Deanship of Scientific Research

Refusing Invitations: A Contrastive Pragmatic Study of Jordanian Arabic and Castilian Spanish

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Abstract

Objectives: The study aimed at examining the use of refusals by Jordanian Arabic and Castilian Spanish speakers when declining invitations from their friends, focusing on similarities and differences in terms of head strategies, adjuncts, order, and frequency.

Methods: A discourse completion task (DCT) comprising various situations were designed to elicit refusals from the participants. Drawing on Beebe et al's categorization (1990), the data were categorized into head acts (subdivided into direct and indirect strategies) and adjuncts to refusal.

Results: Although the Jordanian and Spanish participants belong to two distant cultures (eastern and western), the findings revealed that they were more similar than different in their refusals. They both showed a stronger tendency for indirectness in refusing invitations, with the Jordanians being more indirect. Both groups commonly utilized the strategies of *statement of regret*, *giving reason*, and *negative ability*, with different degrees of preference and frequency. As for adjuncts, both groups were inclined to employ a high percentage of adjuncts either before or after head strategies of refusal. While the Jordanians preferred the adjuncts of *gratitude* and *swearing*, the Spanish participants preferred *gratitude* and *positive opinion*. Both groups showed predilection to combine the same typical components in their refusal responses but differ in the order in which these components appeared. The employment of indirect refusal strategies and adjuncts in the Jordanian and Spanish responses pragmatically served to mitigate potentially negative effects of refusal on the inviters.

Conclusion: Further research on Jordanian and Spanish refusals in other situations is recommended.

Keywords: Castilian Spanish; Jordanian Arabic; Invitation; Refusal.

رفض الدعوة: دراسة تداولية مقارنة بين العربية الأردنية والإسبانية القشتالية

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ملخّص

الأهداف: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى بحث استعمال الرفض لدى الناطقين بالعربية الأردنية والإسبانية القشتالية عند رفض تلبية دعوة الأصدقاء من خلال التركيز على أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في استراتيجيات الرفض الرئيسية والمصاحبة له وترتيها وتكرارها.

المنهجية: اعتمدت الدراسة استبيانًا مكتوبًا يحتوي مواقف متنوعة تهدف لجمع حالات الرفض من المشاركين. واعتمادا على تصنيف Beebe et al (1990) فقد قُسمت البيانات إلى مجموعتين: استراتيجيات الرفض الرئيسية (التي أيضا قُسمت إلى مباشرة وغير مباشرة) والاستراتيجيات المصاحبة للرفض.

النتائج: وعلى الرغم من أن المشاركين الأردنيين والإسبان ينتمون إلى ثقافتين مختلفتين وبعيدتين (شرقية وغربية) فقد أظهرت النتائج أن أوجه التشابه أكثر من الاختلاف في رفض الدعوات بين المجموعتين وأن لديهم ميلا كبيراً لاستعمال الرفض غير المباشر والأردنيون كانوا أكثر ميلا لذلك. وكلا الفريقين استعمل على نحو كبير استراتيجيات "الاعتذار" و"إبداء السبب" و"نفي القدرة" مع فروقات في درجة التفضيل والتكرار. وفيما يتعلق بالاستراتيجيات المصاحبة للرفض فكلا الفريقين أظهر ميلاً لاستعمالها قبل أو بعد استراتيجيات الرفض الرئيسية. فبينما فضل المشاركون الأردنيون استعمال استراتيجيتي "الشكر" و"القسم" كاستراتيجيات مصاحبة فإن المشاركين الإسبان فضلوا استعمال استراتيجيتي "الشكر" و"التعليق الإيجابي". وأظهرت النتائج أن كلا المجموعتين تميل لاستعمال نفس العناصر النمطية في الرفض لكن يختلفان في ترتيب ظهور هذه العناصر. وأظهرت كذلك أن استراتيجيات الرفض غير المباشر والاستراتيجيات المصاحبة له عند المشاركين الأردنيين والإسبان تؤدي وظيفة تداولية للعمل على الحد من الآثار السلبية المحتملة للرفض على شخص الداعي .

الخلاصة: وتوصي الدراسة بمزيد من البحث في الرفض في العربية الأردنية والإسبانية في مواقف أخرى غير التي في الدراسة.

الكلمات الدالة: الإسبانية القشتالية، العربية الأردنية، الدعوة، الرفض.

Introduction

One of the speech acts that commonly occurs in daily interaction is refusal that belongs to the category of commissives since the refuser commits himself to the non-performance of a certain course of action (Glaser, 2014). Refusals typically count a dispreferred response, by which the refuser expresses a denial, rejection, or unwillingness to comply with a prior act. More specifically, they are a powerful speech act that may signal non-cooperation or discourtesy, arouse indignation, cause embarrassment, trigger disappointment, and endanger social relations. Therefore, it has been described as "face-threatening and negatively affective" that usually necessitates the use of certain strategies to mitigate its force and maintain social harmony such as apologies, thanking, compliment, and hedging devices (Haugh, 2015). The process of refusing is more complex than many other speech acts, primarily because it may require extensive negotiations as well as politeness strategies to protect the interlocutors' face needs and self-image (Gass et al., 2020). In social interaction, a speaker may resort to a wide variety of linguistic expressions to communicate a refusal appropriately in a way that meets sociocultural norms (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008).

