

# **Investigating Cross-Linguistic and Cultural Differences in Refusal Speech Act among Iraqi Speakers Speaking English**

**and**

**American Native Speakers**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims at investigating the speech act of refusal performed by Iraqi speakers speaking English (ISSE) and American native speakers (ANS) with respect to linguistic devices and cultural differences. To this aim, the following questions should be answered: 1. What strategies do Iraqi speakers speaking English and American native speakers use when they refuse offers, requests, suggestions, and invitations? 2. Is the choice of refusal strategies affected by culture? 3. How the use of refusal strategies is affected by the interlocutor status? 4. Regarding the Iraqi subjects responses, is there any evidence of pragmatic transfer? The discourse completion test (DCT) developed by Beebe et al (1990) is used for this purpose. Twenty participants, ten Iraqis and ten Americans take part in this test. The findings indicate that there are many differences among the Iraqis and the Americans in making refusals. The differences can be attributed to cultural differences between Iraqi and American cultures.

## **1. Introduction**

Speaking a language means more than uttering a number of grammatically decent sentences. Speech acts are an indispensable component of everyday communication in any language. Austin, in his seminal book *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), believes that there is a lot more to a language than the meaning of its words and phrases. when we exploit language to communicate,

we do not just say things but do things, that is we perform actions whether explicitly or implicitly (Hashemian,2012:28-29). The speech act theory was emerged in the 1960s with the work of the English philosopher John Austin and was later systematized by John Searl (1976).

The central tenet of speech act theory is that the uttering of a sentence is, or is part of, an action within the framework of social institutions and conventions. Speech act theory assumes that speakers are simultaneously involved in three different speech acts when uttering a sentence:

-a locutionary act: the act of using words to form sentences;

-an illocutionary act: the intended action by the speaker, the force or intention behind the words; and

-a prelocutionary act: the effects that an utterance has on the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, or actions of the hearer.

So, for providing an insight that utterances are used to perform actions, Austin distinguishes between what we say, what we mean, and where we say (Mohammed et al,2013:50).

Among the three acts, the prelocutionary act is actually what the speaker wants to achieve through the action of uttering the sentence, so it is regarded as the most important. Abarghoui (2012:2440) provides Searle's five ways of classification of illocutionary acts, which include:

1. Representatives: These speech acts constitute assertions carrying true or false values (e.g. statements).
2. Directives: In these speech acts, there is an effort on the part of the speaker to have the hearer to do something (e.g. request, advice).
3. Commissives: Speech acts of this kind create an obligation on the part of the speaker; that is; they commit the speaker to do something (e.g.promises).
4. Expressives: These speech acts express an attitude or an inner state of the speaker which says nothing about the world (e.g. apologies, congratulation, compliments).
5. Declaratives: These are speech acts in which declarative statements are successfully performed and no psychological state is expressed (e.g. excommunications).

Moreover, Searle (1975) distinguishes direct and indirect speech acts. In a direct speech act, there is a relationship between form and function. For example, in "pass me the salt", the imperative is used to perform a request. In an indirect speech act, the illocutionary force of the speech act is not understood from the surface structure. Both Austin and Searle note that most utterances are indirect, i.e. their illocutionary force is not reflected in the sentence form, mainly due to the consideration of politeness and convention when language is used in real context (Mohammed et al, 2013: 52, and Adolphs, 2008:27). However, speech acts are everyday activities like informing, describing, ordering, threatening, complaining, and refusing, for which we use language.

## **2. The speech act of refusal**

Refusals have been one of the most important studied topics in pragmatics and they are very important because of their communicative role in everyday social interaction. A refusal is a speech act and is considered to be a type of dispreferred response. It is the act that occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says "no" to a request, invitation, suggestion, or an offer (Allami & Naeimi, 2011, as cited in Asmali, 2013:114).

