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# **A Linguistic Study of Refusal Strategies Used by Advanced Iraqi Learners of English**

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## **Abstract:**

This study focuses on investigating what strategies advanced Basra learners of English as a foreign language employ to express refusals in English. It addresses two questions related as to whether the participations in question follow the same English strategies classified by Beebe and others. (1990) or not, as well as the impact of the gender factor on these strategies. The study has made use of a modified written discourse completion test (DCT) comprising of eight situations. The participants are required to provide written data to express their refusals to these situations. The data gathered have been descriptively analyzed according to the content, frequency and order of semantic formulas used by Beebe et al. (ibid). In order to arrive at statistical results, the percentage of the most frequently used strategies was counted. The findings indicate that advanced Basra learners tend to use more expressions of regret followed by excuses/ reasons/ explanations. Most often, they have avoided refusal with “no” except in few cases where it is, also,

followed by excuses or explanations. With the exceptions of some differences and variances, it has been found that the strategies used by female participants were not very much different from those followed by the males.

## دراسة لغوية لصيغ الرفض كما يستخدمها متعلموا اللغة الإنكليزية في جامعة البصرة

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### الملخص:

تركز هذه الدراسة عمى معرفة الصيغ التي يستخدمها متعلموا اللغة الانكليزية في جامعة البصرة عند التعبير عن الرفض باللغة الانكليزية حيث تحاول الباحثة من خلال هذه الدراسة الاجابة عن سؤالين اولهما هل ان المشتركين في الاختبار يتبعون الاستراتيجيات ذاتيا في اللغة الانكليزية وكما صنفتها Beebe واخرون (١٩٩٠)، وثانيهما هل هنالك اي تاثير لجنس المشترك ذكار كان ام انثى على محتوى المعنى لهذه الصيغ. وقد تم الاعتماد على اختبار اكمال الخطاب المكتوب والمعروف اختصارا ب DCT مع اجراء بعض التعديلات البسيطة عليه. وتضمن هذا الاختبار ثمانية مواقف: اثنان للطلب واثنان للعرض واثنان للدعوة ومثلهما للاقتراح. تم تحليل النتائج احصائيا واستخراج النسبة المئوية لكل صيغة كما اجاب عليها المشتركون. وكانت النتيجة التي توصلت اليها الدراسة الى ان متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية في

جامعة البصرة يستخدمون الصيغ التي تعبر عن الاعتذار أكثر من غيرها من الصيغ يتبعها تعابير الاعتذار أو الأسباب أو التبريرات التي توضح رفضهم لموقف معين وغالبا ما يتجنبون الرفض المباشر (لا) أو (كلا) ماعدا في حالات قليلة جدا يتبعها تبرير للرفض أيضا. وبغض النظر عن بعض الاختلافات توصلت الدراسة الى عدم وجود اختلافات كبيرة بين اجابات الذكور والاناث .

Speech acts of refusal, in general, are minimal and functional units of discourse communication (Searl, 1969; Cohen, 1995, as cited in Nelson et al., 2002: 42) and often necessitate indirect strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1978:56), and that is why they are selected to be the data of this study. They are considered as "one of the central issues of intercultural communication" because of the various functions they perform in discourse (Phuong, 2006: 2). According to Beebe et al. (opcit, 56), refusals are a major "sticking point" for non-native speakers and are complex in nature. Yamagashira (2001: 260) describes the speech acts of refusals as a "sensitive pragmatic task" simply because interlocutors, in performing refusals, use indirect strategies in order not to offend each other. In doing so, as Yamagashira contends, interlocutors may use different forms and contents in the situation they are involved in. Misunderstanding may occur if non-native speakers fail to perform a refusal in the foreign language because they will depend upon their native language strategies which might be different from those of the foreign language.

A great number of studies has been carried out to investigate the speech acts of refusals ([carla.acad.umn.edu/speechacts/refusals/ref.html](http://carla.acad.umn.edu/speechacts/refusals/ref.html)). One of the most significant studies was conducted by Beebe

et al. (1990) who investigated differences and similarities between Japanese speaking Japanese, Japanese speaking English, and American English speakers.