A refusal response can be expressed directly or indirectly, and often accompanied by other adjuncts to refusals (Beebe et al., 1999). A direct refusal reflects the clarity of the speaker's communicative intention (e.g. "No" and "I can't"). In indirect refusals, the degree of complexity heightens because the speaker needs to opt for the most appropriate form to attenuate the unpleasantness of a direct refusal. Among these indirect strategies of refusals are apologies (e.g. I'm so sorry), excuses (e.g. I have an appointment), postponements (e.g. I'd rather go camping tomorrow), and wishes (e.g. I wish I could come). Furthermore, refusals are often accompanied by various adjuncts that follow or preface the main refusal utterance. According to Beebe et al (1990), a refusal sequence may consist of pre-refusal strategies (used to prepare the addressee for a forthcoming refusal), head act (the main refusal response), and post-refusal strategies (used to conclude the refusal response). Hence, refusals can be classified into semantic formulas/heads and adjuncts. The former includes a main response act (whether direct or indirect) while the latter includes pre-refusal and post-refusal strategies that may accompany the main refusal act but not themselves employed to convey refusals.

Speech acts are commonly examined within the field of contrastive pragmatics, which is concerned with systematically comparing and contrasting pragmatic phenomena in different languages, with the focus on describing differences and similarities between two languages (Kranich, 2016). Such contrastive investigations typically address how certain communicative functions (e.g. refusals, offering, inviting) are realized in different languages and what strategies are used in the realization of a given speech act (Barron, 2003). Even though communicative functions themselves are presumably universal, their linguistic realization may differ from one language to another, therefore, a particular function is to be contrasted in a number of languages (Trosborg, 1994).

The employment of a multilingual/multicultural approach in pragmatic research can enhance our knowledge of unknown or little understood aspects, allowing for issuing judgments on what is culture-specific or universal of a speech act (Ogiermann, 2009). Various speech acts have been dealt with from the perspective of contrastive pragmatics, to mention a few, requests and apologies in English and Uruguay (Reiter, 2000), requests in Chinese and Korean (Rue & Zhang, 2008), and refusals in American English and Egyptian Arabic (Nelson et al, 1998).

The study of refusals offers an illumining source of information on the social values of a speech community and brings insights into the social norms of different cultures (Al-Ghamdi and Alqarni, 2019). Refusals are also of scholarly interest due to their face-threatening nature and their typically complex constructions. People commonly use refusals for various reasons in their daily interactions in all languages. However, they do not refuse in the same way- the way refusals are realized and employed varies from one language to another. Saying 'No', for example, to an invitation or request is not an easy task since it may risk offending the addressee. Whereas many studies have focused on speech acts such as apologies, requests, and thanking, there has been much less examination of refusals, especially, in contrastive area. More particularly, most of the present cross-cultural studies on Arabic refusals, if not all, have been concerned with English language. A study on refusal in Arabic and Spanish has not yet been undertaken. Hence, from contrastive pragmatic perspective, the present study aims at contributing to the research of refusal speech act by investigating potential similarities and differences between Jordanian Arabic and Castilian Spanish regarding refusal to invitation.

Literature Review

A great number of studies have dealt with refusal from various perspectives and models in different languages. Beebe et al (1990) dealt with refusals in terms of their order, frequency, and content. In their study, all participants tended to initiate their refusal to invitations with adjuncts such as 'well' and 'thank you'. Their study presented a classification of refusal strategies that has influenced a large number of the subsequent studies on refusal to date. The proposed classification comprises of three main categories: direct refusal, indirect refusals, and adjuncts to refusal. Osborne (2010) investigated refusals to invitations by Brazilian Portuguese speakers who showed some tendency to personalize and repeat reasons to reinforce and mitigate their refusal. In Canadian English, Farenkia (2019) found that when declining invitations from friends, indirect strategies were mostly favored, particularly, the strategies of reason and regret.

From variational pragmatics, Farenkia (2015) analyzed refusal to invitation in two regional varieties of French, Cameroonian and Hexagonal French. The most common strategies by both varieties were giving excuses and apologies. From the same perspective, Ren (2015) examined refusals in two varieties of Chinese (Mainland and Taiwan). Both varieties showed a strong preference for indirect strategies.

Many studies have been concerned with comparing refusals in English with other languages such as German, Italian, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic. In a study on Korean and American refusals, Kwon (2004) reported that the Korean refusers preferred indirect strategies while the American refusers preferred direct strategies. By contrast, in Guo's study (2012), English speakers, compared to their Chinese counterparts, preferred highly indirect strategies. In another study, Beckers (1999) revealed that Americans used more strategies than Germans but both groups relied on the strategy of reason in their refusals.