Refusing can be realized differently across cultures, languages and even among people in the same culture and among the people of the same language. Ellis (2008) as cited in (Asmali, *ibid*) stresses that refusing requires a high level of pragmatic competence since people from one culture may refuse in a very different way than the people from another culture. Refusing in another language may cause problems for the interlocutors of different languages. Hashemian (2012:29) focuses on the fact that refusals are considered to be a face-threatening act (FTA) among the speech acts. He clarifies that the positive or negative face of the speaker and listener is risked when a refusal is called for or carried out.

Refusals, on the whole, are complicated due to the fact that they are influenced by some social factors, as gender, social distance, and power (Fraser,1990; Smith,1998, as cited in Mohammad,2013:52). How to say "no", then, is very important than the answer itself. Mohammad (*Ibid*) maintains that in a certain context, interlocutors are socially expected to know when to use the

appropriate form of refusals. Depending on ethnicity and cultural –linguistic values, the speaker must know the appropriate form and its function.

### **3. Refusal Categorization**

Refusal is a complex speech act that requires a high level of pragmatic competence to be performed successfully. The best taxonomy for refusal strategies, the commonly known and used semantic formulas in coding refusals is provided by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weeltz in( 1990) as cited in Hisu-Jung Lin (2010: 59-60) & Asmali, (2013:115-116). It is presented as follows:

#### **3.1. Direct**

- A. Per formative (e.g., "I refuse")
- B. Nonperformative statement
  - 1. "No"
  - 2. Negative willingness/ ability ( "I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")

#### **3.2. Indirect**

- A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry...", " I feel terrible...")
- B. Wish ( e.g., " I wish I could help you...")
- C. Excuse, reason, explanation ( e.g., " My children will be home that night.")
- D. Statement of alternative
  - 1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., " I'd rather do ..." "I'd prefer ")
  - 2. Why don't you do X instead of Y ( e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else? ")
- E. Set condition for future or past acceptance ( e.g. " If you had asked me earlier", "I would have..." )
- F. Promise of future acceptance ( e.g., "I'll do it next time", "I promise I'll..." )
- G. Statement of principle ( e.g., " I never do business with friends")
- H. Statement of philosophy ( e.g., " One can't be too careful." )
- I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
  - 1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)
  - 2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: " I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")

3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack ( e.g., " who do you think you are?")
  4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.
  5. Let interlocutor off the hook ( e.g., " Don't worry about it." " That's okay.")
  6. Self defense ( e.g., " I'm trying my best.")
- J. Acceptance that function as a refusal
1. Unspecific or indefinite reply
  2. Lack of enthusiasm
- K. Verbal avoidance
1. Topic switch
  2. Joke
  3. Repetition of part of request, etc. ( e.g., Monday)
  4. Postponement (e.g., " I'll think about it ")
  5. Hedging (e.g., " Gee, I don't know')

### **3.3. Adjuncts to refusals**

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (e.g., " That is a good idea...")
2. Statement of empathy (e.g., I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
3. Gratitude/appreciation

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Design of the Study**

Iraqi speakers speaking English and American native speakers' refusal data are collected, classified, and compared. The frequency of refusal utterances are calculated according to the classification designed by Beebe et al (1990). The classification of the data into semantic units are performed by the researcher.

### **4.2. Instrument**

This study is based on analyzing a questionnaire made between Iraqis and Americans. The discourse completion test (DCT) employed by Beebe et al (1990) is used. This test encompasses twelve situations (see

Appendix 1). These situations consist of three requests, three suggestions, three invitations, and three offers. These situations involve obvious status relationships (high, low, equal) between the interlocutors. Each situation is followed by a space for the subjects to fill in the particular refusal. The participants are also asked to write their levels of education and gender before responding .

### 4.3. Participants

Altogether,20 subjects participate in this research. They consist of 10 Iraqi lecturers(5 males and 5 females) at the Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences / Basra University, and 10 Americans (5 males and 5 females ), government employees, working at different government departments in America.

