to reach a native-like pragmatic competence because of their few chances of interacting and communicating with the native speakers of the target language. They may also lack the required knowledge and rules that associate the production of speech acts as used by native speakers (Kasper, 1997, in Tanck, 2002). In other words, EFL learners are not exposed to English as used in real life situations. Most teaching materials often include artificial situations that don't reflect the speech acts as used in real life situations.

To use speech acts successfully, EFL learners are required to "recognize the extra-linguistic, cultural constraints that operate in a NS's (i.e. native speakers) choice of a particular speech act appropriate to the context" (Kasper, 1984, p.3). She also adds that both EFL and ESL learners have to realize the speech act at the linguistic level and be introduced to the socio-cultural norms of the target language. Learners have to be equipped with the socio-cultural knowledge by which speakers can

determine "whether it is acceptable to perform [a particular speech act] in a given situation" (Cohen, 1996, p. 254). Therefore, speakers need to employ both their linguistic knowledge necessary to form the speech act and the socio-cultural knowledge that allow them to use that speech act properly.

> *No error of grammar can make a speaker seem so incompetent, so inappropriate, so foreign, as the kind of trouble a learner gets into when he or she doesn't understand or otherwise disregard a language's rules of use* (Rintell-Mitchell, 1989, cited in Trosborg 1994, p. 3).

Therefore, the rules of use of English should be introduced to EFL students so that they can be empowered to use the various types of speech acts appropriately in the target language context.

Speakers use different speech acts to achieve their communicative goals such as apologizing, promising, threatening, requesting, complaining, refusing, etc... (Tanck, 2003). This study focuses on making refusals (also called "expressing disagreement" with others). The speech act of refusal signals the negative response to an offer, invitation, request, or suggestion. Refusing or disagreeing always contradicts the expectations of the one who initiates the request. So, speakers tend to soften and mitigate the impact (weightiness) of their refusals by using politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Abdul Sattar, et al, (2011) assert that making refusals appropriately involves not only linguistic knowledge but also pragmatic skills. Otherwise, refusing inappropriately might lead to offending the interlocutors or at least hinder successful communication. The speech act of refusal is affected by many factors, or let us say social variables, such as gender, age, power, social distance, and the weightiness of imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987). For example, disagreeing with a professor, a high status person, requires using indirect strategies because saying 'no' might be interpreted as an insult. In a study by

2

AbdulSattar, CheLah, and Suleiman (2011), they show that Malay participants have used address forms such as "professor, sir, Mr., etc..." when refusing an act initiated by a higher status person. The use of such terms indicates that the speakers respect the other person. Also making refusals differs from one culture to another. It is argued that Americans are referred to as being very direct which would explain the absence of some politeness markers in their refusals (Bardovi-Harling, and Mahan-Taylor, 2003).

1.2 Problem Statement

It is known that language cannot be separated from culture. One of the aspects in culture is the refusal speech act. It is also known that native English speakers' norms are not the same as Arabic speaker norms in making refusal. That is why this area should be investigated to find out differences between the two. That brings awareness to teachers of English who should take into account the English native norms in teaching English to bring EFL closer to the native speakers' performance.

Making refusals requires knowing the linguistic skills that usually associate the production of refusals. Otherwise, interlocutors may fall in problems of miscommunication as a result of inappropriate use of refusal speech act. Wrong use of refusals may lead to communication problems which possibly results in breakdown of communication with English native speakers. One possible source of wrong use of refusals may be due to direct transfer from the learners' L1 to L2.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study aims at identifying the problem areas in using the speech act of refusal. It can be argued that mastering the speech act of refusal involves not only linguistic competence but also socio-cultural awareness of the target language and its

3

speech rules and norms. It is hoped that the study will give some insights to teaching material designers so that they may focus on the cultural dimensions of the target language. Material designers, as well as teachers, may create better teaching strategies and better materials to overcome the difficulties that EFL learners encounter in making refusals and other speech acts. The study will emphasize that EFL learners still need more focus on instruction on speech acts to foster the students' pragmatic competence (Tanck, 2002).

1.4 Objectives of the study

This study aims primarily to investigate what types of strategies Palestinian university students majoring in English prefer to use when they make refusals. The study attempts to find out whether the refusal strategies of the participants are affected by the three variables suggested by Brown and Levinson (1987): power, social distance and the rank of the imposition. The effect of the students' native language, Arabic, on making refusals in English will also be examined. More specifically, the study will test whether pragmatic transfer exists or not.

1.5 Research questions

This study tries to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strategies mostly used by Palestinian English seniors in making refusals?

2. What is the effect of social power, social distance and weight of the imposition on the realization of the speech act of refusal by Palestinian English seniors?

3. What is the effect of the participants' L1 (Arabic) on realizing the speech act of refusals?

1.6 Hypotheses of the study

The study examines the following hypotheses:

1. Palestinian EFL learners use different strategies when making refusals compared with native speakers of English (NSE).

2. Palestinian EFL learners vary their refusals according to social power, distance and imposition (risk).

3. The participants' native language, Arabic, affects the learners' realization of the speech act of refusal in the target language (English).

1.7 Limitations of the study

This study is limited to thirty seven participants from the English Department at Hebron University. This may not be representative enough of all senior English majors at Hebron University or at other universities in Palestine or the Arab world. A large number of participants is needed to make strong generalizations. Another limitation is the use of a DCT technique to collect the data. Natural data will much helpful and more reliable. The study is also restricted to one particular speech act: making refusals to requests. It overlooks refusing invitations, suggestions or offers.

1.8 Definition of terms:

Refusal: is one type of speech acts. It occurs when a speaker says "no" directly or indirectly to an initiated offer, request, suggestion or invitation. A refusal always contradicts the speaker's expectations and can be direct or indirect (Beebe, et al , 1990)

Pragmatic failure: takes place when two speakers fail to understand each other's intentions. In other words, it is "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said" (Thomas, 1983, pp: 91).

Pragmatic transfer: a transfer of L1 "socio-cultural communicative [norms and conventions] in performing L2 speech acts or other functions of language…"(Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990: pp: 56).

Semantic formula: also called 'speech act set', in the case of refusal, one can produce three separate speech acts: an expression of apology, followed by direct refusals (e.g. I can't), followed by an expression of gratitude (e.g. thank you for asking me..).

Socio-cultural knowledge: the "speakers' ability to determine whether it is acceptable to perform a specific speech act at all in a given situation and select one or more semantic formulas that would be appropriate in the realization of the given speech act" (Cohen, 1996, pp: 254).

Speech act: the smallest functional unit in human communication which carries information about meaning such as refusing, apologizing and requesting, etc... (Searle, 1969).

Speech Act Theory: tries to explain how speakers use language to perform "intended actions" and how hearers infer the intended meaning. Three kinds of meaning are expressed: locutionary (literal meaning), illocutionary (the acts performed by saying) and perlocutionary (the effect of what is said), (Austin, 1962, Searle, 1969, cited in Cohen, pp: 1996).

Face: is the public self-image that every person likes to maintain for him or herself. It has two types: **positive face** which is the desire to be liked and approved by others and **negative face** which is the wish to do your everyday work without others imposing on you (Wolfson, 1989, pp: 67).

This chapter presented the basic elements of the study such as the objective, research questions, the hypotheses, and context in which the study can fit.

Chapter Two

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of previous studies that investigated the speech act of refusal. More specifically, the various factors that would affect the realization and production of refusals will be discussed. The chapter also tries to link the speech act of refusal with politeness and with pragmatic failure. Some comparative studies will be reviewed to show the extent to which EFL's refusals resemble those produced by the native speakers of English.

2.2 The speech act of refusal

Refusals occur when a speaker says 'no' or 'I refuse' or otherwise. According to Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), A refusal is a response to a speech act such as requesting, offering, inviting, and suggesting. This means the speech act of refusal is never self-initiated. Making refusals contradicts the listener's expectations and it consequently threatens the face of both the listener and the speaker. The speech act of refusal is often realized through indirect strategies and requires a high level of pragmatic competence (Chen, 1996). According to the politeness theory (Brown and Levinson, 1987), saying 'no' directly may be interpreted as impolite or rude. Speakers use indirect strategies when making refusals in an attempt to mitigate the impact of their refusals. Chen (1996) argues that English native speakers' production of refusals consists of three components: (1) an expression of regret, (2) an excuse, and (3) an offer of alternative.

When realizing the speech act of refusal, a native speaker makes a set of speech acts. Each one is considered a speech act by itself (Tanck, 2003). This set may

7

include:(1)an expression of regret, (2) a direct refusal, and (3) an excuse. In some cases, the speaker offers an alternative. For example, when a speaker wants to refuse an invitation, he or she might say: I'm so sorry (regret). I can't come (direct refusal). I will be so busy (excuse). Or I promise I'll do this later (alternative).

2.3 Felicity conditions of the speech act of refusal

In this section, the researcher presents the felicity conditions that have to be met so that the act of refusal will be valid or be considered as refusal. Austin (1962) lists four conditions that have to be applied if the utterances have the power of "doing an act". One of these conditions is the person and the circumstances in a given situation must be appropriate. For example, "I sentence you to five years imprisonment" can only be valid if it is only uttered by an authorized judge (Austin, 1962, in Muqattash, 2002, pp: 55). However, the conditions related to the speech act of refusal were developed by AL-Eryani (2007), Chen (1995), Umale (2011) and Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), among others.

1. The refuser has to have the free choice (free will) to accept or reject the request, suggestion, invitation, or offer made by the interlocutor. Otherwise, the speaker has to accept what he or she is asked to do.

2. The ultimate goal of the refuser is to commit himself/herself to avoid doing what the requester asks. In English, an utterance like "I will see or I will decide" is not a refusal because that means the refuser may accept doing what he or she is requested to do by the interlocutor.

3. The speech act of refusal relates to the present time or future. For example, one can refuse by saying *I can't do that, or I won't do that*.

4. Refusals are always expressed by the speaker himself or herself. That is, the refuser uses the first singular pronoun (I refuse, I am sorry, I can't do x).

8

5. The refuser is expected to provide true reasons for not meeting the request. This is referred to as the "sincerity condition" of making a request which is related to the speech act of refusal (Searle, 1969). At the same time, the requester has to be sincere in his/her request.

6. In general, making a refusal is a face-threatening act to both the requester and the refuser. So, the refuser takes into account the impact on the "face" of the person being refused (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

2.4 Types of refusals

It has been argued that the speech act of refusal is expressed in different strategies. Ueda (1972) lists nine ways to make refusals to requests, offers, invitations or suggestions. These are:

1. Be silent, hesitant,

2. Offer an alternative,

3. Postponement,

4. Avoidance,

5. General acceptance,

6. Diverting attention,

7. Giving excuses,

8. Saying what is offered is in inappropriate, and

9. Showing lack of enthusiasm.

Later classification, mainly by Beebe, et al (1990) divides refusals into three categories which are: indirect, direct and use of adjuncts. Direct refusals can be performative, acting while speaking, (i.e.; I refuse.) or nonperformative (i.e., I can't do it). Indirect refusal can be expressed by an apology, a statement of alternative, setting conditions for past or future acceptance, avoidance, a statement of principle, a

promise, giving explanations or a combination of this. Adjuncts can be expressed by: expressing positive opinion/ feeling (i.e., This is a great idea, but), a statement of empathy (i.e.: I'm sure you will understand, but..) expressing gratitude/ appreciation (i.e., Thanks so much , but..) or pause filler. One can refuse by being direct but to make the refusal less face threatening, indirect refusals can be accompanied and tagged with an adjunct. The following are possible refusals adopted from Tanck (2003) which she called "semantic formulae":

a- Regret +explanation+ alternative: e.g.:

  1. *Sorry, I have a class and I am late. Can I get another person to help you.*

b- Regret + negative ability + alternative: e.g.:

  2. *Sorry, I can't. I can ask my friend to help you.*

c- No + explanation: e.g.

  3. *No, I am busy.*

d- Explanation + future alternative such as:

  4. *I am not free. You may interview my friend instead.*

e-Regret + negative ability + explanation.   e.g.:

  5. *I am sorry, I can't help because I have a class.*

The above choices (from 1 to 5) are the most common ways of expressing refusal as shown by various studies that investigated EFL learners (Omanis, Yemenis and Egyptians). When reviewing the refusals made by British native speakers, a great similarity will be noticed. Here are the most common ways the British people tend to use when making refusals as found in a study done by Umale (2011).