While a number of studies have dealt with refusal in Arabic, most of them are cross-cultural that compare Arabic with English, for example, Egyptian Arabic (Nelson, 2002), Jordanian Arabic (Al-Issa, 1998), Iraqi Arabic (Jasim, 2017), Yemeni Arabic (Al-Eryani, 2007), and Moroccan Arabic (Anssari Naim, 2016).

In Nelson et al's (2002) study on refusal by Egyptian Arabic and American English speakers, both groups of participants employed relatively similar strategies of refusal with similar frequency. In Saudi Arabic and Australian English, Alhaidari (2009) reported that while all participants applied the same indirect strategies, they differed in length, frequencies and content of the refusal strategies. In Iraqi Arabic, Jasim (2017) analyzed refusals used by Iraqi Arabic and British English speakers, reporting that indirect strategies were the highest by both groups.

In Jordanian context, Al-Issa (1998) made a comparison between Jordanian Arabic speakers and American English speakers with respective to pragmatic transfer. His results showed that both groups of speakers relied on the strategy of giving reasons more than other strategies. In a similar study, Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) report that Jordanian Arabic and American English speakers preferred indirect strategies. in a more recent study, AlKayed et al (2020) focused on the politeness strategies used by Jordanians when performing refusal. From a gender perspective, Yousef and Al-Khawaldeh (2021) studied the impact of gender on the realization of refusal in Jordanian Arabic.

Refusal in Spanish language has been approached by a number of studies (e.g. Feˊlix-Brasdefer, 2003; Margalef-Boada, 1993; VonCanon, 2006). Feˊlix-Brasdefer (2003) investigated the use of politeness strategies by native speakers and non-native speakers of Spanish when declining an invitation. Although both groups favored similar strategies of refusal, they differed in the preference and frequency of these strategies. Margalef-Boada (1993) compared the use of refusals among native speakers of peninsular Spanish and German. The findings indicated that the strategies with high frequency for all participants were reason, and regret. Comparing refusal by native speakers of Spanish and English, VonCanon (2006) reported that giving reasons was the most commonly used strategy by both groups. Siebold and Busch (2015) explored refusals in Peninsular Spanish and German. Their analysis demonstrated that the Spanish students showed a higher preference for indirect strategies. Elias (2016) reported that the Spanish participants preferred to decline indirectly, mainly, by giving reasons and indefinite replies.

Methodology

The data of the study were elicited via DCT (discourse completion task). DCT has been characterized as an ideal way and the most widespread method for data elicitation in cross-cultural research, particularly, for comparing strategies and patterns of speech acts (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Rue and Zhang, 2008). DCT-based research has some distinct advantages, compared to other speech act data collection methods. For example, (1) DCT allows for obtaining large amounts of data in a short period of time; (2) stereotypical expressions and patterns of a particular speech act can be easily identified; (3) the kinds of strategies used by the subjects to perform a certain speech act in a given situation are made available for analysis; (4) sociolinguistic variables (e.g. gender and social status) can be highly controlled (Byon, 2015).

The study included 100 participants: 50 Jordanian Arabic native speakers and 50 Spanish native speakers. Each group contained female and male participants, aging between 21 and 30. All of them are undergraduate students from different majors. The Jordanian participants are from three universities in Jordan while the Spanish are from two universities in Spain. All of the situations in the data required a refusal response to an inviter of equal status (friend to friend). Due to space limitation, non-equal situations (e.g. lower-higher, higher-lower) are excluded in order to arrive at a more in-depth analysis and satisfactory description of the phenomenon at issue.

All participants signed a consent form and were informed about the objectives of the study. Then, they were asked to respond negatively to four different situations of invitation in writing: graduation celebration party, birthday party, dinner party, and drink after class.

The analysis was mainly based on the classification proposed by Beebe et al's (1990), in addition to what has been given in the reviewed studies on refusal. Each refusal occurrence was independently examined and segmented into two main categories: refusal strategies (subdivided into direct and indirect head acts) and adjuncts. Following Beebe et al (1990), refusal responses were coded in terms of order, for example, this refusal response *"I'm sorry, I can't, I have a meeting now, thanks"* can be coded as a combination of units as follows:

[regret] [negative ability] [reason] [gratitude]

A further focus of the study is that each category (heads and adjuncts) were statistically counted to account for the frequency of each one. The findings in each group of participants are compared to account for similarities and differences.

Findings and discussion

The present section examines the differences and similarities of the refusal realization in both Jordanian Arabic and Castilian Spanish in response to invitations. The findings are introduced, discussed, and compared in both cultures. Following Beebe et al (1990), the identified refusals were categorized into semantic formulas/ strategies and adjuncts. These categories were observed to occur with various degrees of preference in each groups of the respondents. The following sub-sections address independently the findings on direct strategies, indirect strategies, adjuncts, and refusal sequence/ order in both groups of speakers, respectively. Illustrative examples from Jordanian Arabic and Castilian Spanish, along with their English translations, are also provided. Examples numbered (**-a)** represent Jordanian Arabic refusals and those numbered (**-b**) represent Castilian Spanish refusals. Overall, the findings are clearly summarized in Table (1) and (2) and discussed elaborately in the following sub-sections.