### 5.Findings and Discussions

The Findings of this study indicate many differences between Americans and Iraqi speakers of English language in making refusals towards requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers of people of different ranks.

**Table (1)**

**Iraqi Participants' Performance in Refusing Requests**

Strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation3
	Higher	Lower	Equal
Excuse 12	120% 11	110% 11	110%
Regret 3	30% 4	40% 7	70%
Negative ability 1	10% 7	70% 6	60%
Principle 6	60% -	- 2	20%
Appreciation 4	40% 3	30% -	-
Pause fillers 3	30% 2	20% 2	20%
Hedging -	- 4	40% 1	10%

Wish 1	10% 3	30% -	-
Negative willingness -	- 1	10% 1	10%
Promise -	- 2	20% -	-
Direct 'no' -	- -	- 1	10%
Addressing terms -	- 1	10% -	-
Postponement -	- -	- 1	10%
Statement of empathy -	- 1	10% -	-
Total 30	29.7% 39	38.6% 32	31.7%

**Table (2)**

**American Participants' Performance in Refusing Requests**

Strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation3
	Higher	Lower	Equal
Excuse 3	30% 5	50% 6	60%
Regret 3	30% 2	20% 5	50%
Negative ability 3	30% 2	20% 4	40%
Alternative 1	10% 5	50% 3	30%
Agreement 2	20% 2	20% -	-
Negative willingness 3	30% -	- -	-
Appreciation 2	20% -	- -	-
Set condition for future acceptance 1	10% -	- 1	10%
Pause filler -	- 1	10% 1	10%

Postponement 1	10% 1	10% -	-
Direct 'no' 1	10% -	- 1	10%
Criticize -	- -	- 1	10%
Thanks 1	10% -	- -	-
Hedging -	- 1	10% -	-
Wish 1	10% -	- -	-
Total 22	34.9% 19	30.2% 22	34.9%

It is clear from table (1) that Iraqi participants employ 14 strategies and heavily rely on (excuse, regret, negative ability). The low status shows the higher percentage (38.6%). Table (2) indicates that American speakers, in refusing request, use 15 strategies and heavily depend on (excuse, regret, negative ability, alternative). The high and equal statuses show the same percentages(34.9%,34.9%) which take priority over the low. Both groups of speakers prefer to use indirect refusal strategies rather than direct ones.

**Table (3)**

**Iraqi Participants' Performance in Refusing Suggestions**

Strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation3
	Higher	Lower	Equal
Principle 11	110% 4	40% 3	30%
Excuse 2	20% 6	60% 8	80%
Negative willingness 3	30% 4	40% 3	30%
Pause filler 2	20% 2	20% 2	20%
Agreement 2	20% 2	20% 1	10%

Negative ability -	- 3	30% 2	20%
Criticize 4	40% -	- -	-
negative consequences 3	30% -	- -	-
Hedging 1	10% -	- 2	20%
Self- defense -	- 3	30% -	-
Regret -	- 2	20% -	-
Direct 'no' 1	10% 1	10% -	-
Alternative 2	20% -	- -	-
Promise -	- 1	10% 1	10%
Appreciation -	- 1	10% -	-
Statement of empathy 1	10% -	- 1	10%
Let the interlocutor of the hook -	- 1	10% -	-
Thanks -	- -	- 1	10%
Total 32	37.2% 30	34.9% 24	27.9%

**Table (4)**

**American Participants' Performance in Refusing Suggestions**

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Situation 1</b>	<b>Situation 2</b>	<b>Situation3</b>
	<b>Higher</b>	<b>Lower</b>	<b>Equal</b>
Excuse 7	70% 2	20% 3	30%
Alternative 1	10% 8	80% 2	20%
Negative willingness 2	20% 2	20% 4	40%
Thanks 2	20% 2	20% 4	40%