  6. *No, I couldn't. I am sorry.* (direct refusal + negative ability +apology)

  7. *I am sorry I don't have that amount of money.* (apology + reason)

  8. *I wish I could but I can't afford that.* (adjuncts + negative ability)

9. *It would be great but I need an academic career.* (adjuncts + reason)

10. *No, thanks. (direct refusal + adjunct)*

11. *No, not today. There is too much work to be done.* (direct refusal + alternative + reason)

12. *No, don't worry, it doesn't matter.* (direct refusal + adjunct + indirect refusal)

The above are authentic examples as used by British native speakers of English quoted from Umale (2011). The researcher includes these examples because one can make a comparison to see whether refusals made by Palestinian EFL learners are similar or different from those of the British.   The most common strategies of refusals by American NSs include first: excuses/ reasons, and second statement of apology (Beebe, et al , 1990). American NSs did not favour direct responses like 'no'.   In general, the speech act of refusal is expressed by one of these strategies or a combination of two or more. The following table classifies all the possible strategies based on   Beebe et al. (1990) and Nelson et al. (2002).

(Table 1) shows the most common refusals by both NSs of English and NNSs.   There are more options to make indirect refusals. About twelve refusal strategies can be used instead of making strong refusals (i.e., direct refusals). Adjuncts don't constitute a refusal by themselves though they can be joined with other strategies. For example, one can refuse by saying " *Thank you very much for inviting me, but I have a very important meeting*"

11

Table 1: The Classification of refusal strategies

Type	No.	Strategy	Examples
Direct refusal	0	Direct (performative and nonperformative)	"I refuse". "No, I can't". "I won't"."I don't think so". "No".
Indirect refusal	1	Statement of regret	I am sorry.
	2	Expressing wish	I wish I could help you…
	3	Excuse, reason, explanation	I have no time. I am busy.
	4	Statement of alternative	You can ask someone else.
	5	Future acceptance	I'll do that next time. I promise I'll do…
	6	Statement of principle or philosophy.	I never lend money.
			I don't refuse any request made by a dear friend.
	7	Criticizing the requester	That is a terrible idea. I am a student, not a cleaner.
	8	Avoidance. Topic switch, hedging, telling a joke, postponement, silence, etc..	Oh, I am not sure. (hedging)
Adjuncts	9	Positive opinion/ feeling.	This is a great idea,….
	10	Statement of empathy	I am sure you will understand me, but..
	11	Pause filler.	
	12	Gratitude/ appreciation	Thanks so much, but…

2.5 Pragmatic failure in making refusals

Pragmatic competence is awareness of the "social, cultural, and discourse conventions that have to be followed in various situations" (Bardovi-Harling & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Koike (1989) defines it as" the speaker's knowledge and use of appropriateness and politeness   which dictates the way the speaker will understand

and formulate speech acts" (p. 279). What is interesting about Koike's definition is that it links politeness with pragmatics.

Several studies have shown that second and foreign learners produce language that is different from native speakers in terms of using certain speech acts (requesting, apologizing, refusing,..), conversational   function (leave taking, greeting,..), conversation management (turn taking, length of responses,..), etc..

Tanck, (2003) argues in favor of explicit instruction of how to realize and produce certain speech acts and when to use them appropriately. For example, it is useful to teach students how to refuse or disagree with others and what formulas are commonly used in the native language context. This can be achieved by providing authentic material that highlights the required speech act. Learners can also be made aware of and conscious about the idea that some speakers are direct; which can justify why some politeness markers are absent. Teaching pragmatics doesn't only mean focusing on linguistic issues, but also includes nonverbal focus such as shaking hand when greeting, the use of space, i.e. how close one should stand when talking in meeting others, when to smile, when to use one's hands and other body movements (Bardovi-Harling & Mahan-Taylor, 2003).

The inability of learners to use language appropriately and effectively means that the communicative goals may not be achieved as required. Thomas (1983, pp: 91) defines the pragmatic failure as "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said". She lists various causes of pragmatic failure. A pragmatic error might result in serious communicative problems and eventually leads to a breakdown in communication. Speakers who encounter pragmatic failure will possibly be viewed by the interlocutors as rude, uncaring or even abrupt. Thomas (1983) also adds that using language without paying much attention to its social, cultural and discourse

conventions will show that the speakers are uncooperative and, in most extreme cases, insulting and rude. In addition, Takahashi (1996) argues that the inability to say no clearly and politely has led many non-native speakers to offend their interlocutors.

One possible source of pragmatic failure may be pragmatic transfer from Learners' L1 to L2. Kasper (1984) argues that pragmatic transfer results from the 'influence of the learners' pragmatic knowledge of language and culture other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information" (Kasper 1984, p.207). Thomas (1983) says that pragmatic transfer leads to inappropriate performance in a foreign language where the speakers sound uncooperative or even rude. She adds that pragmatic transfer occurs when speakers use rules from their L1 or their native culture and apply them to the target culture. This type of transfer (pragmatic transfer) results in sociopragmatic failure and is more serious than linguistic failure.

In summary, EFL learners may not only transfer linguistic items from their L1's, but they may also apply L1 speech-norms or habits to the target language. The produced speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, complaining, advising, etc. even linguistically correct, may not be understood and interpreted correctly by native speakers.

2.6 Politeness theory and refusals

Politeness is a major issue that arises when discussing the production and realization of different types of speech acts. Some speech acts are face threatening such as requesting, apologizing, refusing, or complaining. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), people maintain two kinds of face: positive face and negative face. Positive face involves the desire to be approved and appreciated by others. A person tends to show positive face when he or she is with their boss, showing a positive self-

14

image. An example of a speech act that threatens the speaker's positive face would be apologizing, admitting of guilt. Such speech acts threaten the positive self-image the speakers want to keep for themselves. On the other hand, negative face suggests the desire of the speaker or hearer to have autonomy, or not to be imposed upon. To illustrate, a request might be a face threatening act to the hearer because the speaker wants or asks the hearer to do what the speaker wants which might be contrary to the hearer's own desire. The concept of face refers to the "public self-image that every interlocutor wants to claim for himself" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, pp: 66). A speech act is considered face threatening when the act of communication (verbal or non-verbal) comes against the face needs of the hearer and the speaker or one of them. That is why one can use some politeness strategies to mitigate and soften the weightiness of certain acts.

Brown and Levinson (1987) also argue that people choose different politeness strategies to save face, for example:

1. The speaker can make a speech act directly (baldly and clearly) by saying, for instance, *lend me your car*. A bald on record strategy includes no attempt by the speaker to mitigate the impact of a speech act on the hearer's face. Also when a speaker says "*no*" to refuse a request is a bald on record strategy as it includes no effort to minimize the threat of refusal on the hearer's face.

2. The speaker can choose to make the act indirect. This happens when the speaker says: *It is hot in here*. The speaker makes no request with his words but indirectly means that he wants someone to open the window.

3. Positive politeness strategy occurs when the speaker compliments the hearer before asking him to do a favor, for example, "*What a nice suit this is ...May I borrow your pencil?*" In this way, the requester tries to satisfy the hearer's

positive image he desires because the hearer likes to be respected and honored. Positive politeness strategy is mostly used between people to "build up solidarity, showing the other is liked and seen as desirable" (Tracy, 1990: pp. 211-212).

4. A speaker can express an act by using negative politeness strategy by which he/she tries not to impose anything on the hearer, by maintaining the H's autonomy. For example, when a speaker makes a request by saying: *You couldn't by any chance loan me your car, could you*? The speaker implies that the hearer has the right (autonomy) not to loan his car to the speaker, in other words, the speaker is not imposing on the hearer.

Direct strategies are more face threatening in nature because the refusers use no mitigation by the to lessen and soften the impact of the speech act on the hearers' face. Direct strategies, as Sarfo (2011) suggests include: (1) *flat No*, (2) *No* with some other expressions like an excuse or giving an alternative, and (3)negative expressions such as *'I can't'*. These three direct strategies are like those bald-on-record strategies of Brown and Levinson (1987). When the speaker uses such direct strategies, he or she makes a refusal explicit and plain.

Meanwhile, indirect strategies are less face threatening in nature. Sarfo (2011) lists some indirect strategies: (1)*giving excuses, (2) requesting clarification, (3)suggesting alternatives, (4) mitigating refusals, (5)setting a condition for future acceptance, (6)laughter as refusal, (7)expressing regret, etc.*.

Speakers use politeness strategies when making refusal in an attempt to lessen the impact of their refusals especially when they talk to people of higher status and power. One can be polite when he or she makes indirect refusals whereas being direct

16

can be interpreted as impolite like saying, for example, 'no' without expressing excuse, explanation or promising future acceptance.

Wolfson (1989) tries to link the social variables that affect the choice of refusal patterns (weak, medium and strong) with politeness. Of course, people of higher power and status are treated differently compared to normal people of lower power.

> in deciding how much to take another person's feelings into account, we have three factors to consider. First, people are usually more polite to others when they are of higher status or perceived of as being powerful; second, people are generally more polite to others who are socially distant; third, we are usually more polite in relation to the gravity of the threat we are about to make to others' face. (1989: p: 67).

This is in total agreement with the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987) who proposes that the speaker varies his/ her language, or his/ her types of politeness strategies, according to the social power, social distance between interlocutors and the weightiness of the speech act. Ignorance of the politeness system of the target language community leads to pragmatic failure. He Ziran, et al. (2004) explains that lack of knowledge about the politeness conventions may happen when a speaker uses a polite form with a close friend or with someone with lower social status, or uses intimate form with a stranger or with someone of higher social status. That is why learners of English should be made aware of and conscious to the politeness principle of the target language, L2.

2.7 Language proficiency and refusals

Beside power and social distance, appropriate use of refusals depends also on the L2 proficiency of the learners. In this section, the researcher reviews studies that have found a link between language proficiency and making refusals appropriately.

17

According to Yamagashira (2001) who used a DCT (Discourse Completion Test) to examine the effect of Japanese L1 on making refusals in English, the subjects with lower English proficiency tended to resort to their L1 strategies to make refusals in English. The researcher argues that the subjects' insufficient knowledge of English is behind the choice of such refusal strategies. However, subjects of higher English proficiency tend to approximate American native speakers when making refusals. Tanck (2003) also finds that low and middle level learners tend to produce longer utterances than native speakers do. The non-native speaker's utterances are twice as long as that made by native speakers of English. This can be due to their limited linguistic proficiency in the target language (English). To conclude, subjects of lower L2 proficiency are more influenced by their L1 refusal conventions. In other words, allowing pragmatic transfer to happen.

2.8 Refusals in comparative studies with native speakers

In this section, the researcher reviews the studies focusing on the speech act of refusal produced by EFL learners of English and refusals made by American and British native speakers for comparative purposes. Comparison is important because it allows us to predict how close or far are EFL learners are from native speakers of English in making refusals.

It should be noted that the majority of the studies which investigated the speech act of refusal used DCT (discourse completion test) to collect the data. The researchers argue that using DCT is quite effective in eliciting the intended speech act. On the other hand, using recordings or real data incorporates a lot of difficulties and does not guarantee getting the intended speech act.

2.8.1 American and Thai

Wannaruk (2008) conducted a study comparing similarities and differences in refusals. Forty American (NSs), forty Thai native speakers (NTs) and forty Thai EFL learners participated in the study. Each group had twenty males and twenty females. All of them were graduate students studying different majors in their own countries. The Thai EFL participants had never travelled to any English speaking countries. The data were collected via DCT technique, in which the participants had to make refusals to people of higher, equal and lower power. The importance of this study is that it shows how Americans make refusals in their native language, English. The results were the following:

1- In refusing an advisor's invitation to a party, NSs began their refusal with 'positive note' followed by an explanation as *"I'd love to, but I've a lot of homework..."*.

2- When refusing a friend's or a neighbor's invitation, NSs tended to be direct. They sometimes used blunt *'no'* plus an explanation.

3- In general, American NSs tended to give *explanations* in all situations (80% -95%); their explanations were both specific and clear.

3- *'No'* was hardly used when refusing people of higher power but was employed when refusing friends or neighbors because they are not socially distant.