Table (1). Refusal strategies and adjuncts found in the data.

Categories	Jordanian Arabic		Castilian Spanish	
I. Direct strategies	No	Percentage	No	Percentage
a. Performative	0	0	0	0
b. Non-performative statement				
- No	0	0	0	0
- Negative ability	156	97.5	168	96
- willingness	4	2.5	7	4
Total	160	100%	175	100%
II. Indirect strategies				
a. Statement of regret	158	35.74	132	34.19
b. Wish	12	2.71	9	2.33
c. Reason	130	29.41	167	43.26
d. Statement of alternative	12	2.71	41	10.62
e. Set of condition for future or past acceptance	7	1.58	14	3.62
f. Promise of future acceptance	66	14.93	9	2.33
g. Statement of principle	2	0.45	1	0.25
h. Statement of philosophy	0	0	0	0
i. Attempt to dissuade	2	0.45	0	0
J. Unspecific or indefinite reply	2	0.45	1	0.25
k. Lack of enthusiasm	4	0.90	9	2.33
k. Verbal Avoidance				
- postponement	13	2.94	3	0.77
l. Proverbs	34	7.69	0	0
Total	442	100%	386	100%
III. Adjuncts				
a. Statement of positive opinion/ feeling or agreement	34	9.47	76	28.57
b. Statement of empathy	6	1.67	9	3.38
c. Pause fillers	0	0	0	0
d. Gratitude /appreciation	172	47.91	181	68.04
e. Swearing	147	40.94	0	0
Total	359	100%	266	100%

Table (2). Frequency of refusal strategies in the data.

Strategies	Jordanian Arabic		Castilian Spanish		Total
Direct	160	26.57%	175	31.19%	335
Indirect	442	73.42%	386	68.80%	828
Total	602	100%	561	100%	-

Direct refusal strategies

The analysis revealed that direct strategies were commonly used by both Jordanian speakers and Spanish speakers. Their total frequency in both groups of participants is 335 times: 160 by the Jordanian groups and 175 by the Spanish group, as shown in Table (2). It seems that there was no significant difference between these two groups regarding direct strategies of refusal. However, the Spanish participants were observed to use slightly more direct strategies, which may be attributed to that Spanish society is less collectivistic than its Jordanian counterpart. Collectivist cultures are inclined to be more indirect in their style of communication as they display a greater concern for preserving interpersonal harmony and avoiding offense and embarrassment (Anchimbe, 2018).

Although direct refusal can be realized in different patterns in the literature, namely, *blatant 'No'*, *performative verb* (e.g. 'I refuse'), and *negative willingness* (e.g. 'I don't want/like'), only one direct form, *negative ability,* emerged in the refusals of both groups. That is, the participants highly preferred to express their inability to accept the invitation using 'I can't' rather than, for example, 'No', 'I don't want', or 'I refuse'. As seen in Example (1), the invitee expressed his refusal by asserting his inability to comply with the invitation.

Example (1):
a. (..ما بقدر اشرب اشي..)
'…I can't drink anything…'

b. (... pero no puedo...)
'... I can't...'

The reliance on *negative ability* by both groups may be justified on one hand that the invitee needs to make his refusal extremely explicit to abort any insistence from the inviter and to draw the act of inviting to a close. On the other hand, he simultaneously wants his refusal to be less face-threatening. Although the close relationship between the participants, bluntness strategies (*Flat No*) and *performatives* were never used. This may signal that for Jordanian and Spanish speakers those two strategies are an inappropriate way (face-threatening) to refuse invitations even if they were from friends. This is in line with Anssari-Naim (2016), who argued that it is not possible for the addressee to use *flat no* to refuse an invitation, though it is possible to be used to refuse a suggestion or a request.

It is worth mentioning that as direct refusals are commonly used by both groups of participants, all of their occurrences were accompanied with various indirect and adjunct strategies (See next section). This is because when people intend to be direct in their refusal, they commonly employ some mitigation or politeness devices to smoothen their refusal and avoid potentially undesired effects.

Indirect refusal strategies

Indirectness is viewed as a deviation from the basic content of the utterance to the speaker's intention, in which an indirect utterance conveys something more or other than its literal meaning (Livnat et al 2020). The function of indirect strategies of refusal is to attenuate the effect of the refusal response that a direct response may have on the interlocutor. It is generally described as a more polite technique that allows the invitee to refuse with maintaining cordial interaction (ibid). Thus, indirectness has frequently been equated with politeness (Rundquist, 2007).