The findings of their study showed that there were significant differences between Japanese and American in the order, frequency, and content of the semantic formulas in refusals. A semantic formula is described as "the means by which a particular speech act is accomplished, in terms of the primary content of an utterance, such as a reason, an explanation, or an alternative" (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1991:48). For instance, in the case of refusing a request for buying a toy for a daughter "Sorry honey, I can't buy it because it is not fit for your age. I'll buy you another one," the formula comprises of (regret) + (excuse) + (alternative). According to this system, the direct formulas were either performative (I refuse), nonperformative (No), or statements of negative willingness (I can't), as listed below. Performatives are "self-naming utterances, in which the performative verb usually refers to the act in which the speaker is involved at the moment of speech" (Leech, 1983: 215), for example, (I refuse your suggestion). Non-performative statements can be expressed with "no" as direct refusal, or negative willingness such as using "not" or any other word that semantically negates an utterance, such as "can't". Beebe et al. (1990), in their study, also took the social status and the social distance between interlocutors into consideration. Felix-Brasdefer (2003) compared the refusal strategies made by native speakers of Mexican Spanish, native speakers of American English, and advanced learners of Spanish as a foreign language in six different situations. The results indicated that

non-native learners' strategies were different from native speakers' in frequency, content, and perception.

To account for the complexity of the speech acts of refusing, Hudson (2001) reported, in a study to assess pragmatic competence of Japanese learners of English as a second language, that refusals appeared to be more difficult to perform than apologies and requests. Similarly, in studies focused on patterns of speech act development,

refusals seem to develop more slowly than other speech acts as requests (Trosborg, 1995; House, 1996; Barron, 2003; Barron Wurga, 2007).

Among the several studies on Arabic, Stevens (1993) used a written DCT comprising 15 situations: 8 requests and 7 offers/ invitations to study Arabic and English refusals. The results Stevens arrived at indicated that Arab and English speakers followed many similar strategies. Another study was conducted by Al- Shalawi (1997) who studied the types of the semantic formulas used by Saudi and American students in refusing requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. The results of this study showed no significant differences between the two groups; they used the same semantic formulas. The only difference arrived at was the number and content of the semantic formulas which reflected cultural differences between the two communities.

AL-Issa (1998) investigated refusal strategies using a written DCT made by Jordanian Arab speakers and Americans. His findings showed that Jordanians made use of regret statements (e.g. I'm sorry) more than their American counterparts. Both groups, however, followed their strategies with reasons and explanations.

## **1.1. Objective and Methodology of the Study**

### **1.1.1. Objective of the study**

As previously mentioned, this study is limited to investigate English refusal strategies as used by advanced Basra learners of English. Its main objective is addressed in the following questions:

1- As non-native speakers of English, do Basra advanced learners use English strategies, without the interference of Arabic, in their refusing English situations?

2- Are there any differences in the strategies used by female and male learners?

### **1.1.2. Methodology of the Study**

#### **1.1.2.1. Participants**

Thirty eight Iraqi advanced learners of English participated in this study. All participants were undergraduate students at the second year, Dept. of English, College of Arts, University of Basra. Their age ranged from 18 to 25 years old, 21 females and 17

#### **Data Collection**

The data for the present study were collected depending on a modified discourse completion test (DCT) used by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986), Beebe et al. (1990), Ikoma and Shimura (1994), Chen (1996) and others. The test included (8) situations (Appendix A) that required certain refusal strategies. The situations were divided into two requests, two invitations, two suggestions, and two offers. The situations were the same in the two groups, females and males, except a little difference regarding the gender of the speaker in the situations. For example, in the first situation, a daughter, in the case of females, requests her mother to buy her an expensive toy while both of them are doing some shopping. In the case of males, a son asks his father to buy him a video-game

device also during their doing some shopping together. Another change was made in situation (2): the city where the respondent was having a holiday in both female and male situations was changed from Hawaii to London. Situation (7) was slightly modified.

The original involves a situation in which a friend of the respondent borrows 25 pounds while in the modified one the pounds are changed into dinars. The aim behind such changes was to make the respondents imagine as if they were in that situations.

### **1.1.2.2. Procedures**

The current study uses a written modified version of DCT. The (8) situations of the DCT were printed and distributed to participants. Each participant got two pages where every four situations were printed on one page. The participants were divided into two groups: males and females so that the researcher could find out whether or not there was any effect in changing the gender of the initiator on both groups. Before running the test, the researcher explained what is meant by refusal introducing the participants to direct and indirect refusals.