Agreement 2	20% 4	40% 1	10%
Promise 1	10% 1	10% 1	10%
Principle 3	30% -	- -	-
Regret 1	10% 1	10% 1	10%
Pause filler -	- 1	10% 1	10%
Direct 'no' -	- -	- 2	20%
Addressing terms -	- 2	20% -	-
Criticize -	- 1	10% -	-
Hedging -	- -	- 1	10%
Postponement -	- 1	10% -	-
Negative ability 1	10% -	- -	-
Command 1	10% -	- -	-
Self- defense -	- -	- 1	10%
Total 21	31.3% 25	37.3% 21	31.3%

For refusing suggestions, table (3) exhibits that Iraqi participants perform 18 strategies and greatly use (principle, excuse, negative willingness). The higher rank expresses a higher frequency of strategies (37.2). Within table (4), American participants employ 17 strategies and mostly use (excuse, alternative, negative ability, thanks, and agreement). The low status indicates a high percentage (37.3%) while the high and equal ranks point out equal percentages. The two groups of participants reflect the same tendency to use the indirect strategies more than the direct.

**Table (5)**

**Iraqi Participants' Performance in Refusing Invitations**

Strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation3
	Higher	Lower	Equal
Excuse 12	120% 11	110% 11	110%
Regret 1	10% 4	40% 3	30%
Pause filler 2	20% 4	40% 2	20%
Negative ability -	- 4	40% 3	30%
Thanks 2	20% -	- 5	50%
Appreciation 1	10% 3	30% -	-
Agreement 1	10% 3	30% -	-
Wish 1	10% 1	10% 1	10%
Acceptance that function as refusal -	- 2	20% 1	10%
Direct 'no' 1	10% -	- 1	10%
Criticize 2	20% -	- -	-
Negative willingness -	- -	- 2	20%
Statement of empathy -	- 1	10% -	-
Principle 1	10% -	- -	-
Alternative 1	10% -	- -	-
Promise 1	10% -	- -	-
Postponement -	- 1	10% -	-
Condition for future acceptance -	- -	- 1	10%
Total 26	28.9% 34	37.8% 30	33.3%

**Table (6)**

### American Participants' Performance in Refusing Invitation

Strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation3
	Higher	Lower	Equal
Regret 3	30% 4	40% 8	80%
Excuse 5	50% 5	50% 2	20%
Negative ability 1	10% 3	30% 4	40%
Thanks 2	20% 3	30% 2	20%
Negative willingness 1	10% 2	20% 3	30%
Direct 'no' 4	40% -	- -	-
Appreciation -	- 2	20% 2	20%
Pause filler -	- 2	20% 2	20%
Hedging 1	10% 2	20% -	-
Wish -	- 2	20% 1	10%
Criticize 2	20% -	- -	-
Postponement -	- -	- 2	20%
Promise 2	20% -	- -	-
Agreement -	- 1	10% -	-
Principle 1	10% -	- -	-
Statement of empathy -	- 1	10% -	-
Alternative 1	10% -	- -	-
Total 23	30.3% 27	35.5% 26	34.2%

Table (5) shows that in declining invitations, Iraqi subjects use 18 strategies, and heavily employ (excuse, regret, pause filler, negative ability, and

thanks). The low level reflects the high proportion of rejecting strategies (37.8). According to table (6), American participants produce 17 strategies, and mostly rely on (regret, excuse, negative ability, and thanks). The low status signs the high proportion of strategies (35.5%). Still both groups favor the indirect way of refusing.

**Table (7)**

**Iraqi Participants' Performance in Refusing Offers**

Strategies	Situation 1	Situation 2	Situation3
	Higher	Lower	Equal
Excuse 2	20% 13	130% 18	180%
Direct 'no' 12	120% -	-	15 150%
Let the interlocutor of the hook 18	180% -	-	-
Thanks -	- 3	30% 10	100%
Pause filler 1	10% 4	40% 3	30%
Negative ability -	- 4	40% 2	20%
Regret 1	10% 3	30% 1	10%
Appreciation -	- 5	50% -	-
Agreement -	- 4	40% -	-
Negative willingness -	- 2	20% -	-
Statement of empathy 2	20% -	- -	-
Advice 2	20% -	- -	-
Principle -	- -	- 1	10%
Criticize -	-	- 1	10%
Statement of negative consequences -	-	-	10%