As shown in Table (1), the total frequency of the indirect strategies was 828: 442 times by the Jordanian participants and 386 times by the Spanish participants. It seems that the Jordanian participants tended to be more indirect in their refusals than their Spanish counterparts. The analysis revealed that 12 indirect strategies were detected in the data (See Table 1). With the exception of *proverbs* and *attempt to dissuade* being used only by the Jordanians, all those strategies were used by both groups of speakers with different degrees of frequency**.** The indirect strategies used most commonly by the Jordanians were *statement of regret*, *reason* and *promise of future acceptance*. By contrast, the most frequently used by

the Spanish speakers were *reason*, *statement of regret*, and *statement of alternative*. It seems that two strategies were widely shared by both groups, namely, *reason* and *statement of regret*. However, some strategies were totally absent (*statement of philosophy*) or rarely used (e.g. *set of condition for future or past acceptance*, and *attempt to dissuade*).

Roughly speaking, the Jordanian and Spanish respondents shared the same common and uncommon indirect strategies in their refusal to invitations. For example, they both over-relied on *statement of regret* and *reason* and underutilized strategies such as *wish* and *avoidance*. Some differences across both groups of participants can be seen in the use of *statement of alternative* and *promise of future acceptance*. The former was more frequent in the Spanish refusals while the latter was more common in the Jordanian refusals. Thus, it can be said that the use of indirect strategies in both groups is more similar than different. It is worth mentioning that one indirect strategy in the data was not listed in Beebe et al's taxonomy of refusals, namely, *proverbs*.

As shown in Table (2), the statistical analysis revealed that, compared to direct strategies, indirect strategies had a higher percentage, amounting to a total of 73.42 % of the entire occurrences of refusal strategies in the Jordanian refusals and 68.80 % in the Spanish refusals.

Compared to direct strategies, the findings revealed that both Spanish and Jordanian speakers prefer indirect to direct strategies. This is in line with Chen et al (1995) that direct refusal is the least frequently used when the interlocutors are of same status. This may be attributed to the potentially uncompromising and confrontational tone of direct refusals that may pose a threat or risk social harmony to interpersonal relationships between equal status interlocutors (Chen et al, 1995), especially, in the Jordanian culture that counts direct refusal quite often as an impolite behavior. In pragmatic research, directness is assumed to be in essence impolite (Grainger & Mills, 2016). The indirect semantic formulas with a high frequency, compared to others, in either both groups or one of them will be elaborated below.

Statement of regret

This strategy includes expressions of regret, apology, and asking for forgiveness (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008), which is seen as a polite convention to express concern and empathy. When refusing an invitation, the need for apologies as a sign of politeness and decency arises because it is perceived as violating social norms. The findings showed that this strategy is one of the common strategies used by the Jordanian and Spanish respondents to regret their incapability to accept the inviter's invitation (see Example 2) as a sign of politeness to maintain social harmony between the inviter and the invitee.

Example (2):

a. (بدك تعذرني لاني مشغول ع الاخر فآسف جدا...)

'Sorry, I'm very busy, I'm awfully sorry…'

b. (Lo siento, Es que tengo un examen...)

'I'm sorry, I have an exam...'

Both groups of respondents employed a high proportion of *statements of regret*, which means that they prefer this strategy as an appropriate way to refuse an invitation. It ranked the first in the Jordanian data and the second in the Spanish data. The high similarity between the two groups concerning *statement of regret* may be explained that since refusal counts a dispreferred response that violates a social norm of accepting invitations, repair work such as regret and apology, (rather than saying 'no' directly) is needed to signal that the refuser still values the inviter's face and their in-group relationship (Ren et al, 2013).

As one difference between the two groups, the findings showed that unlike the Spanish respondents, many of the Jordanian participants apologized twice in the same response. This may reflect that they are more sensitive to refusals either as inviters or invitees. Another difference is that the Jordanian respondents employed various apologetic expressions to lessen the effect of declining an invitation This emphasizes that the Jordanians count apologies as a significant act of

politeness and, thus, a redressive strategy of refusal to invitation. This finding is in line with Al-Khatib (2006) that Jordanians tend to employ a variety of apologetic forms since accepting an invitation is the norm among Jordanians.

Some studies claim that *Statement of Regret* is incapable to effectuate refusal, thus, it cannot be taken as a refusal strategy but as an adjunct (Maróti, 2016). However, the present findings prove that this strategy can be used as a head act of refusal as it was frequently used by Jordanian and Spanish groups to serve refusal to invitation.

Reason

This strategy is used when the invitee provides the inviter with an explanation, excuse, or justification beyond his refusal. It is one of the highly preferred strategies by both Jordanian and Spanish participants (see Table 1), ranking first in the Spanish data (43. 26 %) and second in the Jordanian data (29.41 %). This is in line with Elias (2016) that giving reasons for declining an invitation is the most preferred strategy by Spanish speakers. The results here are also similar to Beebe et al (1990), where the majority of refusals in their study were reported to contain reasons. With giving reasons being frequently used in the Jordanian and Spanish data, this emphasizes that this strategy, which is common across all cultures, can be taken as universal or unmarked (Lyuh and Tak, 2018*).*

This high frequency of giving reasons indicates that expressing regrets or negative ability is usually not enough to decline an invitation, therefore, the invitee has to offer strong reasons for his non-compliance. This helps the invitee decline tactfully in a manner that allows him to maintain interpersonal relations and develop polite and honest ways of responding to others.