Instructions were read aloud to participants. These instructions included explaining what was required from the participants. Then, they were asked to read every situation carefully and then refuse it depending on their linguistic and pragmatic competence. They were asked, too, to respond by writing their refusals in the blank below each situation. The time of the test was one hour.

## **2. Data Analysis**

The refusal strategies gathered in this study were analyzed in line with the semantic formula used by Beebe et al. (1990), Chen (1996) and others. Following Beebe et al.'s classification (1990:7273), the data were



analyzed according to the content, frequency, and order of the semantic formula. The content could be one of the strategies listed below.

In order to account for the frequency of formulas, the number of each strategy was calculated. Statistically, the percentage of every strategy was counted. In addition, the formulas have been classified as direct and indirect. Beebe et al.'s classification, also, includes adjuncts which are expressions that accompany refusals, but cannot not be used by themselves to stand as refusals. The original classification of refusals is listed as follows (Beebe et al., 1990) (The strategies that are not used by the participants were omitted):

### **I. Direct:**

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

B. Non-performative statement e.g.:

1. "No"

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

### **II. Indirect**

A. Statement of regret (e.g., ,,,"I'm so sorry.")

B. Wish (e.g. I wish I can do it for you)

C. Excuse/reason/explanation (e.g., "I have other plans." "I'm going to be studying until late tonight.")

D. Statement of alternative:

1. I can do X instead of Y

2. Why don't you do X instead of Y

E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "Oh, if I'd checked my e-mail earlier, I wouldn't have made other plans")

F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., ,,,"I'll do it next time"; "let's make it another day")

G. Statement of principle (e.g., ,,,"I don't believe in fad dieting.")

- H. Statement of philosophy (e.g. Help one, help all)
- I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
  - 1. Threat/statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g. If you don't see me then, you will miss out.)
  - 2. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (e.g., ,,Who do you think you are?)
  - 3. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., That's okay; don't worry about it." " )
- J. Avoidance:
  - a. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g. Borrow money?)
  - b. Postponement (e.g., ,,I need to think about it." " )

### **Adjuncts to Refusals**

- 1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (I'd love to)
- 2. Statement of empathy (e.g., ,,While I appreciate..)
- 3. Gratitude/appreciation (e.g., ,,Thanks." " )

Because the researcher could not gather any English strategies made by native speakers of English due to the unavailability of native samples, the strategies made by advanced Basra learners were compared to the English strategies classified by Beebe et al. (1990).

### **3. Analysis and Discussion**

The content, frequency, and order of the semantic formulas as well as the similarities and differences between the strategies used by male and female respondents have been set for each situation as follows:

#### **3.1. Refusal of Requests**

To begin with, the first situation in the DCT requires the respondents' refusal of a request made by a daughter/son to her/his mother/father, as previously

mentioned. The second situation requires the respondent to imagine herself/himself in London where s/he meets a taxi driver. After showing the respondent around the city and using his own mobile phone to contact a friend of the respondent, the taxi driver asks for double the taxi fare for his extra services. Respondents were asked to refuse this request. The results were 76 refusal strategies of the two situations of requests. It has been found that females' direct refusal with "no" was rarely used while many such cases could be detected in males' refusals. Females have, instead, used many expressions of regret together with much detail to express a set of refusal. The semantic formula (regret) + (reason/ explanation) has been found the most recurrent refusal strategy used by both groups of respondents to refuse requests.

To exemplify, a female respondent refuses her daughter's request beginning with a statement of regret followed by two reasons to explain her refusal (the refusal made by a female is referred to as (F) and that made by a male as (M) at the end of the example together with the number of the respondent assigned by the researcher):

1) I'm sorry, daughter, but I cannot buy it now because it is so expensive and I need the money to buy important things. (F2)

The maximum order of the semantic formula was no more than (3). However, the order varies from one respondent to another. There have been many other semantic formulas used by respondents, but with lower frequency. For instance,

the formula (non-performative statement) + reason/explanation) has been used (6) times, and (statement of condition) + (promise) has been only used once. The frequency and order of the semantic

formulas used by females are shown in the following table:

**Table (1): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Females' Refusal of Requests**

Order of Formula		
1	2	3
regret of Statement (43)	-reason/explanation (20) -negative consequence (1)	-Statement of alternative (6) - Promise (5)
Set condition for future acceptance (1)	promise (1)	-----
Nonperformative statement (6)	reason/explanation (6)	-----
Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (1)	criticize the requester (1)	-----
Reason (1)	negative willingness (3)	-----
Pause filler (1)	Nonperformative (1)	-----

Male respondents, on the other side, have produced more strategies with different frequencies and orders. Strategies beginning with adjuncts as gratitude, pause filler (well) or (Oh) and (performative statements "no") were only used once by females in refusing requests. Similarly, strategies that involved threat and attack or insult were never manipulated by female respondents.

**Table (2): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Males' Refusal of Requests**

Order of Formula			
1	2	3	4
Positive willingness(3)	-non-performative statement (3) -reason (3) - performative (1)	negative consequence (3) ----- reason (1)	explanation (3) ----- -----
Nonperformative statement (6)	-reason (3) - performative statement (1) ----- -criticize the request/requester (2)	----- -reason (1)  -negative consequence (2) -threat (2)	----- ----- reason (2) -----
Regret (4)	-excuse/reason (1) - nonperformative - criticize the request/requester(1) -negative willingness (1)	----- -reason (1) ----- -negative consequence (1)	----- -promise (1) ----- -----
Gratitude (2)	-regret (1) -criticize the request (1)	-negative willingness (1) -negative willingness (1)	-reason (1) -----
Pause filler (1)	-regret (2)	-excuse/reason (2)	-----

Order of Formula			
1	2	3	4
Criticize the request/ requester (1)	-threat (3)	-attack (4)	-----

Considering the data and the two tables above, the researcher has arrived at the fact that both female and male respondents have conveyed refusals of requests in a way that combines refusals and explanations or reasons. In the second situation of requests, a male respondent refuses to pay a taxi driver a double fare by saying:

2) No, I refuse that because this is not your fare, it's too much and I don't have enough money. (M8) Thus, the most frequently used semantic formula is (excuse/reason/ explanation).

### **3.2. Refusal of Offers**

In the first situation of offer, a classmate offers the respondent to have lunch together but the latter has to leave college early to go through her/his project, and thereby refuses the offer. The second situation requires the respondent's refusal of a professor's offer to have a discussion late Sunday afternoon at the time when the respondent has to pick up a friend from the airport. Predominantly, two types of formulas were used by both groups of respondents, females and males, and almost in the same order. Most respondents have begun their refusals to offers with either (regret) + (excuse) + (explanation/ reason), or (non-performative statements) + (reason/ explanation). These types are illustrated in

the following examples. Example (3) is provided by one of the female respondents:

- 3) I'm really sorry, (statement of regret)  
I have a busy day (excuse)  
Because I have a hard project (explanation/  
reason) (F6)

A male respondent has followed the same formula in the same situation:

- 4) I'm sorry, (statement of regret)  
I have to go now (excuse)  
I have another appointment (explanation/reason)

The other formula is found in the following:

- 5) I can't go with you, (non-performative  
statement) Because I have a lot of homework  
today (reason/explanation) (F14)  
No, (non-performative statement) I am very  
busy now (reason/ explanation) (M7)

Once again, the most frequent and preferable formula for the participants in this study is (regret) + (explanation/ reason). Also, respondents have frequently given reasons or explanations following expressions such as wish and gratitude. sometimes, they have used only reasons to express refusals. Nearly (3) male respondents preferred to use only (reason) in the first position with no other formulas. Tables (3) and (4) below show the frequencies and orders of the semantic formulas used in refusing offers by female and male respondents respectively:

**Table (3): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Females' Refusal of Offers**

<b>Order of Formula</b>		
1	2	3
regret (30)	explanation/ reason (30) reason	----- alternative (3)
Nonperformative (4)	explanation/reason (4)	-----
Wish (2)	explanation (2)	-----
Positive willingness (2)	explanation (2)	-----
Request (1)	reason (1)	-----
Pause filler (4)	Nonperformative (4)	
Performative (1)	Reason (1)	

**Table (4): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Males' Refusal of Offers**

<b>Order of Formula</b>		
1	2	3
Regret (7)	excuse/reason (4) nonperformative statement of principle (1)	reason (1) reason (1) -----
Nonperformative (4)	reason (3) performative	----- reason (1)