4- Pragmatic transfer was also noticed in Wannaruk's study (2008). Thais adopted the norms of their mother language when making refusal in English. For example, they used regret more than American native speakers (NSs) who preferred to use gratitude or positive feelings. Pragmatic transfer was also observed when Thai subjects gave explanations. Their explanations (reasons) were generally vague, unspecific and unclear. In summary, there were three typical components of refusals

19

made by native speakers regardless whether the interlocutors were of higher, equal or lower power. These components are: *an expression of regret*, *an excuse*, and *an offer of alternative.*

2.8.2 Chinese and American

Chen (1996) used a discourse completion test to examine the speech act of refusal to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions made by American NSs and Chinese speakers of English. The findings of the study revealed that both groups avoided using direct refusals such as "no", or "I refuse". The study also showed that an expression of regret was common by American speakers but was rarely used by Chinese speakers. Chen's study is significant because the direct strategy "no" was not a common strategy even if it is well-known that Americans "prefer communicating straightforward, stating explicitly what has to be said" (Cohen 1987, pp: 13).

2.8.3 Japanese and American

Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) compared the speech act of refusal produced by both Japanese and Americans. This study is often cited when discussing the speech act of refusal. Three groups took part in the study. Twenty Japanese-speaking in English who were studying at the US universities. Twenty American NSs. The third group, a control group, consisted of twenty Japanese native speakers who were residents of Japan. The authors used a discourse completion test to collect the data. The purpose of the study was to test the pragmatic transfer in Japanese ESL learners' refusals. The study demonstrated that there were significant differences relating to the order, frequency and content of the semantic formula of refusals. The Japanese subjects produced refusals in L2 that were similar to those made by native speakers of Japanese. The researches added that Japanese ESL learners "approximated" English native speakers' refusals than Japanese EFL learners did. In

20

other words, Japanese people who studied in the US received more input which in turn increased their pragmatic knowledge.

2.8.4 Turkish, Lao and American

Sadler and Eroz (2002) investigated refusals produced by participants of different L1s. Thirty subjects for each group were selected: ten Americans, ten Loa, and ten Turkish. The participants completed a questionnaire consisted of twelve situations to elicit refusals to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. The study used a DCT questionnaire. The researchers used the classification developed by Beebe, et al. (1990) to analyze the results. The study revealed the following results:

1- The Americans' most preferable refusal formula was (1) excuse/explanation, and (2) statement of regret. The Turks' refusals were very similar to the Americans'.
2- The Americans avoided direct refusals; 'no'. Although Americans are known to be straightforward and direct. In this study they avoided 'no' refusals. It is probable that they did so in order to save their interlocutors' face.

3- Loa participants' most common refusal strategy was similar to that produced by Americans except the use of statement of negative ability, gratitude or appreciation at the end. The researchers attributed the similarity of refusal patterns produced by the three groups, mainly the Americans and the Turks, to the high level of English proficiency the participants had which entailed higher competency in the language and high awareness of and familiarity with the mainstream culture.

2.9 Comparative studies with Arabic

The researcher reviewed comparative studies that compared refusals made by both Arabs and English native speakers. The comparison is important because it will

give insight and better understanding of the way Arab learners of English realize and produce the speech act of refusal.

2.9.1 Saudis and Americans

Al-Shawali (1997) investigated the speech acts of refusal made by Saudi learners of English and American male undergraduate students. The study revealed that both groups used similar refusal strategies but generally, the Saudis used more direct refusals. What was significant in this study is that Saudis tended to use vague answers and unspecified reasons while the Americans used more specific explanations when making refusals. In addition, Saudis used hedging and avoidance strategies more often. The researcher concluded that such differences can be attributed to cultural differences. That is to say, refusals are different in different cultures. Beebe, et al, (1990) argue that the refusals made by Japanese learners of English were very similar to those refusals made by Japanese native speakers. So pragmatic transfer occurred because Saudi learners of English used their L1 conventions to make refusals.

2.9.2 Omanis and British speakers

Umale (2011) investigated the similarities between British and Omani strategies of refusing requests. The researcher used the Discourse Completion Test to elicit refusals. The study was conducted in Oman. The British participants, five females and five males, were working there. The Omani participants were nine male and one female. All were graduates. It was found that Omani people transferred their L1's 'speech habits' which results in "misunderstanding and communication failure" (pp: 31). The Omani participants tended to give long answers, non-specific reasons, and used the same semantic formulas used in the Arabic language. On the other hand, the British expressed regret and gave specific reasons. In general, the Omani

respondents used more direct refusals than their British counterparts. Umale (2011) also discussed the issue of power. It was found that talking to people of higher status, both Omani and British speakers used more direct strategies. He also added that both Omanis and British were very careful when refusing a request initiated by people of higher power. In assessing the pragmatic competence of both British and Omani people, it was found that the British gave reasons before they refused and then expressed regret followed by explanations (excuses). Both groups appeared to care for their interlocutors' face by using positive politeness such as compliments before expressing refusals. Meanwhile, both groups used direct strategies when refusing requests to people of equal status.

2.9.3 Egyptians and Americans

Nelson et al. (2002) investigated the differences and similarities between refusals made by Egyptians and Americans. The participants were twenty-five Egyptians and thirty Americans. A modified DCT version, developed by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). The test consisted of 12 items. The respondents had to write refusals to three requests, three invitations, three offers and three suggestions. Each situation required the participant to make one refusal (orally) to a person of higher power, equal power and lower power. The analysis of the data showed that the two groups were similar in using direct and indirect strategies in making refusals. More specifically, giving reasons was found to be the most common strategy used by both Egyptian and American speakers. The second most common strategy by both groups was using statements of negative willingness. Regarding power, the Egyptians tended to use more direct strategies when addressing people of higher or lower power than the Americans. The results were surprising because the Egyptians were expected to be less direct than the Americans.

2.9.4 Yemeni and American

Al-Eryani (2008) studied the speech act of refusal using a DCT designed by Blum-Kulka in (1989). Three groups participated in the study: twenty Yemeni learners of English, twenty Yemeni native speakers of Arabic and twenty American native speakers of English. Yemeni native speakers of Arabic completed the DCT in Yemen whereas the rest of the study was completed in the US. He then compared the results with both Yemeni native speakers and American English native speakers. The results were analyzed in terms of semantic formulas and were categorized according to the refusal taxonomy designed by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990). The results were as follows:

1- Each group used different frequency and content of refusals in relation to the status of the interlocutors. They also varied their refusals according to the eliciting acts (request, offer, invitation, and suggestion). For example, American English native speakers tended to be more direct in making refusals while Yemeni native speakers were less direct; they usually gave reasons or explanations at the beginning of the semantic formula.

2- There was a connection between English language proficiency and pragmatic success. Yemeni whose English language proficiency was high produced refusals much similar to American Native speakers.

3- There was evidence of pragmatic transfer since Yemeni learners of English showed some of their L1 speech norms when formulating refusals. Yemeni learners of English displayed pragmatic transfer because their English refusals were closely similar to those made by Yemeni native speakers of Arabic.

The studies above show that the production of refusals is bound by variables such as, power, social distance, weight of imposition, and language proficiency.

24

2.10 The role of power in making refusals

As shown in the previous section, the choice of refusal strategy is affected by variables such as social distance between the interlocutors,　weight of the refusal, and power. The status or power factor seems to be very significant. The power variable is also referred to as the higher position or higher status. That is to say, people of a higher position such as doctors, professors, or police officers, compared to students, or layman. In the present study, power and higher position or status are used interchangeably. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) speakers consider the power differences of the addressee as an effective element in shaping the refusal strategy. Speakers use certain strategies to mitigate the impact of refusals on their addressees' face because refusals are face-threatening acts, because they don't support (comply with) the face wants of the addressee. Speakers, therefore, use different politeness strategies like positive politeness, negative politeness and off-record strategies to make their refusals more acceptable, or more appropriate. It is expected that lower status interlocutors tend to use higher politeness strategies and more indirect strategies in refusing or disagreeing with higher status people (Wolfson, 1989). She also adds that lower status people are expected to use address terms more often like sir, teacher, boss, doctor, professor, etc. introducing their refusals. Previous research showed that Arabic native speakers generally tend to produce indirect refusal strategies when communicating with acquaintances of equal status and with close friends of unequal status (Hussein, 1995).

The status of the addressee plays a role in choosing the refusal strategy. Abdul Sattar, CheLah, and Suleiman (2011) found that when refusing a low status person, the most frequent strategy was: regret + negative ability + an excuse; (*sorry, I can't. I have a meeting....*). When refusing a request made by an equal status person,

the most frequent strategy was: regret + excuse; (*Sorry, I need to read the notes tonight)*. The results also indicated that participants of equal power used direct strategies more often. They expressed refusals by saying 'no' or ' *I can't give you the note...'*. In contrast, refusing a higher status person was different. The study found that the majority of the participants avoided direct strategies. They preferred using indirect strategies to show respect to their interlocutors. That is why lower status participants used address forms like '*professor*' when talking to higher status people. What is significant in this study by Abdul Sattar and his associates is that no participant replied 'no' to people of higher status because making direct refusals by saying 'no' might be interpreted as an insult to the addressee, and this might be risky.

However, in situations where the interlocutors are equal in power and there is no distance between them, the preferred strategy is directness which is also referred to as ' solidarity politeness system' (Scollon and Scollon, 2001, cited by AL-Marrani and Sazalie, 2010). Speakers in such situations tend to be direct to show closeness and affiliation.

2.11 The social distance and the choice of refusal strategy

Beside power, social distance should be considered when discussing the speech act of refusal. It is also known as 'level of familiarity', between the listener and speaker. In case of familiarity and closeness, it is expected that strong and direct refusals are made, whereas refusals to strangers are more likely to be indirect and include some expressions such as giving reasons or explanations, suggesting alternative and others (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

For example, it was found that when American friends refuse each other's requests or invitations, they tend to give true reasons and more details compared with strangers of both higher and lower power where they give brief and unelaborated

response to both higher and lower status. Wannaruk (2008) argues that direct refusals were also used by Americans when talking to intimates and acquaintance.

In yet another study comparing Japanese and Americans, Beebe et al (1990) argue that Americans tended to give brief refusals to higher and lower power whereas they gave 'more detailed responses to peers'. Social distance affects the choice of refusals. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) maintain that the more familiar the interlocutors are such as classmates and friends, the more direct refusals they will use.

2.12 Weight or 'risk' of imposition

In addition to power and social distance, the weight of imposition (also called: the absolute ranking of imposition, Brown and Levinson, 1987, pp: 73) affects the refusal strategies. For instance, borrowing a pen from a neighboring student is not as significant and risky as borrowing a friend's car. It is assumed that speaking to somebody is like interfering with his own freedom and speakers are supposed to respect the circle of freedom of the addressee. It is, therefore, understood that the speaker is imposing on the hearer by interrupting his life. Using a language appropriately requires careful phrasing of the language of imposition by using politeness expressions to avoid backlash from the hearer. This is called imposition and it has degrees of weight from low demanding to high demanding from the addressee (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

2.13 Summary

The chapter presented the speech act of refusal that comprises a variety of individual speech acts. A refusal may be expressed by three separate speech acts: an expression of regret (apology), a direct refusal and an explanation, or some variation of these. Research also showed that refusals are culture-specific. Refusals made by

non-native speakers are likely to differ from those made by native speakers. For example, non-native speakers of English rarely include an excuse compared with American native speakers who mostly give an explanation. Lacking the appropriate conventions of the speech act of refusal in English, EFL learners tend to transfer rules of speech from L1 to the target language which in turn results in pragmatic failure. The chapter also discussed the link between the type of refusal and politeness. When speakers choose the most direct and unambiguous refusals (such as: 'no' or I refuse'), they employ an on-record strategy. This means, making refusals without using adjuncts or any indirect strategy such as: " No, I refuse" will be considered strong and direct. Providing a reason is considered more polite than direct refusals. Using direct refusals implies that the refuser doesn't care about the requester's face want.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the steps the researcher adopted to collect the data. It also presents the assumptions according to which the DCT was designed and a brief description is given for each situation. Subjects of the study and the analysis of the data will also be discussed in this chapter.

3.2 Participants of the study

To get refusals in English, thirty-seven senior Palestinian university students participated in this study. They were undergraduate students majoring in English at Hebron University. The researcher chose senior English majors because he assumed that they would have a reasonable English proficiency to produce linguistically acceptable refusals. The majority of the participants were female: seven male and thirty-three female. Although research showed that, for example, women use more hedging and compliments compared to men, the researcher restricted the investigation to the three variables discussed in chapter two. The test was translated into Arabic and administered to thirty-seven Palestinian Arabic majors studying Arabic at Hebron University. They were asked to write refusals to respond to the ten situations using standard or colloquial Arabic.

3.3 Data collection and study instrument

To collect the data, the researcher used a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). DCT is used to elicit various types of speech acts like apologizing, requesting, promising, advising, disagreeing, etc.. There are many comparative studies that

include native and non-native speakers such as Beebe et al. (1985), Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Welts, (1990), Chen, (1996), Al-Shawali, (1997). In this study, the subjects were asked to complete a DCT which included twelve situations that are frequently used in real life. The participants had to respond to each situation and write what they would actually say in these situations. They wrote refusals in English.

The researcher considers that the speech act of refusal is a face-threatening act; therefore, speakers may use polite strategies to mitigate the impact of their refusals. They may vary their refusals according to various elements. Brown and Levinson (1987) maintain that speakers vary their refusals according to three factors: social distance (familiars or strangers), relative power (status) between interlocutors, and weight or risk of the imposition.

In light of the social variables discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987), the researcher designed the situations. The questionnaire consisted of ten situations. The first six situations try to investigate the effect of social power and social distance between the interlocutors. When combining the social power of the interlocutors with the social distance between the interlocutors, six situations (combinations) will result. The respondent is either higher, equal or lower in power (status or position) in relation to the interlocutor. If they know each other, there is no social distance between them. If they are strangers (i.e., unfamiliar, or has newly met each other), then there is social distance between them. Below are the six situations that were designed to test the effect of the relative power and the social distance of the speakers in each situation. The situations in the discourse completion test are adapted from studies done by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), Umale, (2011), Nelson, et al. (2002). The following are the situations that were used to trigger refusals in this study with a brief discussion on each:

1. *You are a student studying English at a Palestinian university. A professor, whom you have known for a long time, asks you to clean his office. What would you say to him? ………………………..*

In this situation, the respondent is in lower power (status) in relation to the speaker and there is distance between them. The request is risky and highly demanding. (-p, -d, +r)

2. *You teach at a university. One of your students asks you to postpone a test for the following week. You can't approve this. What would you say to him?*

In this situation, the respondent is of higher power in relation to the speaker and there is no social distance between the two as they have met before. The request is of low risk. (+p, -d, -r)

3. *You are a head master at a high school. A newly appointed English teacher wants you to show him how to make a lesson plan for grade eight. It is the beginning of the year and you are very busy and can't help him. What would you say?*

In this situation, the respondent has lower power in relation to the speaker and they don't know each other. The request is of low risk.   (+p, +d, -r)

4. *You are a senior student at a university and your advisor wants you to attend a conference at the university. You are busy and can't attend. What would you say to him?....................................*

In this situation, the respondent is in lower power in relation to the speaker and they know each other very well which means that there is no social distance between the two. The request is of low risk and not highly demanding.   (-p, -d, -r)

5. *You are the boss in a company. One of your best workers asks for a raise in his salary. Your company is facing a financial problem. You can't approve this request. What would you say to him? …………………......*

In this situation, the respondent is higher in power (authority) than the speaker but there is no social distance between them. (+p, -d, +r). The request is risky.

6. *While driving your car to work, a police officer stops you and asks for your driving license. You can't waste time. What would you say to him?..................*

In this situation, the respondent is in lower power (status) and there is a distance between the speakers (the policeman and the driver). (-p, +d, +r).The refusal is risky.

7. *You are a doctor at a hospital. A patient asks you to postpone the operation which is scheduled for today. Of course, you can't approve this request. What would you say to him? ……...*

In this situation, the respondent is a doctor and has the authority and power over the patient. The refusal is risky. (+p, +d, +r)

8. *You are a new worker in a company. The boss wants to talk to you about how to finish a particular task but you have to leave soon. What would you say to him?..*

In this situation, the respondent is in low power in relation to the boss. The worker is less in power compared to the boss of the company. The interlocutors don't know each other. The refusal is not risky. (-p, +d, -r)

In the next situations, the researcher tries to test how the participants realize the speech act of refusal when talking to people of equal power.

9. *Your best friend asks to use your mobile phone. You cannot let him/her do that for a certain reason. What would you say to him?*

In the situation above, the interlocutors are equal in power and there is no social distance between them as they are friends. The refusal is of low risk. (=p, -d, -r)

10. *You are a lecturer at a college. The workload is very heavy and you are under a lot of stress. One of your colleagues wants to talk to you over lunch but you are tired and don't have time. You can't approve this request. What would you say to him? ....*

In the situation above, the speakers are equal in power. It aims to investigate what types of refusal learners would prefer when to talking to people of equal power. (=p, -d, -p)

Table 2: Summary of the combinations of variables in each situation[1]

Situation no.	Power (+, -, =)	Distance (+, -)	Risk (-, +)
1	-p	-d	+r
2	+p	-d	-r
3	+p	+d	-r
4	-p	-d	-r
5	+p	-d	+r
6	-p	+d	+r
7	+p	+d	+r
8	-p	+d	-r
9	=p	-d	-r
10	=p	-d	-r

To answer the third research question which examines the effect of the learners' L1 on realizing refusals in the target language (English), the researcher used an Arabic version of the questionnaire. The same items were translated into Arabic.

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[1]*Note: -p means that the respondent (the one who refuses) is lower in power relative to the speaker whereas +p means the refuser is higher in power in relation to the speaker. R stands for 'risk', it refers to the magnitude of the refusal whether low (-r), or high (+r). (+d) means that there is distance between the speakers which suggest that they don't know each other. (–d) means that the speakers are familiar and there is no distance between them.*

The Arabic majors' refusals were compared to those English majors. That helped out whether L1 (Arabic) influenced the refusals made in the target language, English.

To get the Arabic responses, the researcher gave the Arabic version of the DCT to senior Arabic majors to use their answers as a reference point in the discussion of the answers of English majors. That was to establish a norm in Arabic for comparison with English. It was also assumed that English majors may resort to translation from English or into English if given the same questionnaire in two languages. Therefore, the DCT was given to Arabic majors to avoid memorization. It is believed that transfer from L1 to L2 will become more obvious if the sample was taken from non-English majors.

The participants were given the English version of (DCT), which included ten situations. A brief description was included for each situation. The participants (English majors) were asked to respond to each situation by writing the refusal in English. It was emphasized that the participants had to respond to all situations by using refusals. They wrote their responses in the blanks bellow each situation. The DCT was administered by the researcher himself. To get the Arabic refusals, forty Palestinian Arabic majors at Hebron University were given the Arabic version of the DCT. They were instructed to write their refusals in Arabic.

3.4 Data analysis

The researcher collected the thirty-seven copies. The responses of the English majors were classified into ten categories; reason (explanation), regret (sorry), future and past acceptance (if you had asked me earlier, I would have come), positive opinion or feeling (thanks for asking me or I would love to), indirect refusal (I am a student, not a cleaner), agreement, alternative (may be next time), direct refusal (I

refuse), no, and can't (I can't ..). Bearing in mind that a refusal could be consist of three individual speech acts such as: an apology, an explanation, or an offer of alternative as in: "I am sorry, I have an important meeting, may be next time". A respondent might use more than one expression to make a refusal. Reason was not used in all situations but was used higher than any other strategy. Then, the researcher counted how many times the respondents used each strategy in each situation. For example, in situation number one in which the student had to refuse a request made by his professor giving a reason was used fourteen times and expressing regret (i.e.: I am sorry) was used twelve times. Finally, the researcher counted how many times reason was used in all situations.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results to answer the three research questions. First, research question one investigated what refusal strategies the respondents used; (1) showing the most and least common strategies employed in making refusals. (2) examples are given on each strategy. (3) Then the preferred refusal strategy is discussed with examples. (4) The content of refusal strategy is elaborated on; what combination of strategies was most preferred. (5) direct and indirect refusals are also discussed. (6) a comparison is made between Arabic majors refusals obtain by this study and native speakers of English. After that, the researcher discusses the second research question and uses the results to show whether the respondents vary their refusals according to the three variables. Third, the chapter finally presents the refusal strategies most preferred by Arabic majors with examples: (see table 7). Finally, the third research question is answered. That is, a comparison is made between refusals made by both groups to check if pragmatic transfer exists or not.

Table 3: Percentages of refusal types made by English majors

Situations	Indirect (489, 76.9%) number + %														Direct: (144, 23.1%)number + %					
	Reason * (28.25%)		Regret (19.58%)		Future and Past Acceptance (8.51%)		Positive Opinion and Feelings (11.24%)		Indirect Ref. (.96%)		Agreement (2.89%)		Alternatives (5.46%)		Direct Ref. (4.49%)		Flat no (2.25%)		Can't (16.37%)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
1-student-professor	14	8%	12	10%	1	2%	11	16%	1	17%	4	22%	3	9%	0	0%	0	0%	7	7%
4-student-advisor	20	11%	10	8%	3	6%	7	10%	1	17%	5	28%	1	3%	4	14%	0	0%	7	7%
6-driver-policeman	26	15%	7	6%	1	2%	8	11%	0	0%	4	22%	6	18%	2	7%	1	7%	5	5%
8-worker-boss	16	9%	9	7%	9	17%	13	19%	0	0%	3	17%	2	6%	1	4%	1	7%	6	6%
2-professor-student	8	5%	10	8%	4	8%	2	3%	2	33%	1	6%	4	12%	9	32%	6	43%	11	11%
5-boss worker	21	12%	13	11%	14	26%	5	7%	0	0%	0	0%	2	6%	2	7%	1	7%	16	16%
7-doctor- patient	14	8%	10	8%	0	0%	6	9%	1	17%	0	0%	2	6%	8	29%	5	36%	16	16%
3-headmaster-teacher	14	8%	12	10%	11	21%	2	3%	0	0%	0	0%	10	29%	2	7%	0	0%	13	13%
9-friend-friend	23	13%	22	18%	1	2%	4	6%	1	17%	1	6%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	12	12%
10-lectuerer-lecturer	20	11%	17	14%	9	17%	12	17%	0	0%	0	0%	3	9%	0	0%	0	0%	9	9%
Total	176		122		53		70		6		18		34		28		14		102	

Table 3 shows the number and percentages of refusals made by Palestinian EFL learners. It presents both direct and indirect refusals. Table three can tell the most and the least preferred refusals the learners used. For example, the respondents preferred reason more than any other strategy.

Direct refusals include three subcategories which are:

1. Flat 'No': (e.g.: No, it is not possible at all) (situation 2).

2. Can't: (e.g.: I can't postpone your test, you should study) (situation 3).

3. Direct refusals are statements which express strong and clear refusals without using "no" or "can" (e.g. : Your request is completely refused) (situation 5).

Indirect refusals include seven subcategories which are:

1. Giving reason or explanations.

2. Expressing regret (e.g., expressing one's apology for not being able to do the act).

3. Future or past acceptance (e.g.: I will raise your salary after the company solves its financial problems) (situation 5).

4. Using terms that express positive opinions and feelings (gratitude and appreciation)

5. Indirect refusals (e.g. : I don't think so).

6. Expressing agreement (i.e.: accepting to perform the request).

7. Suggesting alternatives.

Category 4 is also called **adjuncts** such as using the preferred terms of address (e.g.: doctor or professor), positive opinion (I would like to...), gratitude or appreciation (thanks for your invitation...). These are not refusals on their own but they were inserted as softeners and downgraders to minimize or tone down the face

threatening of the speech act of refusal. Adjuncts were classified as indirect refusals. This category adds to the indirectness of the refusals and indicates politeness.

Direct refusals are very explicit and the message of rejection and disagreement is clear. Indirect refusals, however, may include reason, alternative, suggestion, partial agreement, etc.. Both types can be linked with the "power" variable. That means, when high power makes refusals to low power, the refuser is expected to use no mitigation or softeners because there will be no risk or low risk. In other words, he is in a way trying to exert power over the speaker. So that little mitigation will possibly be used. Therefore, directness will be displayed like "No, I don't accept this" or "No, I can't". But when the respondent is of lower power than the requester, the refusals will be weak because lower power people try not to impose on their interlocutors since they can't refuse high power strongly, they try to lessen and soften the impact of their refusals on the speakers to show respect and avoid possible risk. Therefore, it's expected that low power will use adjuncts of gratitude and appreciation (thank you) in their refusals (Umale, 2011).

A single refusal formula can be divided into small elements which are considered as individual speech acts. A refusal may include the following elements: (1) expression of regret, (2) negative ability, and (3) a promise of future acceptance as illustrated by the following example:

13. *Sorry, I can't help you, come later.* (3- headmaster to teacher)

One can express his refusal by using a set of speech acts joined together. In this study, the respondents rarely used one single speech act to express their refusals like; "I can't".

4.2 Research question one

Research question one is: "*What are the mostly used semantic formulas (i.e., refusal strategies) by Palestinian senior students learning English in making refusals?*". According to the studies reviewed in chapter two, people can express their refusals in many different ways either directly or indirectly. They can be direct by saying "No", "I refuse" or "I can't". On the other hand, the refuser can be indirect, for example, by giving a reason (explanation) or expressing regret (I am sorry). In this study, the respondents used different refusal strategies (i.e.: or patterns) in their refusals. Ten refusal patterns were used:

Reason, regret, future and past acceptance, expression of positive opinion and feelings (adjuncts), alternative, (partial) agreement, and mitigated refusal (indirect refusals), direct refusal, expressing negative ability (e.g. : I can't), and "No".

To comment on this result, these wide options of expressing refusals revealed that the respondents recognized how face-threatening the act would be on the interlocutors. Besides, the indirect way to refuse signals that strong refusals are more likely to cause some damage to the relationships. That is why the respondents used reason, regret, alternatives and other strategies to soften their refusals.

The most frequent type was giving a *"reason" (note:* this refusal pattern or type is also called "excuse" or "explanation" because the refuser provides it to explain to the refusee why he can't accept to do the act*)* with the percentage of 28.25% (176 out of 623). That is to say, reasons, explanations or excuses were used higher than other refusal patterns. The participants used this pattern in all situations, with higher, lower, and equal power interlocutors, but in different percentages. What is worthy to note here is that the participants did not use excuses alone, but they used them in combination with other strategies like regret or expressing negative ability.
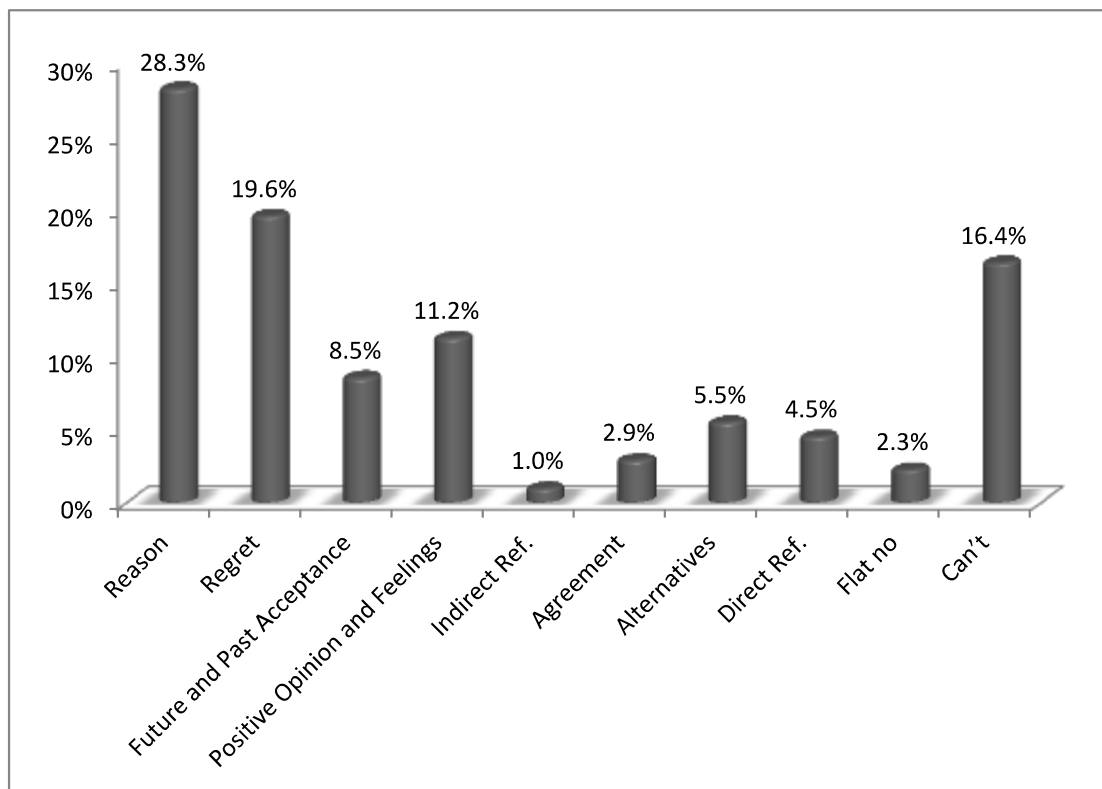
Figure 1: Percentages of refusal patterns made by English majors

Below are some examples from this study:

14. *I am really sorry. I have no time. I can't.*(2- professor to student)

15. *Sorry my boss, I have to go now.*(5- worker to boss)

16. *Sorry my professor. I couldn't do this job.*(1-student to professor)

17. *I hope, but I can't, I am too busy.*(10-lecturer to lecturer)

18. *Sorry, I can't give you my mobile, I have a personal reason.* (9-friend to friend)

19. *Sorry, I can't accept your invitation, I am very busy.* (10-lecturer to lecturer)

Sometimes, the respondents replaced negative ability (can't) with other patterns such as: a statement of future promise of acceptance. Below are some examples:

20. I should leave now, maybe I'll talk to you tomorrow.(8-worker to boss)

41

21. *Sorry at this time I can't. I promise when we pass the financial problem of our company I will raise your salary.* (5- boss to worker)

22. *I am not here over lunch. See you tomorrow.*(10- lecturer to lecturer)

The second common strategy was expressing regret or apology by saying: *sorry*, or *I am sorry*. It was used 19.58%, counting 122 times out of 623. This type was used generally at the beginning and, in very rare cases, at the end as shown in the following examples:

23. *I'm sorry, I can't give it to you because I'm too busy.* (6-driver to policeman asking for the driving license).

24. *Sorry. I can't accept your invitation.* (10-lecturer to lecture: lunch invitation).

The respondents favored short refusals. In general, they used two combinations of refusals such as giving a reason followed by an expression of regret or an expression of positive opinion followed or preceded by negative ability (i.e.: can't). See the examples below.

25. *I would be very happy to give you the mobile, but I can't.* (9-friend to friend: asking for using mobile).

26. *Please, I must leave now.* (8- worker to boss).

27. *Sorry, we can meet tomorrow.*(situation 8).

28. *Your request is completely refused.* (5-boss to worker: asking for salary raise).

The above examples show that the respondents preferred short refusals although they used variuos refusal types. The respondents rarely used four or more refusal types to make a refusal.

The third common refusal pattern was expressing negative ability, which is expressed in different ways such as (I can't, I am not able...). It was used 16.37%, which means 102 out of 623. It was used in all situations but in different percentages.

This type of refusal is classified as direct and because of this it was accompanied by other patterns, and was rarely used alone. See the examples below:

29. *I can't talk now, I will tell you later.* (8-worker to boss)

30. *Sorry, I can't, I must go home now.* (9- friend to friend: asking to use his mobile).

31. *I am tired, I can't attend, forgive me.* (4-student to advisor).

What is noteworthy in this study is that the respondents avoided using two direct refusal patterns like "flat no" and "can't". It seems that they recognized that such refusals would be very strong and direct which might be interpreted as rude or impolite. That is why they accompanied their refusals with softeners and mitigators like giving reasons or expressing regret.

4.2.1 The order of refusals

The respondents did not stick to one order when they used more than one strategy to express refusals. Sometimes they expressed regret and then gave reason or vice versa. However, there was a general tendency to start refusals with regret followed by an excuse (i.e. reason). When they used "can't", they followed this order: expression of regret, can't and reason.

32. *I am so sorry, I can't help. I am too busy.* (3-headmaster to teacher).

However, the respondents did not favor using can't in the first position. This can be attributed to the idea that starting refusals with can't will be very direct and strong refusals. They tended to use can't mostly in the second position within the refusal formula after expressing either regret or providing excuses. To avoid starting refusals with can't or no, the respondents began their refusals with positive

expressions, such as expressing gratitude and appreciation (I would like to, but I can't).

American native speakers, however, tend to use regret more in the first position of their refusals (AL-Eryani, 2008). Likewise, the respondents in this study tended to use regret in a similar fashion.

4.2.2 The content of refusals

Question one also investigates the content of the semantic formula that the respondents used in their refusals. The respondents, sometimes, expressed their refusals by using one single refusal pattern. Here are some examples:

33. *May be tomorrow.*(8-worker to boss)

34. *I can't do that.* (1-student to professor)

35. I am very sorry. (4- student to advisor)

36. *I don't like attending conferences* .(3-headmaster to student)

The examples above consist of only one speech act; promising future acceptance, expressing negative ability respectively. Meanwhile, in other cases, the respondents used two patterns in their refusals, combined two strategies together like:

37. *I am sorry. I can't right now.* (9-friend to friend)

38. *I don't accept this, your health is more important than anything else.* (7-doctor-patient)

The above examples consist of two speech acts in each. The first includes regret and negative ability, the second example includes a direct refusal (I don't accept this) followed by an explanation.

In general, the refusals consist of either two or three speech acts in each, which are: reason, regret, and negative ability. The examples are:

44

39. *I would do it, but sorry, I am busy.* (1-student to professor)

40. *You can ask any of the teachers here because I am busy.* (3- headmaster to teacher)

41. *You know that the company faces a financial problem, I can't raise your salary, sorry.(5-boss to worker).*

In all cases, direct refusals seem shorter than indirect ones. The direct refusals generally consist of a single speech act. To support this point, the percentage of indirect refusal is 76.88% and they include seven categories. Whereas, direct refusal is 23.11% and has only three categories. The following examples show how short direct refusals are:

42. *I will refuse.* (1- student to professor)

43. *I am not interested in attending the conference.* (4-student to advisor).

44. *No, I can't.* (7-doctor to patient)

45. *I can't do this.* (1- student to professor)

46. *Your request is completely refused.* (5-boss to worker)

47. *I don't accept.* (9- friend to friend)

48. *I can't.* (2-professor to student)

49. *I refuse this suggestion.* (10- lecturer to lecturer)

In the above examples, the speakers (refusers) made no attempt to lessen the impact of the refusals on the hearers' face. The communicative meaning of each statement is expressed explicitly with no mitigation. The examples are classified as very direct refusals because the speakers provided no other strategies such as expressing regret (*I am sorry*), giving explanations and alternatives or using positive remarks or expressing gratitude like (*thank you very much for asking me..or please ..excuse me..*).

In addition, the results show that the respondents preferred, or tended to give unspecified reasons. The respondents offered the following examples:

50. *I am in a hurry.* (6-driver to policeman).

51. *I am busy.* (10- lecturer to lecturer)

52. *I have to leave, I have a serious reason..* (6-driver to policeman)

53. *I can't postpone it because of many reasons.* (2-professor to student).

54. *I must go.* (5-boss to worker)

The above examples include no specific reason or explanation. The excuses were very general and very unspecified which may not be convincing to the listener. For example, *I am busy...I have a problem ...I have to leave.. I have a serious reason. I can't do that for many reasons etc...* All these are unspecific explanations. The listener may interpret such vague excuses as lies or lack of seriousness. Tanck (2003) argues that non-native speakers also tend to offer unspecific explanations when making refusals whereas English native speakers offered specific explanations, such as: "I *have to pick up a friend at the airport...*" (I, b, pp: 12). She argues that "this lack of specificity can lead to the speaker being perceived as vague or secretive. In the student-professor context, such vagueness may seem disrespectful as if the student feels superior to the professor..." (Tanck, 2003, pp: 12).

4.2.3 Indirect refusals and politeness

Regardless whether the reasons or explanations given in refusals are specific or unspecific, their use signals that the refusers do care about their interlocutors' feelings, or 'face' in (Brown and Levinson's, 1987). That is, the refuser wants to reduce the force of his or her on the addressee and, therefore, uses reason, suggesting alternatives, or promising future acceptance as a further mitigation. In addition, adjuncts like, thanking, using names or name terms, aims at maintaining "balance and

harmony" between speakers and hearers (Leech, 1983). He also adds that the indirect speech acts are more polite because they increase the "degree of optionality". On the other hand, the use of direct refusals like: no, can't or I refuse, will signal that the refusal is disregarding the damage and offence which may result because of such strong refusal.

This study proved that the participants used more indirect strategies to express the message of refusals. See *Figure 2*.
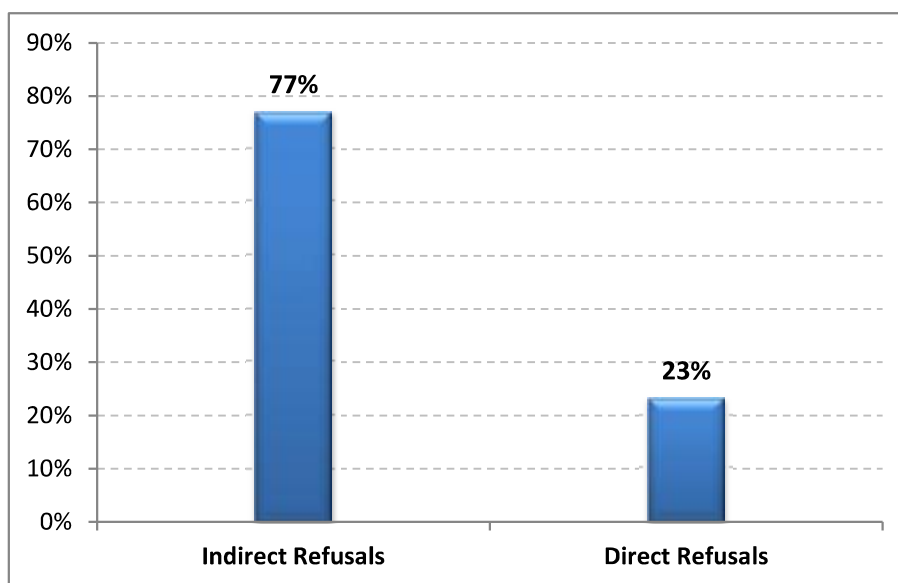
Figure 2: Distribution of direct and indirect refusals

Figure 2 shows that the participants preferred indirect refusals than direct. They used indirect refusals 70% which is very significant. the results show that more indirect refusals were used when talking to people of higher power. The explanation for this would be that the participants realized that refusals are always undesired by the hearers and might cause damage to the relationships between both, the speaker and the hearer. The use of indirect refusals will possibly make the refusals more convincing and yet acceptable.

4.2.4 Native speakers norms

This study revealed that *giving excuses* (reasons or explanations), expressing regret (*I am sorry*) and a statement of negative ability were the most common strategies used by the participants. American native speakers, according to Tanck (2002), used regret and alternatives in relatively most refusals. Tanck also argues that the two types of refusals, regret and alternatives are culturally and socially important in the American refusals. In this study, the participants used regret 19.58% only whereas American native speakers used it relatively in all refusals. In general, American native speakers of English used more expressions of regret and offers of alternatives compared to the participants in this study. In this study, the use of alternatives was very limited. It was only 3.36%.

4.2.5 Summary

The participants have used a wide variety of strategies to respond to requests initiated by the interlocutors. They used both direct and indirect strategies. Indirect strategies include: expressing excuse, giving alternative, expressing regret, promising future acceptance, setting conditions for future or past acceptance, etc. The most common refusal type or pattern was giving excuses and the second common one was expressing regret. Expressing negative willingness (*can't)* was the third most common type. The least familiar refusal type is the indirect refusal which is also called "mitigated refusal". Very few examples were identified as:

55. *I am a student, not a cleaner.* (1-student to professor).

56. *I don't think so.* (1-student to professor).

57. *Please, let me go, I am in a hurry.* (6-driver to policeman).

4.3 Research question two

The study was also planned to answer the second research question:

What is the effect of the social power, social distance and the weight of the imposition on the realization of the speech act of refusal by Palestinian senior English majors?

The results of this study indicated that the respondents varied their responses (refusals patterns) when dealing with people of higher, equal or lower power. The researcher classified the situations according to refusals made to higher, lower and equal power and put them in tables: 4, 5, and 6. Then he calculated the frequency of refusal patterns for each situation. The researcher grouped situations (2, 5, 7, and 3) together (table 5) because, in each, high power and status people were asked to make refusals to lower power interlocutors. Situations (1, 4, 6, and 8) were put together (see table 4) because they represent low power and status making refusals to high power interlocutors.
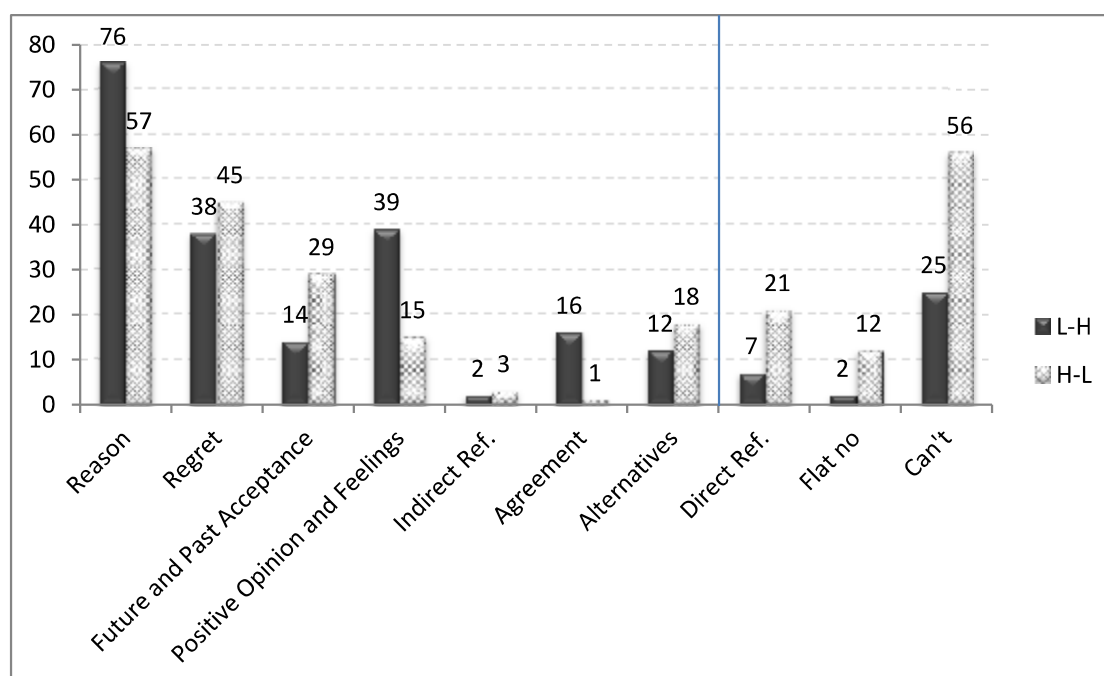

Figure 3: Refusals made according to power variable.

49

Table 4: English majors' refusals made to high power (L-H)

	Indirect refusal														Direct refusal					
	Reason		Regret		Future and Past Acceptance		Positive Opinion and Feelings		Indirect Ref.		Agreement		Alternatives		Direct Ref.		Flat no		Can't	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
-student-professor	14	18%	12	32%	1	7%	11	28%	1	50%	4	25%	3	25%	0	0%	0	0%	7	28%
-student-advisor	20	26%	10	26%	3	21%	7	18%	1	50%	5	31%	1	8%	4	57%	0	0%	7	28%
-driver-policeman	26	34%	7	18%	1	7%	8	21%	0	0%	4	25%	6	50%	2	29%	1	50%	5	20%
-worker-boss	16	21%	9	24%	9	64%	13	33%	0	0%	3	19%	2	17%	1	14%	1	50%	6	24%
Total	76	100%	38	100%	14	100%	39	100%	2	100%	16	100%	12	100%	7	100%	2	100%	25	100%

Table 5: English majors' refusals made by high power to low power (H-L).

	Indirect refusal														Direct refusal					
	Reason		Regret		Future and Past Acceptance		Positive Opinion and Feelings		Indirect Ref.		Agreement		Alternatives		Direct Ref.		Flat no		Can't	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
-professor-student	8	14%	10	22%	4	14%	2	13%	2	67%	1	100%	4	22%	9	43%	6	50%	11	20%
-boss-worker	21	37%	13	29%	14	48%	5	33%	0	0%	0	0%	2	11%	2	10%	1	8%	16	29%
-doctor-patient	14	25%	10	22%	0	0%	6	40%	1	33%	0	0%	2	11%	8	38%	5	42%	16	29%
-headmaster-teacher	14	25%	12	27%	11	38%	2	13%	0	0%	0	0%	10	56%	2	10%	0	0%	13	23%
Total	57	100%	45	100%	29	100%	15	100%	3	100%	1	100%	18	100%	21	100%	12	100%	56	100%

Table 6: *English majors' refusals made between equal power*

| | Indirect refusal | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Direct refusal | | | | | |
	Reason		Regret		Future and Past Acceptance		Positive Opinion and Feelings		Indirect Ref.		Agreement		Alternatives		Direct Ref.		Flat no		Can't	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
-friend-riend	23	53%	22	56%	1	10%	4	25%	1	100%	1	100%	1	25%	0	0%	0	0%	12	57%
0-lectuerer lecturer	20	47%	17	44%	9	90%	12	75%	0	0%	0	0%	3	75%	0	0%	0	0%	9	43%
Total	43	100%	39	100%	10	100%	16	100%	1	100%	1	100%	4	100%	0	0%	0	0%	21	100%

The results show that the respondents paid attention to the power variable. It seemed that social distance and the weight of imposition were of limited effect on the production and choice of the refusal patterns.

4.3.1 The use of direct strategies:

Three types of refusals are considered direct since each one expresses the refusal clearly and without any mitigation, i.e. the refusal is strong and clear. These strategies include:

1-directrefusal like: *I refuse or I don't accept that..*

.2-expressing negative ability such as: *I can't*. and

3- '*no*' which is the most direct and is also called flat 'No'.

To comment on refusals made to higher or lower power, the following points were noted:

1-Direct refusals such as 'I *refuse to do it*, or *I don't accept this'* were used more by higher power. They were used it 21 times; while, direct refusals were used less by lower power, only 7 times. That is to say, when making refusals to people of higher status/ power, less direct strategies were used. That is because people with low power, for example, students, drivers, patients, etc., tried to use more politeness when

interacting with higher power persons, for example, professors, boss, police officers, etc. The are some examples:

58. *"I refuse this suggestion" is a strong refusal* was made by professor to his student who wanted to postponing a test (situation 2)

59. *You must attend this planned operation.* (7-doctor to patient)

2- When making refusals to people of lower power and status, the respondents used more negative ability expressions *'can't".* *Table 4* shows that "can't" was used "56" times by high power interlocutors but was used "25" times by low power people. "Can't" was used more by professors, bosses, advisors, and doctors and was used less by students, patients, drivers, and teachers. The use of can't is considered part of the direct refusals. It is noted that "can't" was generally accompanied by other strategies like giving reasons or expressing regret, but in some situations the respondents preferred to use it alone. Examples are below:

60. *I can't do this.* (by a headmaster in response to a teacher who asked for a lesson plan, situation 3).

3- The use of most direct 'no' without any other strategies, i.e., (flat no) was used more by higher power interlocutors. Low power people used the flat 'No' only 2 times but higher power people like: professors, bosses, doctors, and headmasters used it 12 times. This enhances the assumption that lower power people tend to avoid strong refusals when refusing requests initiated by interlocutors like professors, police officers or doctors. See the examples below:

61. *of course not, no.* (in response to a patient who asked a doctor for postponing the planned operation, situation 7).

62. *I will say No.* (5-boss to worker).

63. *No, it is not possible at all.* (2- by a professor in response to a student asking for postponing a test).

It is noted that the "no" strategy was used more by doctors, professors, and police officers. The explanation for this is because they have the authority to impose upon others and always like to be obeyed. They just give directions and commands.

4.3.2 Indirect refusals.

In general, there was a tendency to use more indirect refusals when low power/ social position or status people are talking to higher power interlocutors. The explanation of these findings would be that people of lower power try to speak indirectly, thinking that direct strategies may cause damage to their relationships with their interlocutors. Also, indirect refusals can be interpreted as showing respect and appreciation to higher power interlocutors, especially advisors, boss or policemen. Al Eryani (2008, p: 96) argues that the "less use of direct refusal no or can't refers to the same perception of adopting polite strategies". The issue of power was very decisive as the study revealed. The participants tried to be as much polite with professors, doctors, police officers and headmaster as they can in an attempt to save the face of their interlocutors. So, it was found that some participants avoided using the flat 'no' or any direct form of refusals. They mitigated their refusals in many different ways. One participant said in response to his/her professor asking him to clean the office in situation 1:

64. *No, it is right that I am your student, but cleaning the office is not my job. Sorry, I can't."*(1-student to professor).

The above example shows how much the student respected the professor, the person of authority and high status (position). Although the respondent said 'no', but still keen to the issue of politeness because an explanation (cleaning *the office is not*

my job) was used, followed by an expression of regret (sorry) and then expressed his disability *(I can't)*. The student realizes that saying '*no*' alone would be very direct and possibly be inferred as lack of respect.

Concerning the indirect refusals, the following differences are noticed.

1- When comparing the results in *Table 4* with those in *Table 5*in terms of giving excuses (explanations), it was found that higher power people employ less excuses when refusing requests initiated by lower power. High power used reason 57 times as they refused requests initiated by students, patients, teachers or workers. On the other hand, lower power used reason 76 times. It is known that reasons in refusals function as downgraders and softeners. So, those how used more reasons tend to be more indirect in their refusals. This finding goes supports the point that low power are expected to be indirect when refusing higher power speakers.

2- 'Positive opinion and feelings' expressions were used 15 times by high power. By contrast, low power interlocutors used it 39 times. Positive remarks are like:

'I would like to',

'thank you very much'

' that is my pleasure'

Indeed, this study showed that higher power (status) persons used significantly less positive remarks when making refusals to less power interlocutors. This refusal types (also called adjuncts) is not an independent strategy by itself, but it is usually associated with other strategies like expressing regret or expressing negative willingness like saying: ' *Professor, I am sorry'* or *I can't, doctor..'*

3- What is striking in this study is that higher power people used more alternatives than lower power people. Alternatives were used more by doctors, bosses

professors, and head teachers. This contradicts the assumption that low power prefer indirect refusals and higher power generally refuse directly, bearing in mind that giving alternatives is considered as indirect refusal. Furthermore, high power also employed 'future and past acceptance' more than low power. The use of more alternatives and 'future and past acceptance' by high power is due to the point that they have the authority to make future arrangements.

4.3.3 Summary

People of lower position/ power employed more indirect refusal patterns like *giving reasons, positive opinion and feeling expressions, agreement,* while higher power employed more direct strategies such as: *no, can't,* and the direct refusals*(I don't agree.. I refuse...).* To add, as the study shows, lower power interlocutors tend to avoid explicit and strong refusals because such types of refusals are considered impolite and possibly harm the relationship between the students - professors, drivers - policemen, teacher - headmaster, and patient- doctors.

Relating to making refusals to equal power, the study showed that the preferred refusal patterns were giving reasons, and expressing regret. Table (6) shows the refusals patterns made by equal power status persons (9-friend to friend and 10- lecturer to his colleague).

It was found that the respondents varied their refusals according to power. More direct refusals were used by high power and more mitigation was used by lower power. The other two variables which are social distance and the weight of imposition had no significant effect on the choice of refusals. This finding does not deny that these two variables are of no effect. The respondents paid more attention to the power variable.

55

4.4 Research Question three

What is the effect of the participants' L1 (Arabic) in realizing the speech act of refusals?

The study examines the role of the learners' L1 (i.e. : Arabic) in shaping English refusals in the target language. Table (7) exhibits the type and frequency of refusals made by Arabic majors.

4.4.1 Types of refusals made by Arabic majors

Table 7: Arabic majors' refusals

Situations no. / types of refusals	Indirect									Direct			
	Reason	Regret	Future and Past Acceptance	Positive Opinion and Feelings	Religious terms	Agreement	Alternatives	Mitigated refusals	Statement of principle	Direct Ref.	Flat no	Inability (Can't)	
1-student-professor	19	11	0	2	0	2	0	5	1	8	1	9	
2-professor-student	12	9	1	1	1	1	4	4	2	7	1	16	
3-headmaster-teacher	9	14	1	1	0	0	18	6	0	3	0	14	
4student-adviser	23	12	1	1	2	2	1	4	1	2	2	10	
5-boss-worker	13	6	16	4	3	1	2	3	0	2	2	9	
6-driver-police	20	7	5	0	0	5	2	3	1	3	2	6	
7-doctor-patient	22	8	0	0	2	0	1	3	2	8	0	13	
8-worker-boss	27	17	1	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	17	
9-friend-friend	26	17	0	4	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	12	
10-lecturer-lecturer	25	23	6	3	5	0	6	0	0	1	0	16	
Frequency	196	124	31	19	16	10	35	29	11	36	9	122	
Percentage	30.72%	19.44%	4.86%	2.98%	2.50%	1.57%	5.49%	4.55%	1.72%	5.64%	1.41%	19.12%	100%

(Table 7) shows the following facts about refusals made by Arabic university majors. Knowing how Arabs refuse in Arabic and what types of refusals they would prefer can help us understand whether English majors transfer Arabic patterns when making refusals in English. The researcher found the following about refusals made by Arabic majors:

1- The most common refusal strategies were: (1) reason (30.72%), followed by (2) regret (19.44%), followed by (3) negative ability' can't' (19.12).These were the most frequent refusals. The following are some examples:

65. عذرا، لدي محاضرة، لا أستطيع.(10)(lecturer to lecturer)

Excuse me, I have a lecture, I can't.

66. لا أستطيع،اعذرني، لا يوجد لدي الوقت الكافي.(2)(professor to student)

I can't, excuse me, I don't have enough time.

67. أسف, لا استطيع مساعدتك, لأني لا اعرف اللغة الانجليزية. (3)(headmaster to teacher)

I sorry, I can't help you because I don't know English.

68. أنا لا أستطيع،المعذرة، اسأل شخص أخر.(3)(headmaster to teacher)

I can't, sorry, ask someone else.

69. أنا أسف، لا أستطيع ذلك الآن لأنه يوجد عندي ظرف معين.(9)(friend to friend)

I am sorry, I can't do it now because I have a special reason.

70. لا أستطيع لأنه لا يوجد لدي وقت كافي، لأني مضغوط بالعمل. (3)(headmaster to teacher)

I can't because I don't have enough time and I am so busy with my work.

71. أنا أود الذهاب معك، ولكن للأسف لا أستطيع ذلك. (10) (lecturer to lecturer)

I would like to go with you but, I am sorry, I can't.

72. عفوا، لا أستطيع، ليس من اختصاصي. (3)(headmaster to teacher)

Excuse me, I can't, this is not my work.

The above examples show that the participants include reasons (excuses), expressions of regret, and negative willingness in their refusals of the initiated requests. It should be noted that they used these three strategies interchangeably, i.e.: changing the order of the strategies, once putting an excuse at the beginning followed by an expression of regret or vice versa. They followed no specific order. They sometimes used the expression of regret at the beginning, middle or at the end. In general, the participants preferred: 1 regret, 2 negative ability (can't) and 3 giving reasons. However, they sometimes reversed the order.

Likewise, the results of the present study support Nelson, et al. (2002) who found that reason was the most common strategy used by their Egyptian subjects in expressing refusals to requests, accounting for 42% of the total strategies. The second most popular strategy was expressing negative ability at 15%.

2- The participants tended to avoid using simple direct refusals or 'no' alone. Instead, they tagged direct refusals with other refusal types such as giving alternatives, expressing regret, or providing an explanation. Here are some examples:

73. (1)(student to professor) ‫ارفض،أنا هنا لأدرس وليس لأعمل.‬

I refuse, I am here to study not to clean.

74. (6) (driver to policeman) ‫لا،اعذرني،أنا مشغول.‬

No, excuse me, I am busy.

75. (2)(professor to student)‫لا،ليس لدي الوقت الكافي.‬

No, your request is refused.

3- The participants were very keen on the issue of politeness when making refusals. In most cases, they used politeness strategies and positive terms to lessen the impact of their refusals on the interlocutors' face and hence keep good relationships

with them. For example, when making refusals to a doctor at a university to clean his office, the students refused by using one of these terms such as:

76. اعتذر، I apologize

77. اعتذر منك، I apologize to you

78. اعذرني Excuse me

79. عفوا مع كل الاحترام والتقدير لا أستطيع،(1) (student to professor)

Excuse me, with all due respect I can't

80. أسف، I am sorry

They also showed politeness with friends mainly in situations 9 and 10 they avoided direct refusals. Let's look at the following examples:

81. أنا أود الذهاب معك ولكن للأسف لا أستطيع. (10)(lecturer to lecturer)

I would like to go with you but, sorry, I can't.

82. إنشاء الله مرة ثانية. **(10)**(friend to friend) (May be next time, Allah willing)

83. والله ما بقدر لأنه ما في شحن. (9)(friend to friend)

I swear by Allah that I can't because the battery is low))

84. صديقي العزيز لا ارفض له طلب. (9)(friend to friend)

I don't refuse any request to my dear friend.

85. عذرا،أتمنى ذلك، ظروفي لا تسمح الآن، واعدك أن نلتقي في فرصة ثانية. (10) (lecturer to lecturer)

I am sorry, I wish I could. My conditions don't allow now. I promises we will meet another time.

In the above examples, the participants recognized in advance the impact of refusals on their interlocutors' face. So they included some expressions to lessen and minimize the negative effect of refusals by using polite expressions such as: excuse me, I wish I could, Allah willing, dear friend, and so on.

59

It should be noted that the purpose of collecting the refusals made by Arabic majors is to investigate whether pragmatic transfer exists or not by comparing the number of refusal strategies and the most preferred strategies used by both groups. The present study does not try to test if the Arabic majors change their refusals according to the three variables, i, e. power, social distance and weight of imposition. This can be done in another studies.

4-Because of culture which is rooted in Islam, the Arabic refusals included religious expressions like: Allah willing, and swearing by Allah. This could mean that refusals generally come contrary to the expectations of the one who initiated the requests. These expressions were used to show that the refusers were sincere and really could not do the requests.

5- What is particular in the refusal made by Arab students was the use of string of excuses and explanations, i.e.: the use of more than one excuse in each refusal. The following examples clarify that:

86. لا أحب حضور المؤتمرات وليس عندي وقت. (4)(student to advisor)

I don't like attending conferences, and I don't have time.

87. لا أستطيع،لأنه لا يوجد رصيد كافي،وأنا انتظر مكالمة حاليا. (9)(friend to friend)

I can't because I have low battery and I am waiting for a call.

The use of more than one explanation/ reason in a refusal formula was also noted in refusals made by English majors. This indicates that Arab learners of English are influenced by their Arabic culture norms.

4.4.2 Pragmatic transfer

In this section, a comparison is made between refusals made by both, Arabic majors and English refusals English majors. Let's see the following table which illustrates the frequency and percentage of refusal types (strategies) by both groups.

Table 8: Comparison between English and Arabic majors

	Refusal types (patterns)	Refusals by English majors (total responses: 623)		Refusals by Arabic majors (total responses: 638)	
		frequency	Percentage %	frequency	Percentage %
1-	Expression of excuse/explanation/reason	176	28.25%	196	30.72%
2-	Statement of regret (sorry)	122	19.58%	124	19.44%
3-	Negative ability (can't)	102	16.37%	122	19.12%
4-	Direct refusals (strong)	16	2.57%	36	5.64%
5-	alternative/suggestion	21	3.37%	35	5.49%
6-	Future or past acceptance	45	7.22%	31	4.86%
7-	Mitigated refusals (indirect)	6	.96%	29	4.55%
8-	Positive opinion/feelings	62	9.95%	19	2.98%
9-	Flat "no"	14	2.25%	9	1.41%
10-	Statement of agreement	18	2.89%	10	1.57%
12-	Religious terms	0	0%	16	2.5%

After displaying the types and strategies Arabs adopted in making refusals, one can detect whether Palestinian English majors refused requests similar to their Arabic majors or approximated the target language norms. Refusals made by Palestinian English majors were very similar to their L1's refusal conventions (to their Arabic majors counterparts). The most common strategies used by both groups were an reason, statement of regret, and expressing negative ability. English majors used excuses 28.25% whereas Arabic majors used the same pattern (giving excuses) 30.72%. In addition, the total number of refusal strategies used by both group were also very close; 623 for English majors and 638 for Arabic majors.