Despite the heavy reliance on the strategy of reasons in both groups, they varied regarding their tendency to employ specific reasons to the refusal. As shown in Example (3), The Spanish reasons were more elaborate and specific. Out of the total frequency of reasons in the Jordanian data, 79 reasons were general, while 121 reasons of the Spanish were specific. Thus, the findings point out that the Jordanians prefer avoiding specific reasons for their refusals. This is particularly important as it is related to two different cultures (eastern and western). It is in agreement with the generally cultural view that western cultures tend to prefer more specific and detailed reasons for their refusals such as American and British, while eastern cultures tend to give more general reasons such as Egyptian, Iraqi, and Japanese (Beebe et al., 1990; Jasim, 2017; Morkus, 2009).

Example (3):

a.(صدقني ما بقدر مشغول جدا...)
'I really can't, I'm very busy…'

b. (...porque tengo una cita con el director del departamento)
'..I have an appointment with the head of the deprtment'

The frequent use of specific reasons by the Spanish participants can be justified that the refuser intends his refusal to be more acceptable and convincing for the inviter that helps him appear more honest and realistic in his rejection. Concerning the frequent use of general reasons by the Jordanians, the speaker may feel that it is of a personal nature to divulge the real reason to others. Furthermore, what seems to be a good or valid excuse for the refuser might not be so for the inviter, who might count it as unwillingness to accept the invitation.

Promise of future acceptance

According to the findings, the Jordanian respondents showed a tendency for employing *promise of future acceptance* to imply a promise to accept a similar invitation at some point in the future, thus, the inviter can entertain a future positive response. This indicates that this strategy is appropriate to serve refusal in the Jordanian culture as it shows the refuser is willing to accept a future invitation (consider Example 4).

Example (4):

a.(مرة ثانية إن شاء الله بوعدك)

'Next time God willing, I promise'

b. (...Te prometo que la próxima estaré)

'…I promise you next time I'll'

By contrast, the Spanish respondents rarely used it in their refusals, which indicates that they do not like to commit themselves to accept a future invitation because it may be embarrassing if the next invitation comes and they find themselves obliged to accept it. This low frequency is mainly cultural, where it is common in Spanish to refuse invitations without giving promises (Maíz Arévalo, 2009).

Statement of Alternative

According to Table (1), the Spanish participants tended to use this strategy (11%) more than the Jordanians did (3%). The low use by the Jordanians reflects that they dispreferred giving alternatives to invitation, unlike the Spanish respondents, who feel it is acceptable to give alternatives. However, this strategy was reported to be widely common in Arab interactions (Al-Ghamdi & Alqarni, 2019).

It seems that alternatives were used in the data to avoid a complete refusal since the invitation itself is not declined but some related details need (e.g. time or place) to be discussed or reconsidered to reach a compromise solution, as seen in Example (5). This strategy can be thought of as a polite technique that reflects the refuser's concerns for the inviter's social image or feelings by suggesting alternatives to seek a mutual agreement. It is worth mentioning that alternatives were consistently buttressed by a reason that renders an alternative more justifiable or agreeable.

Example (5):

a. (ليش ما تخليها الجمعة كونه أنسب للجميع)

'Why don't you make it on Friday because it's relevant for us?'

b. (Qué te parece el fin de semana?)

'How about at the weekend?'

Proverbs

This strategy, which is not included in Beebe et al's classification, employs traditional sayings with popular currency that present a moral truth in a pithy manner. (Kaung, 2021). It offers one of the most efficient and accessible means functioning as a mitigating strategy to avoid a breach in social relations (Flores, 2020).

According to the findings, this strategy was moderately used by the Jordanians (8%), whereas, it was absent in the Spanish refusals. It seems that the Jordanian respondents used it as a mitigating and non-confrontational way to decline an invitation that helps the invitee mask or substitute direct refusal that would otherwise be deemed abrasive. A justification beyond using proverbs in the Jordanian refusals can be that indirectness is a major component of proverbs, which can encapsulate what the refuser wants to say and helps him effectively convey his response.

As illustrated in Example (6), all the proverbs used in the data were pertinent to the notion of refusal as they call for forgiveness, finding excuses for others, respecting others' freedom, and accepting apologies.

Example (6):

- (...التمس لأخيك عذرا...)

'…Make an excuse for your brother [in faith]…'

(...تجري الرياح بما لا تشتهي السفن...) -
'…Wind sometimes blows in the wrong direction for the ships…'

The findings support the studies that underscored the use of proverbs in the context of refusing, particularly in collectivistic cultures such as Egyptian and Mexican (Morkus,2009; Felix-Brasdefer,2008).

Adjuncts

Adjuncts are commonly employed in both Jordanian and Spanish data. Their total number in the data amounts to 625 instances (57.44 % of them by the Jordanian group and 42.56 % by the Spanish group). Overall, the Jordanians tended to produce more adjuncts to elaborate their refusals than the Spaniards.

As shown in Table (1), three types of adjuncts to refusals were shared by both groups, namely, *gratitude*, *empathy*, and *positive opinion*. Remarkably, the Jordanians used considerably a new type of adjuncts (not listed in Beebe et al's taxonomy) that belongs to swearing expressions, which never appeared in the Spanish responses. These types are addressed in greater details below.

Gratitude

The statistical analysis, as shown in Table (1), revealed that *gratitude* is the most popularly used by both groups (around 48% in the Jordanian adjuncts and around 68% in the Spanish adjuncts). The results displayed that the choice of *gratitude* in both groups was quite similar, which signals that it was widely used as a mitigating tool that soothes the unpleasant effect of the refusal and consoles the inviter (Alemi & Tajeddin, 2013). This heavy reliance on this adjunct may be due to the fact that it has been described as an inherently polite act that serves an appreciative acknowledgment, redressive and convivial action, and a marker of intimacy, based on its affective value (Leech, 2014).

It can be said that both groups expressed higher levels of respect towards the inviter by employing *gratitude* to lessen the force of refusal (see Example 7). In terms of position, expressions of *gratitude* tended to occur initially in the Spanish refusals and finally in the Jordanian refusals. It should be pointed out that their occurrence in the Jordanian refusals serves, besides its pragmatic function, a discourse function of closing a conversation. This is in agreement with its functional properties in the pragmatic research on thanking speech act (Jautz, 2013).

Example (7):

a.(تسلم شكرا الك, عندي دراسة كثير...)
'…I have a lot of study. Thank you so much'

b.   (Te lo agradezco, pero no puedo...)
'Thanks a lot, but I really can't…'

Positive opinion

This strategy includes positive comments or remarks such as agreement (e.g. ok), evaluation (e.g. good idea) willingness (e.g. I'd love to), feelings (e.g. I'm glad), well-wishing and congratulating (e.g. happy birthday) (Flix-Bradsfere, 2008). The results showed that there was a difference between the Jordanian and Spanish groups in using this strategy, where the Spanish used it (28.57%) more often than their Jordanian counterparts (9.47%). The Spanish respondents tended to give positive opinions in the form of evaluation and willingness to mitigate their noncompliance with the invitation, whereas the Jordanians tended to use this strategy in the form of well-wishing and congratulating.

As seen in Example (8), it is worth noting that most of the instances of positive opinion prefaced a refusal act, which empathizes that it is an effective device for the refuser to introduce his refusal. It was also observed that it was often immediately followed by the strategy of *reason* or *regret*.

Example (8):

a.(إن شاء الله الف مبروك بس للأسف ما راح اتمكن احضر...)
'Congratulations, but unfortunately I won't be able to attend…'

b. (Buena idea, pero no me va bien a esa hora…)
'Good idea, but this time is not convenient for me..'

Swearing

Swearing normally happens when "one calls upon God or some other supernatural agent or some sacred person or object or revered institution" (Searle and Vanderveken, 1984:188). Though *swearing* was not listed in Beebe et al (1990), it was commonly used in the data to accompany refusal acts. Remarkably, it was exclusively used by the Jordanian respondents, showing a noticeable appearance in their refusals, which may be because of the great influence of Islam on Jordanians' daily communication. In Jordanian culture, *swearing* counts as a fundamental device used to assert the speaker's utterance and boost his credibility as it is forbidden and sinful in Islam to swear to a lie.

As most of the instances of *swearing* prefaced refusals, it only appeared to preface or follow the strategies of *negative ability* and *reason*. Statistically speaking, this adjunct appeared 41% of the entire frequency of Jordanian adjuncts. This high frequency may be because by the invocation of God, the degree of strength of the speaker's proposition is increased and that the speaker is truly telling the truth. That is, it helps the refuser persuade the inviter that he genuinely cannot comply with the invitation, thus, mitigating the force of his refusal.

The findings here are in agreement with Abdel-Jawad (2000), Al-Issa, (1998), and Jasim, (2017) that swearing is used in Arabic to mitigate the force of refusals and emphasize the truth of the speaker's proposition.

Example (9):

(والله اني حاب احضر بس...)
'I swear to God, I'd love to attend but…'

Statement of empathy

In *statement of empathy*, the speaker expresses some identification with and understanding of the inviter's situation, feelings, and attitudes (Savic, 2014). This strategy showed a rare presence in the Spanish and Jordanian refusal responses (1.67% and 3.38, respectively). Its whole occurrences in both groups were to initiate a refusal response. As seen in Example (10), it was utilized by both groups to mitigate the refusal by expressing concern for the inviter in order to convey a positive attitude to him. To compare the findings here with the literature, this strategy was reported to be common in British English and infrequent in Iraqi Arabic (Jasim, (2017).

Example (10):

a.(انتي عارفه قديش بحبك ..)
'You know how much I love you…'

b. (yo sé que te vas a enfadar….)
'I know you'll be upset...'

Order of refusal strategies

Refusal strategies are typically used in combination (i.e. two strategies or more to appear in a sequence). Therefore, it is important to examine the most frequently used combinations and how they are ordered. Due to space limitation, the focus will be on the prototypical orders of refusal in the Jordanian and Spanish responses, summarized in Table (3) and (4).

Table (3). Most common refusal orders in Jordanian refusals.

(DS= direct strategy; IS= indirect strategy; AD= adjuncts)

Position 1	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4	Position 5
[swearing [AD]]	[negative ability [DS]]	[reason [IS]]	[regret [IS]]	[gratitude [AD]]
[regret [IS]]	[negative ability [DS]]	[reason [IS]]	-	-
[regret [IS]]	[negative ability [DS]]	[gratitude [AD]]	-	-

Table (4). Most common refusal orders in Spanish refusals.

(DS= direct strategy; IS= indirect strategy; AD= adjuncts)

Position 1	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4
[gratitude [AD]]	[regret [IS]]	[negative ability [DS]]	[reason [IS]]
[negative ability [DS]]	[reason [IS]]	[regret [IS]]	-
[positive opinion [AD]]	[negative ability [DS]]	[alternative [IS]]	-

As noticed in Table (3) and (4), both groups showed a predilection to employ the same typical components in their refusal combinations: *negative ability*, *regret*, *reason*, and *gratitude*. However, the order in which they appeared is different. As the *statements of regret* were common in most of the refusal orders, the Jordanian participants tended to make them first or fourth in the sequence while the Spanish participants tended to make their regrets second or third. They were also found in many instances to follow *reasons*.

The use of *reasons* was also reported to be common in the refusal sequence of both groups. However, it was frequently placed in the third position in the Jordanian sequence and in the second and fourth position in the Spanish one. Both groups often placed this strategy immediately after *negative ability*, which may be because explaining to the inviter why an invitation is declined helps alleviate the disruptive influence of the refusal on him.

Another typical component in the refusal sequence of both groups is *negative ability*. In the Jordanian refusals, it appeared mainly in the same position (second) and in different positions in the Spanish refusal: third, first, and second, respectively.

The Spanish refusal order tended to start with an adjunct more than Jordanians, particularly, *gratitude* and *positive opinion*. However, the Jordanian order of refusal commonly used *swearing* at the initial position. In the final position of the sequence, the Jordanians were inclined to end the response with *gratitude*, unlike the Spaniards. All combinations in which *positive opinion* appeared occurred initially in both groups of data, followed either by *negative ability* or *statements of regret*. Adjuncts were only placed at the peripheral position in the refusal sequence: initially or finally. Roughly speaking, adjuncts tended to occur initially in Spanish refusals and finally the Jordanian refusals.

Remarkably, the refusal sequences in the Jordanian data, compared to their Spanish counterparts, tended relatively to employ longer sequences. The refusal combinations often extended from three to five components in the Jordanian data but three to four in the Spanish data. This might be due to the fact that Jordanians are more concerned about preserving a social harmony with the interlocutor. It was reported that there is a strong correlation between the length of the refusal response and the amount of respect paid to the invitee- that is, short responses are less polite (Alhaidari, 2009)

Conclusion

The study examined the differences and similarities of the refusal to invitations from friends in both Jordanian Arabic and Castilian Spanish. The findings showed that both groups of participants tended to be more indirect in their refusals. Most of the identified strategies were used by both groups of speakers with different degrees of preference. While the dominant direct strategy was *negative ability* in both groups of participants, the most common indirect strategies by the Jordanians were *statement of regret* and *reason* and by the Spaniards were *giving reasons* and *statement of regret*. It can be said that the use of refusal strategies in both groups is more similar than different

The findings indicated that the Jordanians produced the highest number of adjuncts, compared to their Spanish

counterparts. There were three different types shared by both groups, *gratitude*, *statement of empathy*, and *statement of positive Opinion*. New adjunct to refusal and indirect strategy, namely, *swearing* and *proverbs* (not included in Beebe et al (1990)), were exclusively used by the Jordanians. The findings also revealed that both groups tended to include the same typical components in their refusal response (*regret*, *reason*, *negative ability*, and *gratitude*) but differ in the order of these components. The refusal sequences in both groups demonstrated that the Jordanians, compared to their Spanish counterparts, tended relatively to employ longer sequences. Further research on Jordanian and Spanish refusal in other situations (refusal to suggestions, requests, and offers) and in different levels of social distance (e.g. strangers) and power (unequal status relationships e.g. higher or lower status refusers) is recommended.

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