Order of Formula		
1	2	3
Gratitude (4)	excuse/explanation (3) wish (1)	----- statement of principle (1)
reason (3)	-----	-----

### 3.3. Refusal of invitations

With respect to the first situation in which the respondent had to imagine himself/ herself as a top executive at a very large firm refusing an invitation from his/ her boss to attend a party one Sunday, the order (regret) followed by (reason/ explanation) has been found as the most frequent formula used by females. In contrast, males have begun with (gratitude) or (positive willingness) followed by (reason/ explanation). Male respondents have, also, made use of an additional range of formulas comprising of (pause filler) + ( negative willingness) +(reason), whereas female respondents exploited (wish) +(non-performative) as the following responses demonstrate:

7) I'm sorry, (regret) but I promised to attend my friend's wedding next Sunday.

(reason/ explanation) (F10)

8) That's very kind of you, (gratitude) but my wife is ill. (reason) (M1)

9) Well,(pause filler) I am not coming. (negative willingness) My brother will get married next Sunday. (reason) (M2)

10) I wish I will (wish) but I can't. (non-performative) (F24) In the next situation of invitation, a friend invited the respondent to dinner. The latter could not stand his/her friend's fiancé, and thus refused the invitation. The data collected showed that most of

female respondents, nearly (30) out of (42) have expressed (regret) + (reason/ explanation) and almost (3) used (non-performative) + (reason/ explanation) and (6) used (wish) followed by non-performative statements. Very few females have begun with gratitude. In turning down the invitation, male refusers, (11) out of (17) used the formula (gratitude) most often followed by a combination of other sets of formulas, such as (reason), (negative willingness), (non-performative), and ended with (reason).

11) I'm really sorry my dearest friend, (regret) but you know I can't stand your fiancé. (nonperformative) I'm really sorry for saying that but I shouldn't come. (reason/ explanation). (F23)

12) Thank you very much to invite me to dinner, (gratitude) but I am very much busy because I have a work in the supermarket at night. (reason) (M4)

The most interesting finding in the refusals of these situations was that female refusers have not exceeded two sets of order of semantic formula, while male refusers utilized three orders as a maximum. The following two tables illustrate these results.

**Table (5): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Females' Refusal of**

Order of Formula	
1	2
Regret (30)	reason/explanation (30)
Wish (6)	nonperformative (6)
Nonperformative (3)	reason/explanation (3)
Statement of alternative (2)	-----
Positive willingness (10)	Excuse/explanation (1)

**Table (6): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Males' Refusal of Invitations**

Order of Formula		
1	2	3
Gratitude (8)	reason (8) negative willingness (2) nonperformative(1)	----- reason (2) reason (1)
pause filler (3)	negative willingness (1) negative willingness (1)	gratitude (1) reason (2)
Nonperformative (3)	performative (1) gratitude (1)	reason (1) reason (2)

### 3.4. Refusal of Suggestions

Examining the refusals of suggestions, the researcher has found out that the same set of semantic formula used by respondents in refusing the previous situations of requests, offers, and invitations: (regret)+ (reason/explanation) has been manipulated more than other formulas. Refusing the first situation of suggestion, in which a respondent had to refuse the suggestion of a friend who borrowed 25 thousand dinars from the respondent and two weeks later suggested to return only 15 to the respondent, about (10) out of (21) female refusers have employed the same formula mentioned above with the same order. The other most frequent formulas were (non-performative "I can't" or "no") + (reason/ explanation)

+ (negative consequence/ statement of principle) and (gratitude) + (explanation) + (alternative).

13) Sorry (regret)

but I am in need for the 25 thousand dinar for the phone bill (reason/ explanation). (F9)

14) No, I can't accept that (non-performative statement) I want my money back I'm in a disaster (reason/ explanation). (F8)

15) I don't take it until you complete it. (negative willingness) (F21)

Similarly, these three formulas have been found out as the mostly used ones in the second situation of suggestion where respondents were prompted to make a refusal to a suggestion of a friend who suggested trying a new diet.