The following figure shows how close the refusal types/ strategies used by both English and Arabic majors. That is to say, both groups refuse similarly.
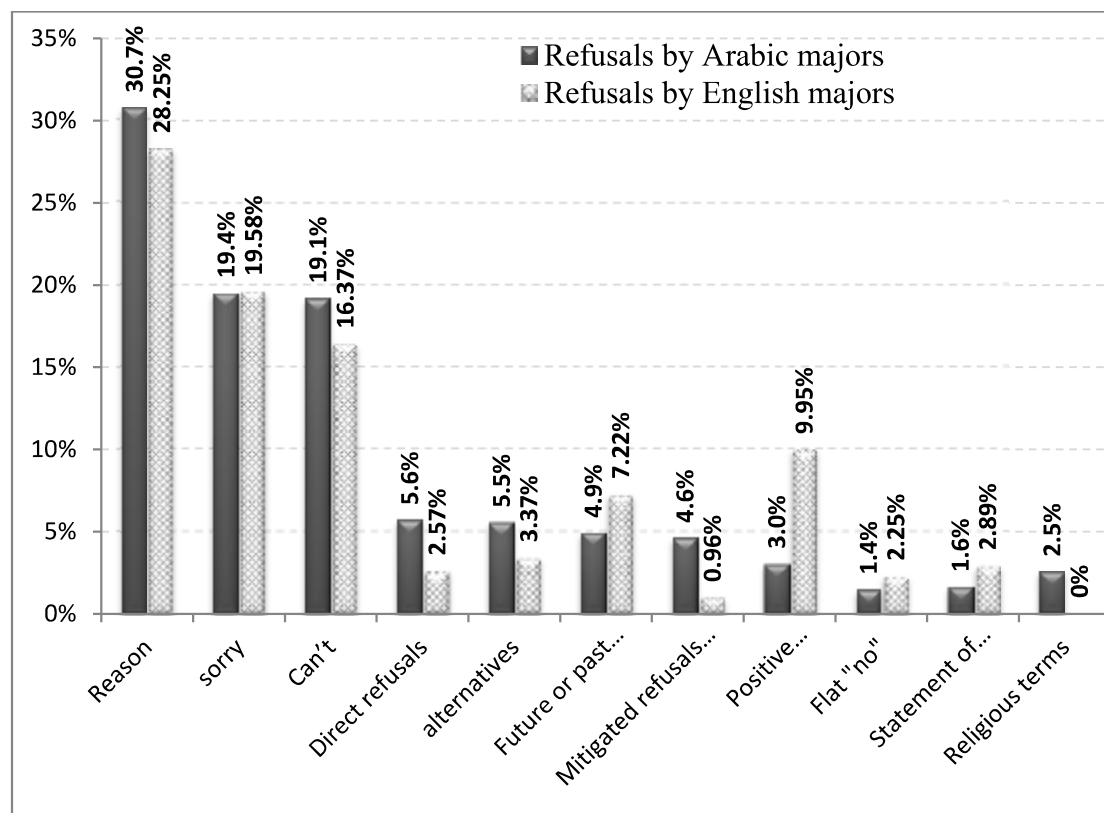

Figure 4: A comparison of refusals by both groups (Arabic and English majors)

It seems that both groups employed relatively the same refusal strategies with similar percentages. The English majors are close to the Arabic majors in making refusals. This means the Arabic majors are influenced by their L1's conventions of making refusals.

4.4.3 Summary

To conclude, the results obtained by comparing the refusals by both groups revealed that Palestinian learners of English were affected by their L1, Arabic, when they refuse in English. The common refusal strategy by both groups was: 1-an expression of excuse, 2-statement of regret, 3- a statement of negative ability. In contrast, American native speakers most common refusal strategies were:1- an

expression of regret, 2-an excuse, and 3-an offer of alternative (Tanck, 2002). Native speakers tend to use and express regret in most cases while non-native speakers used less expressions of regret and less offers of alternatives.

The similar refusals made by both groups can be attributed to the fact that English majors have been studying English apart from its culture. Students are not familiar with the speech norms and socio-cultural dimension of English. To support this point, I quote Tanck (2002) who argues that"pragmatic fluency is more likely acquired in the target language culture rather than one's first language culture" (p: 13). This point should be made clear to EFL teachers and material designers.

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this section, the researcher summarizes the findings of the study and how future research can get benefit of and build on this study. For example, researchers can use other instruments to get data and test other the variables to see if support could be found or not.

5.2 Conclusions of the study

The study concludes the following points:

1-The participants in the study, English majors used various strategies to make refusals. They rarely used one single strategy. They used a combination of strategies. However, the most popular refusals were: 1 expression of excuses or explanations, 2 statemnet of regret (I am sorry), and 3 statement of negative ability (I can't). The strategies were used in different order. That is to say, they would express negative ability followed by an expression of regret, or otherwise. The general tendency was to give a reason, an expression of regret and an expression of negative ability. Sometimes the order was inverted.

2- The participants varied their refusals according to the power/ social status and position of the interlocutors. More indirect strategies were used with higher power interlocutors.

3- The social distance between the speakers and the weight of imposition (high or low risk) were not strong conditioning factors that would affect the production and realization of refusals. It seems that the participants of this study were not affected by the variables like social distance and weight of imposition. It seems that they failed to

notice the relationships between the interlocutors., i.e.: whether distant or familiar. Their focus was on the status (power) of the interlocutors in the given situations.

4- The English refusals, in this study, were similar to those made in the Arabic culture. That is to say, the participants resorted to their native language (Arabic) by transferring the refusal conventions from Arabic and applying them to the target language, English. This kind of transfer is referred to as 'pragmatic transfer' (Beebe, Takahashi, &Uliss-Weltz, 1990: 56). That is to say, the kind of refusals made by English majors will sound strange by the English native speakers which possibly leads to miscommunications or, in certain cases, to breakdown of communication.

5- Because the speech act of refusal is face-threatening, the participants used various strategies to mitigate the impact on their interlocutors' face. For example, they generally avoided using direct refusals and when direct refusals were used, they accompanied them with other strategies like expressing regret or giving reasons.

6- Although the refusals made by English majors in this study were different from those made by English native speakers, the refusals made by Arabic majors were similar to those found by Al-Eryani's study (2008) whereby Yemeni Arabic native speakers preferred indirect refusals than direct ones. Hussein (1995) also found that Arabs, in general, used indirect refusals with people they know like friends and acquaintance. These findings are in agreement with the notion that "indirectness is one of the defining characteristics of Arabic communication style" (Cohen, 1987, as cited by Nelson et al, 2002).

5.3 Suggestions and recommendations

This study shows that EFL learners' refusals in Palestine differ from those made by English native speakers. It is important that EFL learners have to know how to produce and interpret various speech acts appropriately in real life interactions.

Otherwise, they may be perceived as rude, not cooperative, or, in most extreme cases, impolite. Learners of English should be taught how to apologize, make complaints, requests, advise, compliments, refusals, etc...

Here are some suggestions that will hopefully improve the EFL learners performance of speech acts.

1- EFL learners should be provided with relevant materials in making refusals to become more competent in performing the routine speech acts needed for successful interactions with English native speakers. Teachers should provide and encourage explicit instructions of those speech acts (Al-Eryani, 2008, pp: 96). Such instructions would be very helpful because EFL learners have few opportunities to communicate with English native speakers so that they can learn from them the intended speech act.

2- Teachers (in the EFL context) and syllabus designers are advised to include materials and design situations where important speech acts are introduced. For example, they can use the research results to explain how native speakers make refusals to higher, equal, and lower interlocutors.

3- Kasper (1984) suggests that learners of English should know the 'extra-linguistic and cultural constraints' that would affect the production of the routine speech acts. In other words, learners of English must be familiar with those social variables like power, social distance, age, gender, culture and social position, among others, which are important factors in making refusal. For example, Tanck (2002) says that giving unspecified answers or lack of details when refusing a request by a peer would be interpreted as 'unfriendly'.

The above recommendations are to enhance and improve the EFL's socio-cultural competence. Otherwise, their inappropriate refusals, or any other speech act, will make them look vague, rude, abrupt, or, in most extreme cases, impolite.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

This study adopted a DCT instrument for collecting data. Others argue in favor of using data obtained from real-life situations. Unfortunately, this way is time consuming and may not represent the real data.

The study did not look at gender, age, level of education, the speakers cultural background, etc which may show variations in strategies. Besides, one can investigate the language proficiency of the EFL learners because low English language proficiency may prefer direct refusals (Nelson, et, al, 2002)

The researcher suggests that the future studies will take in account the other variables which this study has over looked, such as: age, level of education, gender, etc.. Also future studies are hoped to get natural data and use a larger sample of participants so that generalizations can be made safely.

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Appendix 1

Please read the following 10 situations carefully. After each situation you will be asked to write a response in the given space. Respond as you would be in real conversation.

1- *You are a student studying English at a Palestinian university. A professor, whom you have known for a long time, asks you to clean his office. What would you say to him? ……………………………………………………………………………………..*

2- *You teach at a university. One of your students asks you to postpone a test for the following week. You can't accept this. What would you say to him?*
……………………………………………………………………………………..

3- *You are a head master at a high school. ?A newly appointed English teacher wants you to show him how to make a lesson plan for grade eight. It is beginning of the year and you are very busy. You can't help him. What would you say to him? ………………………………………………………………………………*

4- *You are a senior student at a university and your advisor wants you to attend a conference at the university. You are busy and can't attend. What would you say to him?..*

5- *You are the boss in a company. One of your best workers asks for a high raise in his salary. Your company is facing a financial problem. You can't approve this request. What would you say to him?*
…………………………………………………………………………….

6- *While driving your car to work, a policeman stops you and asks for your driving license. You are in a hurry and can't waste any time. What would you say to him?..*

7- *You are a doctor at a Palestinian hospital. A patient asks you to postpone the operation which is scheduled for him. Of course, you can't approve the request. What would you say to him?* ……..………………………………………………………

8- *You are a new worker ina company. The boss wants to talk to you about how to finish a particular task. You have to leave soon. What would you say to him?* …………………………………………………………………………………………..

9- *Your best friend asks to use your mobile phone for a while. You cannot let him/her do that for a reason. What would you say?* …………………………………………………………………………………..

10- *You are a lecturer at a college. The workload is very heavy and you are under a lot of stress. One of your colleague wants to talk to you over lunch but you are tired and don't have time. What would you say to him?* ………………..……………………………………………

Appendix 2

The Arabic version of the questionnaire (DCT)

اقرأ هذه المواقف الآتية ثم اجب عن كل منها.

1- أنت طالب في جامعة فلسطينية. طلب منك أحد مدرسي الجامعة أن تساعده في تنظيف مكتبه. ماذا تقول له,علما انك تعرفه جيدا ؟ ....

2- أنت تدرس في جامعة وطلب منك أحد طلابك أن تؤجل امتحانا للأسبوع القادم. أنت لا تستطيع ذلك. كيف ترد؟ ....

3- أنت مدير في مدرسة وطلب منك أحد معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية أن توضح له كيف يعد خطة دراسية للصف الثامن. أنت لا تستطيع مساعدته. ما الذي تقوله له علما أنكلا تعرفه جيدا؟

....

4- أنت طالب جامعي وطلب منك أستاذك أن تحضر مؤتمرا في الجامعة. لست متحمسا لذلك. ماذا تقول له؟

....

5- أنت مسؤول في شركة استيراد وتصدير. يطلبأحد موظفي الشركة زيادة في راتبه. أنت تعلم أن الشركة تواجه مشكلات مالية حادة. ماذا تقول لهذا الموظف؟

....

6- أثناء قيادتك السيارة ذاهبا إلى العمل طلب منك شرطي مرور اقاف السيارة وإبراز رخصة السيارة. ليس لديك وقت ولا تستطيعفعل ذلك. ماذا تقول له؟

....

7- أنت طبيب في إحدى المستشفيات الفلسطينية. أراد أحد المرضى أن تؤجل له العملية إلى الأسبوع القادم علما بأن العملية مقررة لهذا اليوم. أنت لا تستطيع فعل ذلك كطبيب. فماذا تقول له؟

....

8- أنت موظفجديد في شركة للاستيراد والتصدير. طلب منك رئيس الشركة أن تبقى في العمل وقتا إضافيا لمناقشة أمور تتعلق بالشركة. أنت لا تستطيع بأي حال من الأحوال بان تبقى وقتا إضافيا. ماذا تقول له؟

....

9- صديقك العزيز يطلب منك استخدام هاتفك النقال. أنت لا تستطيع ذلك لسبب من الأسباب. ما الذي تقوله له؟

....

10- أنت محاضر في جامعة ولديك الكثير منك الواجبات. طلب من أحد زملائك أن تذهب معه لتناول طعام

الغداء. أنت لا تستطيع فعل ذلك ٍ فكيف ترد؟

....

شكرا لكم على تعاونكم