	-	1	
Addressing terms	-	10%	-
-	1	-	
Repetition of part of the offer	-	-	10%
-	-	1	
Alternative	-	10%	-
-	1	-	
Reason	10%	-	-
1	-	-	
Total	29.5%	30.3 %	40.2%
39	40	53	

**Table (8)**

**American Participants' Performance in Refusing Offers**

Strategies	Situation 1		Situation 2		Situation3	
		Higher		Lower		Equal
Thanks	-		40%		120%	
-		4		12		
Let the interlocutor off the hook	12	120%	-		-	
-		-		-		
Excuse	-		60%		50%	
-		6		5		
Negative ability	-		-		70%	
-		-		7		
Direct 'no'		20%	-		40%	
2		-		4		
Appreciation	-		40%		-	
-		4		-		
Agreement		10%		20%		-
1		2		-		
Negative willingness	-		-		30%	
-		-		3		
Regret		10%		10%		-
1		1		-		
Pause filler		10%		-		10%
1		-		1		
Advice		20%		-		-
2		-		-		
Alternative	-		-		10%	
-		-		1		

Set condition for future acceptance	-	-	10%	-
		1	-	
Wish	-	-	10%	-
		1	-	
Total		26.8%	26.8%	46.5%
19		19	33	

Clearly, table (7) shows that for declining offers, Iraqi participants perform 19 strategies and widely use *excuse, direct no, let the interlocutor of the hook, and thanks*. The equal level gets a high percentage in using refusal strategies (40.2%). As it is shown in table(8), Americans apply 14 strategies, and greatly use *thanks, let the interlocutor of the hook, and excuse*. The equal rank, with (46.5%) proportion, takes priority over the high and low ranks which are equal in proportions. Also, the indirect strategies are the preferred kinds of refusal strategies.

Generally, ISSE slightly utilize more refusal strategies (26) than do the ANS (23). ISSE tend to pay much care towards their social relations by using a large number of statements for different kinds of refusal strategies. Though the "excuse" strategy is used by the two groups of participants in the four situations, 127 statements of excuses are used by ISSE and just 49 statements of the same strategy are used by ANS. A typical example of Iraqi refusal which contains a sequence of three statements of excuses to *refuse a worker request about an increase in pay*:

1. Yes, we are very pleased with your work, *but I am afraid the timing is bad. You know how sales have gone down later. we are barely able to pay for utility bill for the show.* So, we won't be able to give you that raise any time soon.

About the same situation, another example is used by an American in which he expresses one statement of excuse:

2. I would love to give you a raise, *but we cannot afford to do that right now.*

ISSE tend to express refusals with caution presented by the use of more statements of wish, statements of hedge, let interlocutor off the hook, and adjuncts which include statements of agreement, appreciations, and statements

of empathy. The results seem to be in harmony with what is stated by Brown and Levinson (1987:83, as cited in Amarien, 2010 :10) that higher number of strategies serve best to minimize face risk. As an instance of Iraqi refusal: an employee refuses the boss request for spending an extra hours working in the office, so he provides an appreciation followed by a hedge statement:

3. *Actually, I highly appreciate your offer, but I think I cannot.*

Another Iraqi participant lets the interlocutor off the hook, then provides a statement of empathy to refuse the offer of his cleaning lady to pay for the Chinese vase that she has broken accidentally:

4. *Forget about it, I shall repair it.*

Iraqi participants show more conformity in which they use less statements of *thanks* and *regrets* and more principles than the American partners who tend to reflect their individualistic views by utilizing more thanks, regrets, and less principles. Thus, in many examples, American participants start their refusals by statements of thanks or statements of regrets. For instance, a participant rejects a friend's invitation by saying:

5. *Sorry can't.*

While another starts a rejection to a worker's request for a pay increase with a statement of regret:

6. *Sorry I can't at this.*

*Thanks* and *regret* are, also, used within the same utterance of rejection. With the following example ,an American refuses a boss's offer to work in a better position:

7. *Thank you for keeping me in mind, I would have loved too but it is really the wrong timing sorry.*

A statement of *principle*, on the other hand, is highly used by Iraqi participants. While it is found within two situations only (invitations and suggestions) and used by the higher level of the American group, *principles* appear in all the situations and are used by many Iraqi partners of different levels, mostly used by

the higher level. The following examples are three refusals used by Iraqi participants of a higher level to reject a request, a suggestion, and an invitation:

8. You know that *I give pay increase in turn*, so I am afraid you have to wait longer.
9. It looks so weird suggestion, because *I know what is important in my class*.
10. Thank you for your kind invitation, but I am afraid I will have to refuse it because *I don't do work during meal times*.

More importantly, both groups of participants prefer to use indirect refusal strategies rather than the direct (see table 9). Generally speaking, ISSE are more inclined to express their refusals in a relatively indirect manner in order to avoid offending the interlocutor. ANS utilize more direct strategies than the Iraqi subjects who are concerned about being indirect, preserving face, and avoiding embarrassment.

**Table (9)**

**Iraqi and American Participants' use of direct and indirect strategies**

Situation	Direct				Indirect			
	Iraqi		American		Iraqi		American	
Request	17	16.8%	14	22.2%	76	75.2%	43	68.3%
suggestion	17	19.8%	11	16.4%	62	72.1%	49	73.1%
Invitation	11	12.2%	18	23.7%	70	77.8%	52	68.4%
Offer	35	19.2%	16	22.5%	86	65.2%	48	67.6%
Total	80	19.6%	59	21.3%	294	71.9%	192	69.3%

Adding to that ,adjuncts are, also, used by the two groups, but Iraqi participants tend to use more statements of adjuncts (36) than the Americans partners (26).Adjuncts, as it is stressed by Morkus (2009:301), are considered to be important external modifiers to the speech act of refusal aiming to minimize the

illocutionary force to refusal and thus, helping the interlocutor to save face. So, we find adjuncts like : 'we appreciate your efforts', 'it sounds great...', ' I really enjoy working here...', 'I would have loved to ...'.

With respect to the social status, it is explicit from table (10) that there are many differences among the three statuses of the two groups. Actually, the low status of Iraqi participants shows more respect to people of higher status by using a high frequency of refusal strategies to refuse different situations raised by those people of higher rank. Such a point cannot be stressed towards the low status of the American group in which there is a very slight difference in the proportions of the high and low levels. In addition to that, the equal levels of the two groups reflects more sensitivity to familiarity and relative status by utilizing high percentages of refusing strategies:

**Table (10)**

**Iraqi and American Participants' Performance according to status**

	<b>High</b>			<b>Low</b>		
	<b>Iraqi/American</b>			<b>Iraqi/ American</b>		
	<b>Iraqi/American</b>	<b>Iraqi/American</b>	<b>Iraqi/American</b>	<b>Iraqi/American</b>	<b>Iraqi/American</b>	<b>Iraqi/American</b>
<b>Request</b>	29.7%	34.9%	38.6%	30.1%	31.6%	34.9%
<b>Suggestion</b>	37.2%	31.3%	34.8%	37.8%	27.9%	31.3%
<b>Invitation</b>	28.8%	30.2%	37.7%	35.5%	33.3%	34.2%
<b>Offer</b>	29.5%	30.2%	30.3%	35.5%	40.1%	34.2%
<b>Total</b>	31%	30.7%	35%	32.5%	34%	36.8%

After examining the Iraqi subjects' performance, it is worth mentioning here that there exists a pragmatic transfer. The pragmatic transfer occurs when speakers apply rules from the first language culture into a foreign language (Wannaruk, 2008:319). There are two sorts for that transfer: (1) positive transfer refers to the processes whereby the first language knowledge facilitates the learning of the foreign language, (2) negative transfer refers to the processes

whereby the first language negatively impacts the learning of the foreign language (Karim & Nassaji, 2013:119).