16) Thanks (gratitude)

I don't like to try a new diet (reason/ explanation)

I am trying a good diet (alternative). (F13)

**Table (7): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Females' Refusal of Suggestions**

Order of Formula		
1	2	3
Regret (14)	explanation reason/ (10) nonperformative statement of principle (4)	----- negative consequence (4) -----
Gratitude (3)	reason/explanation	alternative (6)
Non-performative (11)	Reason/ explanation (12)	-----
Performative (1)	Threat (2)	-----

Order of Formula		
1	2	3
Negative willingness (3)	-----	-----
of Statement principle (2)	Gratitude (4)	
Pause filler (2)	Nonperformative (1)	Reason (2)

Male refusers, on the other hand, were distinguished by their mostly used formulas as (non-performative) followed by either (reason), (performative) + (reason) + (threat), or (gratitude) + (reason), as well as (criticize the suggestion) in combination with (attack) + (threat) in both situations though with different frequencies. They, also, employed other semantic formulas beginning with (statement of principles), or (positive/negative willingness), and ending with (excuse/reason) as shown in table (8) below. Refusing the first situation, one of the male refusers performed the following:

17) No, I refuse your suggestion, (non-performative statement) I need my money, (excuse) and you are too late to repaying my money (criticize the initiator of the suggestion) I want all my money! (threat) (M8)

In the next situation, another refuser wrote the following: 18) I would like that so much my friend, (positive willingness) but I am very full. (excuse/ reason) (M9)

**Table (8): Frequency and Order of Semantic Formula of Males' Refusal of Suggestions**

Order of Formula			
1	2	3	4
Non-performative (7)	Reason (3) Performative Performative Gratitude	----- Reason (2) Reason Reason (1)	----- ----- Threat (1)
Statement of principle (1)	Request (1) Negative willingness(1)	----- -----	----- -----
the Criticize suggestion (1)	Attack (1)	Threat (1)	-----
Gratitude (1)	Statement principle of (1)	Reason (2)	-----

As a final analysis, the percentage of the most frequent strategy was counted. It was found out that the strategy (regret)+ (reason)+ (explanation) the highest in percentage as illustrated in the following table:

**Table (9): The Percentages of the Most Frequent Strategies**

Strategy	The Percentage %
Regret+reason+explanation	38.3%
Non-performative+ reason/ explanation	17.5%
Positive willingness+nonperformative+ reason	6.2%
Gratitude+reason/explanation	7 %
Negative willingness+ reason	3.75 %

#### 4. Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the data analyzed in the current study. First of all, the frequent use of the strategy (statement of regret) + (reason/ explanation) by both male and female participants indicates their carefulness in expressing refusals. Besides, the reasons and explanations that follow their "regret" prove their unwillingness to use direct refusals exemplified by "no". This can be attributed to the influence of the Arab communication nature which encourages indirectness in style to soften the effect of refusals and avoid embarrassment. To put it differently, the participants in question have followed their refusals by excuses, reasons, or explanation in order to keep away from offending their conversant as well as to rationalize their acts of refusing. Besides, making various comments in refusing a situation indicates that respondents were aware that the longer the utterance the more attending to the „face“ of an interlocutor and the more polite they would be.

Moreover, the combination of sets of formulas (excuse/reason/ explanation) is not only used with statements of regret, but also with other formulas.

Again, this is an extra proof of face-saving acts as counterpart of face-threatening act. As for adjuncts, the researcher concluded a preference of pause fillers (e.g. "well" and "oh") and expressions of gratitude.

Regarding the effect of the gender factor on using refusal strategies, it is concluded that female refusers have utilized more semantic strategies than males. The latter, however, used more orders than females. Although some minor modification was made to some situations especially making similar or opposite gender

to examine the respondents' reaction, no important differences have been identified. In addition, female refusers have employed statements that include threat or attack whose frequencies have been counted similar, to some extent, to that of the males.

In order to raise learners' awareness of the possible strategies used in English speech acts of refusal, it is recommended that refusal strategies should be taught in the EFL setting through different procedures such as discourse completion role play and listening to different situation dialogues and writing down key expressions used in each refusal strategies.