## **6. Conclusions**

According to the results observed, differences in using refusal strategies manifest the cultural differences between Iraqi and American societies. Iraqi and American participants have a tendency to mitigate their refusals and minimize the effect on the interlocutor's positive face. Such a tendency is highly reflected by Iraqi speakers who utilize more refusal strategies and use a large number of statements for different kinds of rejecting strategies. The idea of mitigating refusals is, also, highlighted by the Iraqi use of adjuncts which takes priority over the American use. Thus, ISSE pay much care towards their social relations. Additionally, the two groups prefer the use of indirect strategies. The Iraqi group is more inclined to speak indirectly while the American use more direct strategies. It is, in fact, the influence of the western culture.

With less use of statements of thanks and regrets and more use of statements of principles, Iraqi subjects show their view of conformity. The Americans, on the other hand, reflect their individualistic views by using more thanks and regrets and less principles. This result agrees with what Bond and Smith(1996) claim that "conformity is higher in societies that stick to values of conservatism, collectivism, and a preference for status ascription, while it is lower in societies that respect autonomy, individualism, and status achievement " (as cited in Mohammad et al, 2013:58). Moreover, Bond and Smith's saying justifies the low level, of the Iraqi group, interest when interacting with people higher in ranks as they use a high percentage of refusal strategies to reject different situations for those people. Status, then ascribed on the basis of existing hierarchies. That result cannot be applied to the American group who believe that status should be accorded on the basis of individual achievement (Bond and Smith,1996:114).The equal levels for the two groups are so sensitive to familiarity by pointing out high proportions of refusing strategies. In terms of the above results, we can stress that pragmatic transfer exist in the choice and content of refusal strategies (Wannaruk, 2008:318).

A final important result is that the findings of this study are of benefit to EFL learners, in that they will know how to use the speech act of refusal

properly by getting familiar with the way that native speakers refuse requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers according to different ranks.

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## APPENDIX 1

### **Discourse Completion Test (adopted from Hsiu-Jung Lin (2010:61-65))**

Dear participants

Thanks for your willingness to answer this questionnaire. Your responses will be only used in my research. Please read the following 12 situations before you write in response to each of the situations. Before your proceeding to the situation questions, please provide your basic information as shown below:

**Gender:** .....

**Current Educational Level:** .....

**Please read the following 12 situations. After each situation you are asked to write your refusal statement in the blank after "you". So, you are the person in the situation. You must refuse all requests, offers, invitations, and suggestions, in accordance with three statuses: high, low, equal. Respond as you would be in an actual conversation.**

**Situation 1** You are the owner of a book store. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private.

**Worker:** As you know, I've been here just a little over a year now, and I know you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be quite honest I really need an increase in pay.

**(Request: Person of higher status refuses the request)**

**You:**

.....  
.....

**Worker:** Well ... then I guess I'll have to look for another job.

**Situation 2** You are a junior in college. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your classmate often misses class and asks you for the lecture notes.

**Classmates:** Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again? **(Request: Equal Status)**

**You:**

.....  
.....

**Classmate:** Well... then I guess I'll have to ask someone else.

**Situation3** You are the president of a big company. A salesman from a printing machine company invites you to one of the most expensive restaurants, Lutece, in New York.

**Salesman:** We have met several times now, and I am hoping you will buy my company's printing machine. Would you like to have dinner with me at Lutece to sign the contract? (**Invitation: Person of higher status refuses the Invitation**)

**You:**.....  
.....

**Salesman:** Well ... maybe we can meet another time.

**Situation4:** You are an executive at a very large software company. One day the boss calls you into his office.

**Boss:** Next Sunday my wife and I are having a little party at my house. I know it's sudden ... but I'm hoping all my executives will be there with their wives/ husbands. Will you come to the party? (**Invitation: person of lower status refuses the Invitation**)

**You:**  
.....  
.....

**Boss:** Well, that's too bad ... I was hoping everyone would be there.

**Situation 5:** You are at a friend's house watching TV. Your friend offers you a snack.

**You:** Thanks, but no thanks. I've been eating like a pig and I feel just terrible. My clothes don't even fit me.

**Friend:** Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about?  
(Suggestion: Equal Status)

**You:**  
.....  
.....

**Friend:** Well... you should try it anyway.

**Situation6:** Your boss just ask you to bring a report to him. You can't find the report on your desk because your desk is very disorganized. Your boss walks over.

**Boss:** You know, maybe you should try to organize yourself better. I always write things down on a piece of paper so I don't forget them. Why don't you try it? (Suggestion: Person of lower status refuses the suggestion)

**You:**  
.....  
.....

**Boss:** Well... it was only an idea anyway. .

**Situation 7:** You arrive home and notice that your cleaning lady is extremely upset. She comes rushing up to you.

**Cleaning lady:** Oh God, I'm so sorry! I had a terrible accident. While I was cleaning, I bumped into the table and your china vase fell and broke. I'll pay for it. (Knowing that the cleaning lady is supporting three children) (Offer: Person of higher status refuses the offer)

**You :**

.....  
.....

**Cleaning lady:** No, I'd feel better if I paid for it.

**Situation 8:** You teach English at a university. It is just about the middle of the semester now. One of your students asks to speak to you.

**Student:** Ah, excuse me; some of the students were talking after class yesterday. We kind of feel that the class would be better if you could give us more practice in conversation and less on grammar. (**Suggestion: Person of higher status refuses the suggestion**)

**You :**

.....  
.....

**Student:** Well ... it was only a suggestion.

**Situation 9:** You are at a friend's house for lunch.

**Friend:** How about another piece of cake? (**Offer: Equal status**)

**You:**

.....  
.....

**Friend:** Come on, just a little piece?

**You :**

.....  
.....

**Situation 10:** A friend invites you to a dinner, but you really don't like this friend's husband/ wife.

**Friend:** How about coming to my house Sunday night? We are having a small dinner party. **(Invitation: Equal status)**

**You:**  
.....  
.....

**Friend :** Well... maybe next time.

**Situation 11:** You've been working in an advertising company now for some time. The boss offers you an increase in salary and a better position, but you have to move to another town. You don't want to go. Today, the boss calls you into his office.

**Boss:** I'd like to offer you an executive position in our new office in Hick town. It's a great town – only 3 hours from here by airplane! And, your salary will increase with the new position. **(Offer: Person of lower status refuses the offer)**

**You:**  
.....  
.....

**Boss:** Well... maybe you should think about it some more before declining.

**Situation 12:** You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave the office.

**Boss:** If it's okay with you, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up with this work. Can you stay little longer at the office? **(Request: Person of lower status refuses the request)**

**You:**  
.....  
.....

**Boss:** Well, that's too bad ... I was hoping you could stay.

## الخلاصة :

تهدف الدراسة إلى تحليل أساليب الرفض لعشره مشاركين عراقيين يتحدثون اللغة الانكليزية مع عشره مشاركين أميركان محليون وذلك فيما يتعلق بالأدوات اللغوية والاختلافات الثقافية. ولهذا الغرض استعمل اختبار (DCT) Discourse Completion Test المطور من قبل (Beebe et al 1990). تشير النتائج إلى إن هنالك العديد من الاختلافات بين العراقيين والأمريكان في رفضهم لموافق مختلفة: الطلب, الاقتراح, الدعوة, العرض. وهذه الاختلافات يمكن إن تنسب إلى الاختلافات الثقافية بين الثقافات العراقية والأمريكية.