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### **Appendix A: Discourse Completion Test**

Instructions: Please, read the following situations carefully. You have to refuse all situations in English. Write your refusal in the blank area. Please, write your age below:

a- Female

Age:

1. Imagine that you are a mother of three children. One day you are going shopping with your little daughter. She asks if you can buy an expensive doll for her "Mum, I love that doll so much. Could you please buy it for me? You refuse her request by saying:

2. You are on holiday in London, and you meet a male taxi driver. He has shown you around the city while you were in his taxi. He even tried to contact a friend of yours with his mobile phone for you. In the end, he asks for double the taxi fare in recognition of his extra services. You refuse his request by saying:

3. A classmate offers you to lunch with her. You want to leave college early today, so you would rather work through lunch to get ahead on your project. Classmate: Hi. How have you been?

Hey, do you want to go to the cafeteria and get a bite to eat? You refuse her offer by saying:

4. You are working on a group project with three other students. Your group is having a discussion with your professor late

5. Sunday afternoon. It is 2:30pm. You are planning to visit a sick friend at the hospital immediately after the meeting and must leave the university within 15 minutes.

Professor: Hey, it's getting late. Why don't we all go down to the cafeteria? We can finish up there while we eat dinner.

You refuse his offer by saying:

6. You are a top executive at a very large accounting firm. One day, the boss calls you into his office. He says, "Next Sunday my wife and I are having a little party. I know it's short notice, but I'm hoping that all of my top executives will be there with their spouses. What do you say?" Refuse his invitation by saying:

7. A friend invites you to dinner, but you really cannot stand this friend's fiancée. Your friend says, "How about coming over for dinner Saturday night? We're having a small dinner party." Refuse her invitation by saying:

8. One of your female friends, whom you have known for several years, has the habit of borrowing money and then not repaying it for long periods of time. In fact, it seems that she has been late not only in repaying money borrowed from you but also from other people. Two weeks ago, she borrowed 25 thousand dinars from you and again did not repay it as promised. You waited a few days more, but found that you really need some money. At last, she suggests returning only 15. You refuse her suggestion by saying:

9. You are at a friend's house watching TV. The friend offers you a snack. You turn it down, saying that you have gained some weight and don't feel comfortable in your new clothes. Your friend says, "Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about?" Refuse her suggestion by saying:

Instructions: Please, read the following situations carefully. You have to refuse all situations in English.

Write your refusal in the blank area. Please, write your age below:

b- Male Age:

1. Imagine that you are a father of three children. One day you are going shopping with your little son. He asks if you can buy an expensive play station for him "Father, I love that play station so much. Could you please buy it for me? You refuse his request by saying:

2. You are on holiday in London, and you meet a female taxi driver. She has shown you around the city while you were in her taxi. She even tried to contact a friend of yours with her mobile phone for you. In the end, she asks for double the taxi fare in recognition of her extra services. You refuse her request by saying:

3. A classmate offers you to lunch with him. You want to leave college early today, so you would rather work through lunch to get ahead on your project. Classmate: Hi. How have you been? Hey, do you want to go to the cafeteria and get a bite to eat? You refuse his offer by saying:

4. You are working on a group project with three other students. Your group is having a discussion with your professor late Sunday afternoon. It is 2:30 pm. You are planning to pick up a friend at the airport immediately after the meeting and must leave the university within 15 minutes.

Professor: Hey, it's getting late. Why don't we all go down to the cafeteria? We can finish up there while we eat dinner.

You refuse his offer by saying:

5. You are a top executive at a very large accounting firm. One day, the boss calls you into his office. He says, "Next Sunday my wife and I are having a little party. I know it's short notice, but I'm

hoping that all of my top executives will be there with their spouses. What do you say?" " Refuse his invitation by saying:

6. A friend invites you to dinner, but you really cannot stand this friend's fiancé. Your friend says, "How about coming over for dinner Saturday night? We're having a small dinner party." " Refuse his invitation by saying:

7. One of your male friends, whom you have known for several years, has the habit of borrowing money and then not repaying it for long periods of time. In fact, it seems that he has been late not only in repaying money borrowed from you but also from other people. Two weeks ago, he borrowed 25 thousand dinars from you and again did not repay it as promised. You waited a few days more, but found that you really need some money. At last, he suggests returning only 15. You refuse his suggestion by saying:

8. You are at a friend's house watching TV. The friend offers you a snack. You turn it down, saying that you have gained some weight and don't feel comfortable in your new clothes. Your friend says, "Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about?" " Refuse his suggestion by saying: