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REFUSAL STRATEGIES IN SAUDI AND
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REFUSAL STRATEGIES IN SAUDI AND AMERICAN CULTURES

By

Hamdan Ghareeb Al-Shalawi

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

REFUSAL STRATEGIES IN SAUDI AND AMERICAN CULTURES

BY

Hamdan Ghareeb Al-Shalawi

The study investigates the semantic formulas used by Saudi and American male undergraduate students in the speech act of refusal. The data were collected through a DCT questionnaire and were analyzed as consisting of semantic formulas following Beebe and Cummings (1985).

The results of this research revealed that Saudis and Americans used similar semantic formulas in refusing requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions and there were no significant differences between them except in the employment of direct 'no.' They, however, differed in the number of semantic formulas used in each situation and in the content of their explanations which reflected some values of Saudi and American cultures. The choices of semantic formulas reflected the different characteristics of each culture. Saudi refusals reflected collectivistic culture, while American refusals reflected individualistic culture. Americans were more straightforward and concerned about the clarity of their explanations than Saudis.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, my sons, Abdulrahman and Abdullah, and my

daughters, Khawlah, Arwa, and Asma

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the problem

Cross-cultural communication has received great attention recently due to global migration and the increasingly cross-cultural interactions in economic, political and personal relationships all over the world (Klopf and Park, 1982). Cross-cultural communication without an understanding of different sociolinguistic rules and principles of face-to-face interaction among cultures leads to cross-cultural misunderstanding and might lead to serious consequences. One good example of this kind of cross-cultural misunderstanding is reported by Takahashi and Beebe (1987). In the summit meeting between president Nixon and the prime minister Sato of Japan, Nixon asked Sato to reduce Japan's fabric export to the United States. Sato replied 'zinsho shimaso,' which was literally translated into English as 'I will take care of it.' Hearing this response, Nixon thought he had received an approval and a commitment and became very angry when Sato failed to fulfill his promise and take any effective action. In fact, Sato did not make any commitment, since this kind of statement in Japanese culture is a polite and an indirect way of refusing.

The need for cross-cultural communication research has been recognized in the field of linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and communication not only for the purpose of language teaching or illustration of cultures, behaviors and communication systems, but also for enhancing and raising cross-cultural understanding. Wolfson (1989:2) has stated that:

> "Each culture has its own unique set of conventions, rules and patterns for the conduct of communication and these must be understood in the context of the general system that reflects the values and the structure of the society. No two societies are quite alike in this respect, and no group has a monopoly on 'correct' sociolinguestic behavior."

The assumption that the principals underlying face-to-face interaction are universal was introduced by the work of philosophers of language such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1979), and Paul Grice (1975). This assumption, however, is not applicable to all societies. Many studies have supported Wolfson's statement and proved that in different societies and communities, people speak and behave differently and these differences reflect different cultural values or at least different hierarchies of values (e.g., Tannen 1981a; Schiffrin 1984; Keenan 1976). In other words, what counts as polite or impolite may differ from group to group.

Sociolinguistic and second language teaching research helped us understand that learners of languages must acquire not only syntax,

phonology, and lexicon, but must also acquire the language's rules of use (Gumperz 1966; Hymes 1971; Widdowson 1978; Canale and Swain1980). Hymes (1964) introduced the notion of 'communicative competence' to cover both the speaker's knowledge of linguistic rules, as well as the sociocultural rules of speaking. Preston (1989:10) stated that: "What must be said, to whom, with what tone of voice and how the talk (or silence) of others is to be taken are some of the 'communicative competence' aspects of language ability." A lack of knowledge about different norms and value systems of each culture is one reason for cross-cultural misunderstanding and misconception. Thomas (1983, 1984) stressed the importance of sociolinguistic rules of speaking and pointed out the seriousness of the violation of these rules. He (1983) introduced the notion of "cross-cultural pragmatic failure" which he defines as the inability to understand 'what is meant by what is said' and argued that, in different cultures, different pragmatic rules may be found. He noted that pragmatic failure is more serious than linguistic error and continued to argue that pragmatic failure may affect the speaker as a person, while linguistic error shows only that the speaker is not proficient in the language. Thus, those who want to be fluent in a language must posses the linguistic competence as well as communicative competence. In other words, to interact effectively with

speakers from other cultures, one must learn the norms and principles of speaking as well as the rules of grammar specific to that language

There has been widespread interest in studying how different speech acts are performed across languages to understand the different norms and values of societies: refusals (Takahashi and Beebe, 1987; Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1991; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992b), requests (Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1983, 1987; Blum-Kulka and House, 1989), apologies (Olshtain, 1989; Cohen and Oleshtain, 1981; Barnlund and Yoshioka, 1990; Wolfson, Marmor, and Jones, 1989), thanks (Eisenstein and Bodman, 1986), complaints (House and Kasper, 1981; DeCapue, 1989), compliments (Wolfson, 1981 ; Barnlund and Araki, 1985), suggestions (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1990), openings (Omar, 1992), and closings (Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992a).

In spite of the importance of cross-cultural communication to linguists and second language educators, there is no single empirical study that has compared the specific speech act of refusal of Saudis (native speakers of Arabic) and Americans (native speakers of English). The only study that the researcher came across which had used Arabic native speakers as subjects to test native and nonnative rejections collected from academic advising sessions was conducted by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991). In their study, the nonnative speakers were

from several countries. The native languages of these nonnative speakers were: Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Malay, Spanish, Thai, Bengali, Chicchewa, and Yoruba. The present study, however, is an attempt to bridge the gap in this area of cross-cultural pragmatics and to investigate the strategies used by both cultures (Saudi and American) when performing the speech act of refusals. The differences and/or similarities were investigated in terms of two different variables--social status (high-equal-low), and social distance (distant-close). Four different types of speech acts (request, invitation, offer, and suggestion) were used to elicit refusals from both groups.

The significance of the study

As with other speech acts, 'refusals' may serve as an illuminating source of information on the socio-cultural values of a speech community and provide important insights into the social norms that are embedded in cultures. The analysis and description of refusals strategies may provide us with "new information on how native speakers really use language, rather than how we think they perform such acts" (Hatch, 1982).

Although the speech act of refusal is universal across cultures, its occurrence, the situational and social contexts in which it is found, and the linguistic forms used are culture-specific. Gass and Selinker

(1994:183) have stated that: "All languages have a means of performing speech acts and presumably speech acts themselves are universal, yet the 'form' used in specific speech acts varies from culture to culture.

It is also important to study how the realizations of refusals vary cross-culturally, since refusals are major cross-cultural "sticking points" for many nonnative speakers (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz, 1990), and for that reason they are important for second language educators and others involved in cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the speech act of refusal employs many face-saving strategies which are interesting aspects of language usage from a sociolinguistics perspective (Brown and Levinson, 1987:60). They also vary in form and content according to the eliciting speech act (e.g., invitation, request, offer, or suggestion), and they are affected by other sociolinguistic variables.

Therefore, this study may help both learners of Arabic and English to gain communicative competence in the target language and predict the difficulties of learners in expressing themselves spontaneously in the situations where they are expected to refuse.

Questions of the Study

The purpose of this study can be reformulated in terms of the following questions:

1. What are the major semantic formulas used by both groups--Saudis and American-- in the speech act of refusal ?

2. How do Saudis and Americans differ in the choice of semantic formulas?

3. How do the socio-pragmatic features (i.e. social status and social distance) influence the speech act of refusal ?

4. Do Saudis and Americans have different cultures?

5. Does this study confirm the findings of other work in this area or not?

Hypotheses of the Study

Although it is unlikely that no differences exist, the null hypotheses for this study are:

1) There is no significant difference between Saudis and Americans in the employment and the content of semantic formulas used in refusing.

2) There is no significant effect of socio-pragmatic features (i.e. social distance and social status) on the choice of semantic formulas in either Saudi or American groups.

3) There is no significant difference in the number of semantic formulas used in refusing.

4) There is no difference between Saudi and American cultures.

Limitations of the study

This study was limited to male undergraduate university students. This restriction was made due to the difficulties that the researcher faced in finding Saudi female university students who are willing to participate in this study. Also, in order to interpret the results of the study accurately, naturalistic data is needed to complement the written data. Finally, this study only used two variables (social status and social distance) to investigate the speech act of refusal.

Organization of the thesis

In chapter I, the statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, hypotheses, limitations, and organization of the thesis were specified. Chapter II reviews Brown and Levinson's politeness theory and previous studies of refusals. Relevant literature on culture types, mainly collectivism versus individualism and high-context versus low-context cultures are discussed. In chapter III, methodology and data collection are discussed. In chapter IV, the findings and discussion are presented. Finally, a summary, applications and suggestions for further research are made in chapter V.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

After an exhausting and long journey of investigation in Saudi, Egyptian and US libraries and academic institutions, the researcher found no single study that compared the speech act of refusal among Saudis and American cultures. Thus, the researcher tried his best to review some studies that relate, directly or indirectly, to the scope of his study.

Politeness theory was developed from the speech act theory of philosophers of language such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) and form the basis for the types of studies on refusals done in linguistics. This chapter reviews Brown and Levinson's 'Politeness Theory' in some detail and previous studies of refusals. Relevant literature on culture types, mainly the idea of collectivism versus individualism and high-context versus low-context cultures, that might help us understand the different norms and values of societies is also reviewed. This study, however, is not designed to test any of these theories.

The notion of "politeness" in communication has been previously dealt with in a variety of disciplines, e.g., linguistics, psychology, social interaction, and anthropology, because politeness is basic to the

production of social order. The politeness theories developed under the influence of speech act theory are those of R. Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1978). My concern in this study is Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978, 1987).

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

1. Face: Brown and Levinson assumed that every competent speaker of a language has a public self-image called 'face' that he/she wants to preserve. The notion of face was based on Goffman's (1967) concepts of face and face-saving. This face consists of negative and positive aspects:

A) negative face: the desire of the individual not to be imposed on.

b) positive face: the desire of the individual to be approved of or liked by others.

2. Face-threatening acts (henceforth FTA): are the actions that threaten these desires or 'face wants.' Each person assumes that others share these basic 'face wants,' and when involved in social interactions, they are expected to save both the positive and negative face of other people, since threatening other's face may result in threat in return. There are, however, many speech acts which are inherently face-

threatening to the face wants of speakers and/or hearers (e.g., orders, requests, apologies, offers, promises, refusals, etc.).

3. **Strategies:** Speakers therefore employ politeness strategies to mitigate FTAs. The strategies used for saving negative face are negative politeness strategies, and the strategies used for saving positive face are positive politeness strategies.

a) **negative politeness strategies**: are (1) be conventionally indirect, (2) question, hedge, (3) be pessimistic, (4) minimize the imposition, Rx (5) give deference, (6) apologize, (7) impersonalize S and H, (8) state the FTA as a general rule, (9) nominalize, (10) go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H.

b) **positive politeness strategies**: are (1) notice, attend to a H (his/her interests, wants, needs, goods), (2) exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with a H), (3) intensify interest to a H, (4) use in-group identity markers, (5) seek agreement, (6) avoid disagreement, (7) presuppose/raise/assert common ground, (8) joke, (9) assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants, (10) offer, promise, (11) be optimistic, (12) include both S and H in the activity, (13) give (or ask for) reasons, (14) assume or assert reciprocity, (15) give gifts to hearer (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation).

Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed 5 strategies of politeness, from the least redressive to most redressive: (1) do the FTA without

redressive action, baldly on-record, (2) use positive politeness, (3) use negative politeness, (4) do the FTA off-record, (5) don't do the FTA.

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1. without redressive action, baldly

on record   **2. positive politeness**

With redressive action

Do the FTA   **3. negative politeness**

4- Off-Record

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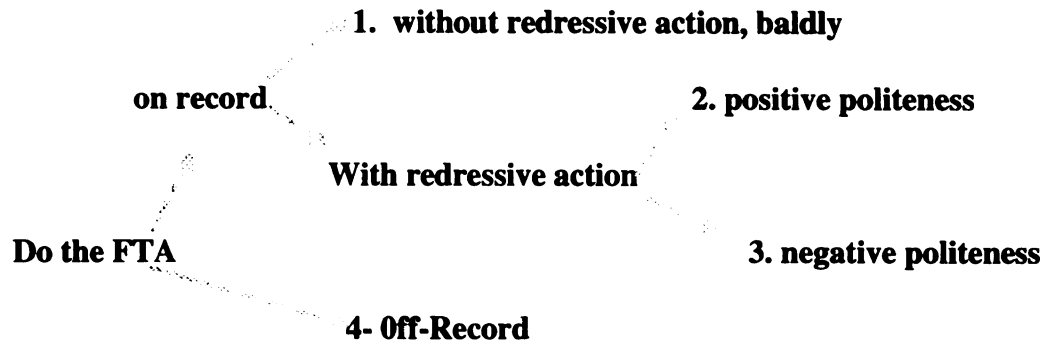
Figure 1. Possible Strategies of Politeness

They claimed that when the relative face-threat increases, a S will select a more redressive strategy. Therefore, a S is likely to select negative politeness strategies over positive politeness when the relative face-threat is high since negative politeness strategies are more redressive than positive politeness strategies.

P, D, and R

Brown and Levinson (1987:243-249) argue that their politeness theory can explain cross-cultural differences in politeness. They proposed that the amount of face-threat carried by a particular speech act in a particular situation (Wx) is determined by the sum of the power

(P) the H has over the S, the social distance (D) between the S and the H, and the absolute imposition (R) inherent to the speech act. Wx is a numerical value representing the estimated degree of threat posed to both the S and H by an FTA. It is composed of the values assigned to D, P, and R:

$$Wx = D (S,H) + P (H,S) + Rx$$

Since different cultures have different values attached to P, D, and Rx, each culture has a different assessment of the seriousness of the FTA, even in the same speech act. These weightings allow more specific identification of 'ethos' or "the effective quality of interaction characteristic of members of a society" (1987:243). Members of different cultures, therefore, tend to employ different kinds of politeness strategies which suit their cultural values.

Individualism versus Collectivism in cultures

According to Triandis, Brislin, and Hui 1988, Collectivism is a more common cultural pattern in Asia, Africa, South America, and the Pacific. It is "characterized by the individuals subordinating their personal goals to the goals of some collectives. The collective is often the extended family, although it can also be a work group (e.g., Japan)."

(P.269). Individualism, on the other hand is a more common cultural pattern in Western Europe and the U.S. It is "characterized by the subordination of a group's goals to a person's own goals" (p. 269). In individualistic cultures, the self is separate from the group, while in collectivistic cultures, the self is part of the group.

In individualistic cultures, people join or leave the group on the basis of costs and benefits of membership in the group. Individualists start conversations very easily even with strangers and like to make many relationships with many people. They don't, however, get into intimate relationships, and they tend to form short-term relationships. In contrast, collectivists are attached to fewer groups which give them their identity. They are group-dependent, so they hardly ever switch in-groups. Any change in in-groups causes major changes in attitudes and behaviors. They are poor joiners of new groups and do very badly when they meet people for the first time. Once they get to know the other person, however, the coldness is replaced by more intense interaction. Collectivists prefer long-term relationships, and they value in-group harmony. This is why they avoid confrontation. Individualists, on the other hand, do not avoid confrontation, since they prefer the clarity of situations over harmony (Lyuh, unpublished dissertation, 1992:30).

Hofstede (1984) points out some of the differences between high and low individualism cultures. He showed that while nuclear family,

self-orientation, individual identity, and universalism (same value standards for all) are characteristics of individualistic culture, the extended family, collectivity-orientation, social identity, and particularism (different value standards for ingroups and outgroups) are characteristic of collectivistic cultures. His research showed that the United States, Australia, and England were the highest on individualism. In addition, he found strong correlation (.82) between individualism and high economic achievement.

Hui and Triandis (1986) surveyed a sample of 49 psychologists and anthropologists from all parts of the world to identify how individualist and collectivist persons act in different situations. Their findings indicated that the main differences between the two were as follows: The collectivist persons were viewed as more likely to be subjected to their in-group influence, to have more consideration for in-group members' opinion when making major personal decisions, and to have more tendency for sharing material resources than individualist persons.

Triandis (1988) points out to the link between collectivism and ethnocentrism. He defines collectivism as: great emphasis on: (a) the views, needs, and goals of the in-group rather than of oneself, (b) social norms and duty defined by the rather behavior to get pleasure, (c) beliefs shared with in-group, and (d) great readiness to cooperate with in-group members. (p.74).

Triandis points out that individuals in collectivistic cultures are seen as representative of the in-group rather than as persons. Unlike in individualistic cultures, the in-groups are "defined through traditions" (p.75) in collectivistic cultures. This means that only one or two in-groups usually become dominant in collectivistic cultures (e.g. , the family, and the nationality).

Triandis et. al. (1988) maintain that in a complex society where the number of the possible in-groups is unlimited, individualism is more likely to increase because interdependence among the individuals becomes less important since the existence of many in-groups provides each individual with more alternative for social support. This, in turn, leads to the individual being less inclined to be totally attached to any particular in-group.

Triandis et. al. point out that there are several stable characterstics or qualities a long which individualistic and collectivistic cultures can be differentiated along. One of these differences is self-reliance which means freedom to do whatever one chooses. Another difference is related to competition with others which characterizes people in individualistic culture. In collectivistic cultures, however, the group has to take care of its members and compete as a group rather than as separate individuals either with in-group or out-group members.

Another difference is related to the idea of achievement. Individual achievement is more emphasized in individualistic cultures than in collectivistic cultures where achievement is a duty of the whole group, and the individual is only a representative of the group.

Finally, the quality of interdependence which is a very positive thing in collectivistic cultures, is seen as mutual interest necessity or "social exchange" in individualistic cultures.

People in collectivist cultures have positive attitudes toward vertical relationships and accept differences in power. People in individualistic cultures have positive attitudes toward horizontal relationships and are uneasy about people in authority (Lyuh, 1992:31).

Ting-Toomey (1988:224) maintained that "individualistic cultures are concerned with the authenticity of self-presentation style, while collectivistic are concerned with the adaptability of self-presentation image". But individualist behavior is motivated by guilt rather than shame and is answerable to the self (conscience) or some superordinate entities (government and God), while collectivists are more conscious of others' approval and feel shameful if they fail to obtain it (Hui and Triandis, 1986). Triandis (1988), however, report that both guilt and shame may exist in some collectivistic cultures as it is the case in India. As a result, "While individualistic cultures are concerned with self-face

maintenance, collectivistic cultures are concerned with both self-face and other-face maintenance (Ting-Toomey, 1988:224)."

Cross-cultural research findings point to the strong relationship between high authoritarianism of and loyalty to the in-groups, especially the family, and collectivism (Triandis, 1988). This may be a true characteristic of the family in Saudi culture. Some researchers have found that loyalty and duty to the family are greater than other social or business related responsibility in Saudi culture because "status of the individual in Saudi Arabia is derived from his membership in the group family, village and tribe, and is not determined by his individual capacity" (Abdrabboh, 1984, p. 37); and that the entire family feels ashamed and equally responsible when one member is engaged in a dishonorable act (Al-Juwayer, 1984).

High and Low-Context Cultures

According to Hall (1976) and Ting-Toomey (1985), low-context cultures are the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Scandinavia, and other countries of northern Europe, and high-context cultures are Korea, Japan, China, Vietnam, the Middle East, and the Mediterranean. Hall (1976) classified cultures according to communication styles. He stated that:

A high (HC) communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low context (LC) communication is just the opposite; i.e., the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code (p.79).

All the cultures that he grouped as low context (America) are individualistic, and all the cultures which he grouped as high context (Saudi Arabia) are collectivistic.

Brown and Levinson predicted that the distribution of politeness strategies in the culture is determined by the relative weights of P and D operating in the social dyad of a culture. They distinguished between positive politeness cultures and negative politeness cultures. They claimed that "in negative politeness cultures, the general level of Wx tends to be high, impositions are considered to be large, and the values for social distance and relative power are high" (1978:250). A culture like that of America, therefore, is categorized as a positive politeness culture in which people are more likely to employ positive politeness strategies whereas a culture like that of Saudi Arabia is categorized as a negative politeness culture in which people are more likely to use negative politeness strategies.

Data collected for this study might help explain, though not directly, the relationship between cultures and politeness, since these

data were collected from both groups in exactly the same face-threatening refusal situations.

Studies on refusals

Several studies have been conducted on the speech act of refusals. For example, Beebe and Cummings, 1985; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987; Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1990, 1991, 1992; Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig, 1992a, 1992b. In spite of the fact that some of these studies were mainly concerned with methodology (e.g., Beebe and Cummings, 1985; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1992a), they presented a good picture of refusals of native and nonnative speakers. Also, two unpublished dissertations, 1992, by Deephuengton, and Lyuh, discussed strategies of refusals.

Takahashi and Beebe, (1987) and Beebe et al., (1990) found great differences between Japanese and Americans in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas in refusals. In the study of the developmental pragmatic competence of Japanese learners of English as a second language as compared with native Americans in the speech acts of refusals, Beebe et al., (1990) found that Japanese refuse differently based on the social status of interlocutors, while Americans are more influenced by the degree of familiarity or the social distance from the interlocutors. Japanese showed different frequencies of semantic

formulas between higher and lower status requesters, while Americans did not. Japanese did not apologize or express regret when they refuse a lower status interlocutor. Americans, on the other hand, pay attention to social distance. Brief refusals to both higher and lower status unequals and more detailed responses to peers were given by Americans. Japanese also tended to give vague and unspecified excuses, whereas Americans gave specific ones.

In their study on the comparison of data collection methods - natural speech versus written - Beebe and Cummings (1985) found similar results to what Beebe et al. observed among American refusals. They found that speech patterns used with intimates are similar to those used with status unequal and strangers and differ from those used with acquaintances. Beebe and Cummings claimed that the Discourse Completion Test method can draw an accurate picture of stereotypical refusals.

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991, 1992) and Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1992b) in their study of native and nonnative rejections collected from academic advising sessions found that 'explanation' was used most commonly by both native and nonnative students. The nonnative speakers were from different countries and spoke different languages: Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Malay, Spanish, Thai, Bengali, Chicchewa, and Yoruba. Native students employed more

'alternatives' than did nonnative speakers. They also used a smaller number of semantic formulas than did nonnative students. Nonnative speakers, on the other hand, employed an 'avoidance' strategy such as questions, postponement, and requests for additional information. Four items were used to test 'illegal' explanations: 'too difficult,' 'you don't like the instructor,' 'too easy,' 'lack of interest in the advisor's course.' Another three items were selected to test 'legal' explanations: 'you prefer not to take summer,' 'you have a schedule conflict,' and 'you have already taken a course.' 'Legal' excuses were used successfully by both native and nonnative students while 'illegal' explanations were used only by nonnative students. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1992) described legal explanations as:

> "those used by native (also nonnative) speakers which the advisers readily accept. They include time conflicts, repetition of course content in the same course, and scheduling of rare or unusual courses as alternatives. Advisers are also sympathetic to explanations concerning deadlines and financial burdens. Illegal explanations are those which the advisors rarely accept, explanations such as a course is too difficult or too easy or a student is not interested in courses in his or her field (PP. 3-4)."

On the basis of this study, the researchers developed a classification of refusals which is slightly different from that of Beebe and Cummings.

In his dissertation, Lyuh (1992) found that Americans and Koreans differ not only in the employment of semantic formulas but also in the content of refusal. Koreans used greater number of semantic formulas than did Americans. They also gave excuses that are more vague than those given by Americans. Korean refusals tended to be less direct. The study also showed that Korean refusals reflected the characteristics of collectivistic high-context culture, while American refusals reflected the characteristics of individualistic low-context culture.

Deephuengton (1992) in his dissertation about how the notion of "politeness" and the concept of "face-preservation" play a crucial role in Thai found out that three kinds of politeness (avoidance of face loss) are indicated by indirect use of language employed in speech acts of both refusing and disagreeing; these are positive politeness, negative politeness, and indirect politeness or off-record "face-threatening" acts (FTAs). He indicated that Thai society is hierarchical in the sense that social status differences play a crucial role. Age, power and religious or governmental positions are all sources of status differences. Thais believe social harmony is best maintained by avoiding unnecessary friction with others.

In this chapter, Brown and Levinson's theory (1978, 1987) and previous studies of refusals were briefly reviewed. Relevant ideas of Collectivism versus Individualism and low-context versus high-context

were also reviewed. Beebe and Cummings' (1985) classification was then used as a basis to classify the speech act of refusals by Saudis and Americans.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research design and methodological steps and procedures used in carrying out this study which was conducted to investigate semantic formulas used by both Saudis and Americans in the speech act of refusal. This chapter includes the following sections:

- Development of the Questionnaire.

- Description of the Questionnaire.

- Subjects of the Study.

- Questionnaire Administration.

- Data Analysis Procedures.

Development of the Questionnaire

The development of the questionnaire involved several steps:

First, a comprehensive critical review of related literature was undertaken to acquire a sound background and knowledge in the construction of a questionnaire relevant to the study. Second, the discourse completion test questionnaire was then designed. In designing the questionnaire, the researcher relied, to a great extent, on previously

designed questionnaires (e.g., Beebe et al., 1990, and Lyuh, I., 1992). Third, the researcher consulted with linguists to receive their comments, suggestions and feedback. Fourth, the English draft of the questionnaire was translated into Arabic. Fifth, the researcher tested the clarity of the questionnaire by administering it to ten male students, five Saudis and five Americans. This pilot study was also intended to examine the face validity of the questionnaire.

Pilot study

Before administering the questionnaire to the selected subjects, a pilot study with the questionnaire was completed in order to determine subject reaction and participation, the time needed to complete the questionnaire and whether there would be any problems or confusion regarding the clarity of the items and language of the questionnaire. Ten students, five Saudis and five Americans, were chosen as a sample for this experiment. This pilot study proved to be beneficial and provided ideas and information not apparent before the study. Moreover, direct feedback was received from these ten students in the pilot study that led to important improvements and indicated the need for some modifications in the early version of the questionnaire. For example, some students reported that that the questionnaire (consisting of 24 items in the first draft) was long and that some of its items were not

clear. This helped the researcher to make some changes and to reduce the number to 14 items only. Some respondents requested more explanations for some situations and this was done in the final version. The time needed to complete the questionnaire ranged from 20 to 40 minutes. In general, this pilot study gave the researcher a good insight and good training on how to administer the questionnaire.

The final draft:

Based on the pilot study and the researcher's close observation, both the English and Arabic versions of the questionnaire were remodeled.

Description of the questionnaire

The elicitation method used for data collection was two questionnaires in the form of open-ended discourse completion tests (DCT) (see Appendices A and B). The DCT is a standard form in which a situation is presented, followed by a brief dialogue. The subjects were asked to complete the conversation. The DCT was originally developed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and has been widely used for the collection of data on speech acts realization both within and across language groups.

In each questionnaire, there were 14 open-ended different situations in which subjects were asked to refuse. The 14 DCT

four requests, four invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Each group of situations consisted of three different social status relationships (high, equal, low). These three variables have been found to be important factors that have resulted in linguistic variation in other studies (e.g., Brown and Levinson, 1978; Wolfson, Marmor, and Jones, 1989; Blum-Kulka and house, 1989).

In situations 1, 2, 3, and 4, the requesters were of higher status than the subjects; in situations 5, 6, 7, and 8, the requesters were of equal status. In situations 9, 10, 11, and 12, the requesters were of lower status. In situations 5, and 7, the requesters were socially close with the subjects, and in situations 13, and 14, the requesters were socially distant. In situation 1, 5, 9 and 13, the subjects were to refuse requests, and in situation 2, 6, and 10, they were to refuse invitations. In situation 3, 7, 11, and 14, the subjects were to refuse offers, and in situation 4, 8, and 12, they were to refuse suggestions. Characters used for high status were advisor, professor, and boss, for low status a freshman, housemaid, and tutored student, for equal status a friend and a classmate, and for close and distant characters a stranger, acquaintance, and a friend. The following table shows the classification of Discourse Completion Task (DCT):

Table 1: Classification of DCT

Stimulus type	Refuser status	DCT item
Request	Lower	#1
	Equal	#5
	Higher	#9
	Distant	#13
Invitation	Lower	#2
	Equal/close	#6
	Higher	#10
Offer	Lower	#3
	Equal/close	#7
	Higher	#11
	Distant	#14
Suggestion	Lower	#4
	Equal	#8
	Higher	#12

Subjects

The subjects used in this study were 100 male undergraduate university students - 50 Saudi students from Imam Mohammed Bin Saud Islamic University (I.M.S.I.U.) and an equal number of American Students from Michigan State University (MSU). Their age is between 19-26. The subjects were not asked to identify themselves and were from majors other than English and linguistics. They were asked to give only their age. They were informed that they were participating in a contrastive socio-linguistic study, but they were not told the details lest this should affect the spontaneity of their responses. Respondents were also told that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time.

Questionnaire Administration

50 Saudi students from Imam University (I.M.I.U.) and an equal number of American students from Michigan State University (MSU) participated in this study. The tests for Saudi subjects were administered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in July 1996, and the tests for American students were done in East Lansing, Michigan, USA in August and September 1996. All subjects were asked to fill out an open-ended discourse completion task questionnaire (DCT) in their native languages (Arabic and English). The questionnaires were distributed by the researcher himself and some friends who helped also in collecting the answers to the questionnaires. Respondents were urged to indicate what they would actually do in the situations rather than what they thought they should do.

Data analysis Procedures

The main purpose of the study is to identify the significant semantic formulas used by both Saudis and Americans in performing the speech act of refusal. To achieve that goal the speech act of refusal were analyzed as consisting of a sequence of semantic formulas using Beebe and Cummings (1985) as the basis for this study (see Appendix C for a complete list). Semantic formulas represent 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 , 1991). For example, if a respondent refused a request for help by saying "I am sorry, I am late for an appointment, why don't you ask someone else?" this was analyzed as expression of regret, excuse, and offer of alternative. Another example, a refusal like "No, I can't attend your party this weekend, I wish I can" is analyzed as no, negative ability, wish according to Beebe and Cummings (1985).

In fact, the researcher did not follow exactly the order of Beebe and Cummings (1985) classification. Instead, he used it as the bases for his analysis. Different orders and numbers were given to show the semantic formulas employed in this study. Moreover, a new category, sarcasm, was added on the basis of the data collected for this study.

Data were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, the researcher obtained the total number of semantic formulas of any kind used for each situation for both groups (Saudis and Americans). Then, the percentage of each semantic formula was calculated by dividing the total number of one type of formula in one situation by the total number of semantic formulas of that situation. For example, if 'regret' were employed 35 times by Saudis in situation 1, then the percentage of that semantic formula is (25.0%) (35, the total number of 'regret' divided by 140, the total number of semantic formulas in situation1). At a second stage of analysis, a t test was conducted to determine if there was any

significant differences in the number of semantic formulas used by both Saudis and Americans. Additionally, a Mann-Whitney Confidence Interval and Test was used to show if there is any significant differences in the choice of semantic formulas by both groups.

Each one of the 14 situations of the questionnaire was analyzed in terms of two variables; social status (high, equal, low) and social distance (distant, close). Results were compared and contrasted to shed light on the refusal strategies used by both groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter will present quantitatively and analyze qualitatively the data collected from the discourse completion test questionnaires administered to 50 Saudis Arabic native speakers and 50 American English speakers. The results of this study demonstrated some differences between Saudis and Americans not only in the number of semantic formulas but also in the content of refusals. The study revealed that Americans used fewer semantic formulas than did Saudis. The average number of semantic formulas used by each group is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Average number of Semantic Formulas per Response

Stimulus type	Refuser status	Situation	Saudis		American	
			T. #	A.#	T.#	A.#
Request	Lower	1	140	2.80	104	2.08
invitation	Lower	2	131	2.62	114	2.28
Offer	Lower	3	86	1.72	79	1.58
Suggestion	Lower	4	105	2.1	78	1.56
Request	Equal	5	87	1.74	81	1.62
Invitation	Equal/close	6	146	2.92	127	2.54
Offer	Equal/close	7	106	2.12	85	1.70
Suggestion	Equal	8	80	1.60	77	1.54
Request	Higher	9	101	2.02	90	1.80
Invitation	Higher	10	128	2.56	114	2.28
Offer	Higher	11	102	2.04	90	1.80
Suggestion	Higher	12	117	2.34	87	1.74
Request	Distant	13	109	2.18	96	1.92
Offer	Distant	14	78	1.56	90	1.8

As seen in Table 2, the average number of semantic formulas in American responses was fewer than the Saudi responses in 13 situations out of 14. Americans, like Saudis, however, used more semantic formulas when refusing a person of higher status (situation 1, 2, 3, and 4). A *t* test was conducted to determine if there is any significant differences in the number of semantic formulas used by both Saudis and Americans. Additionally, a Mann-Whitney Confidence Interval and Test was used to show if there is any significant difference in the rank order of semantic formulas used by both groups.

The results of the Two sample T-test and the non parametric Mann-Whitney test showed that there is no significant difference in the number and the rank order of semantic formulas used by Saudis and Americans. The two sample T-Test is significant at p-value 0.053 and Mann-Whitney test at 0.0.0769.

Both Saudis and Americans used fewer semantic formulas when refusing suggestions as compared to requests, invitations, or offers. The significant factor that influenced the choice of semantic formulas employed by both groups was not social status but rather the type of speech act used to elicit a response; that is, either request, invitation, offer, or suggestion. The semantic formulas of each situation will be presented in the following sections.

Situation 1

In situation 1, both Saudi and American respondents employed similar semantic formulas in refusing a higher status person, advisor, except in the employment of direct 'no.' Saudis did not use direct 'no' at all in refusing the request. The frequencies and percentages of semantic formulas used in situation 1 are given in the following table:

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 1

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	1	0.96
Negative Ability	6	4.29	8	7.69
Regret	35	25.0	22	21.15
Wish	21	15.0	7	6.73
Explanation	50	35.71	50	48.08
Alternative	7	5.0	2	1.92
Future Acceptance	6	4.29	3	2.88
Hedge	3	2.14	1	0.96
Positive Feeling	10	7.14	9	8.65
Pause Fillers	2	1.43	1	0.96
Total	140	100	104	99.98

In this situation, Saudis refused by saying "I'm very sorry, I have to go home", or "I promised to take my family out," whereas Americans tended to say "I'm sorry, I'm too busy in my part time job" or "I have a group study after 15 minutes." Saudis used 'regret' and 'wish' formulas more than Americans did. This reflects some characteristics of high-context culture. Saudis consider preserving harmony of utmost importance in human relationships, whereas Americans put sincerity

and accuracy before harmony. Refusing a request without feeling sorry or showing the desire that you are really willing to comply to the request is considered impolite way in Saudi culture.

Situation 2

In this situation, again both groups used similar semantic formulas except in the employment of direct 'no'. Saudis avoid saying 'no' in their interactions because they consider harmony as the most important element in human relationships. Saying 'no' to someone's face is interpreted as an insult to the other person and that would cause the breakdown of human relationships. The frequencies and percentages of semantic formulas used in situation 2 are presented in the following table:

Table 4: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 2

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	3	2.78
Negative Ability	4	3.05	8	7.41
Regret	20	15.27	12	11.11
Wish	19	14.5	2	1.85
Explanation	50	38.17	50	46.3
Future Acceptance	11	8.4	2	1.85
Repeat	3	2.29	1	0.93
postpone	1	0.76	1	0.93
Hedge	5	3.82	2	1.85
Positive Feeling	6	4.58	6	5.56
Pause Fillers	1	0.76	2	1.85
Gratitude	11	8.4	19	17.59
Total	131	100	108	100.01

In this situation, Saudis used far more 'wish' (14.5%), 'regret' (15.27%), and 'future acceptance' (38.17%) formulas than the Americans did (1.85%), (11.11%), and (1.85%). Saudis tend to seek the satisfaction and the approval of the other person, so they try to show their respect, consideration, and willingness to comply to the request if they could by giving more regrets, wishes and future acceptance. This is a collectivistic quality. Americans, on the other hand, used more 'explanation' (46.3o%) than the Saudis did (38.17%). This might be explained by the different characteristics of high and low-context cultures. A high-context communication depends on the context, so very little information is explicitly presented in the message. A low-context communication, on the contrary, does not depend on the context, so all the necessary information is presented explicitly in the message (Ting-Toomey, 1988:225; Park, 1990:92). Americans, therefore, make themselves understood by talking and giving more explicit information in their communication. On the contrary, Saudis as part of high-context culture tend to give less information and provide vague expressions. Also, they do not give many details in their explanations. Americans also used more 'gratitude' (17.59%) formulas than the Saudis (8.40%). This shows that Americans are more courteous than Saudis.

Situation 3

Once again, both respondents used similar semantic formulas except in the employment of direct 'no.' 'Explanation,' the most common formula, showed high percentages (Saudis 48.84% and Americans 53.16%). 'Regret' were used far more by Saudis (15.12%) compared to Americans (10.13%). This shows that Saudis used more negative politeness strategy than Americans. Also, 'negative ability' was used by Saudis (13.95%) more than Americans (3.8%). This shows that Saudis try to avoid direct 'no' which they consider as impolite and improper way of refusing by using 'negative ability.' Americans, on the other hand, are more straightforward and direct in their refusal. 'Explanation,' again stresses the fact that Americans are more self-expression than Saudis. The list of semantic formulas in situation 3 is given below:

Table 5: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 3

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-		2	2.53
Negative Ability	12	13.95	3	3.8
Regret	13	15.12	8	10.13
Explanation	42	48.84	42	53.16
Postpone	3	3.49	2	2.53
Hedge	2	2.33	1	1.27
Positive opinion	2	2.33	4	5.06
Gratitude	12	13.95	17	21.52
Total	86	100.01	79	100

Situation 4

In this situation, where an academic advisor recommends certain courses to take, Saudis again used different semantic formulas compared to the Americans. They employed 'wish,' 'future acceptance,' 'philosophy,' 'repeat,' and 'postpone' formulas, while the American did not. Other formulas, except in the use of direct 'no,' were used by both groups. 'Explanations' (61.54%) was used more by Americans. This shows that American again are more explicit in their refusal than Saudis. They give more information and details in their refusal. Saudis, on the other hand, try to escape this by giving less information or resort to other formulas in their refusal. The percentages of semantic formulas employed in situation 4 are listed in the following table:

Table 6: Frequencies and percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 4

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-		2	2.56
Negative Ability	4	3.67	1	1.28
Regret	1	0.92	1	1.28
Wish	1	0.92	-	-
Explanation	43	39.45	48	61.54
Alternative	19	17.43	12	15.38
Future Acceptance	10	9.17	-	-
Philosophy	1	0.92	-	-
Question	6	5.5	4	5.13
Repeat	2	1.83	-	-
Postpone	3	2.75	-	-
Hedge	7	6.42	3	3.85
Positive Feeling	9	8.26	3	3.85
Pause Fillers	1	0.92	1	1.28
Gratitude	2	1.83	3	3.85
Total	109	99.99	78	100

Both groups employed a low percentage of 'regret' (0.92% in Saudi responses and 1.28% in American responses) and 'gratitude' (1.83% in Saudi responses and 3.85% in American responses). Saudis used more semantic formulas overall (109) in this situation than the Americans did (78) which means that Saudis are less straightforward than Americans in their refusals. They both refused a suggestion on the basis of the difficulty of a course or their own lack of interest. They also asked for other options to avoid the suggested course. 'Alternative,' once again, was used by Saudis (17.43%) more than Americans did (15.38%). Here, we might say that with higher status, Saudis tend to use 'alternative', 'explanation' and 'future acceptance' to refuse a suggestion. They feel that this is the only way to protect their self-image and the other persons'. Saudis care about the in-group harmony and consistency.

Situation 5

In this situation, where a student asks a classmate to fill out a questionnaire for his research, Saudis used 'regret' (22.99%) more than Americans (18.52%). This can be explained by the differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Saudis used more regret because they feel ashamed and embarrassed for not responding to the request. They try to soften their self-image and the other person's image by resorting to two semantic formulas, 'regret' and sometimes to 'wish' or

both. This is a quality of collectivistic culture where persons feel guilt and shame or both when they refuse a request.

On the other hand, Americans employed more 'explanations' (55.56%) than Saudis (48.28%) to refuse this request. Americans again prove that they are more self-expression than Saudis. In fact, both groups used similar semantic formulas except in the use of direct 'no' and 'postpone' formulas. Saudis a gain did not use the direct 'no,' and American did not use the 'postpone' formula in this situation. The frequencies and percentages of semantic formulas used in situation 5 are demonstrated in the following table:

Table 7: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 5

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	2	2.47
Negative Ability	4	4.6	2	2.47
Regret	20	22.99	15	18.52
Explanation	42	48.28	45	55.56
Alternative	13	14.94	10	12.35
Future Acceptance	2	2.3	1	1.23
Postpone	-	-	1	1.23
Hedge	2	2.3	1	1.23
Positive Feeling	3	3.45	2	2.47
Pause Fillers	1	1.15	2	2.47
Total	87	100.01	81	100

Saudis were likely to say "I don't think my participation in this research would benefit you," or "Why don't you ask someone else," whereas Americans were likely to say "I don't have time to do that," "I have an exam and I need to study," "Can you leave it with me and when I

have time I'll do it," or "Check with me later I don't have time to do it now."

Situation 6

Table 8: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 6

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	2	1.57
Negative Ability	15	10.27	11	8.66
Regret	18	12.33	16	12.6
Wish	15	10.27	3	2.36
Explanation	45	30.82	47	37.01
Future Acceptance	9	6.16	6	4.72
Repeat	2	1.37	2	1.57
Postpone	2	1.37	1	0.79
Hedge	3	2.05	1	0.79
Positive Feeling	12	8.22	9	7.09
Pause Fillers	3	2.05	2	1.57
Gratitude	22	15.07	27	21.26
Total	146	99.98	127	99.99

In this situation, where someone invites a friend to a party in his house, both groups used similar strategies except in the employment of direct 'no.' Saudis again did not use direct 'no' in refusing a friend's invitation. 'Explanation,' 'gratitude,' and 'regret,' formulas were used most by both groups as table 6 shows. 'Negative ability,' 'wish,' and 'positive feeling' formulas come next. Saudis tend to say "I am really sorry, I can't come, I have to take my family out" or "I'm sorry, I have other obligations, and thanks for your invitation", whereas the Americans tend to say " I'm sorry, I have to study, thanks any way" or "I have to

submit a paper next week, so I have to work very hard this weekend, thanks". Again, Saudis stress the importance of the family in their life which is one of the qualities of collectivistic cultures, whereas the Americans resort to their school or homework which is for their own interest and not others. Regret and wish were used by Saudis more than Americans did because as I stated before in collectivistic cultures as Saudis people tend to be ashamed and feel guilt for not complying to the request or invitation of others. They resort to these two strategies to soften their refusal and to preserve their image. The above table shows the percentages of semantic formulas in situation 6.

Situation 7

In situation 7, in which a friend offers a respondent some juice, both groups used similar semantic formulas except in the use of 'regret' which was used only by Saudis (9.43%). Saudis again show a quality of collectivistic cultures by resorting to regret to reduce the effect of their responses as explained before. Direct 'no' was used more by Americans (3.53%) than Saudis (0.94%), although the numbers were small, which means that Americans were more straightforward than Saudis. 'Explanations' again were employed more by Americans (56.47%) than Saudis (44.34%) which again stresses the fact that American were more self-expression than Saudis. Also, 'gratitude' formulas were used more

by Americans (32.94%) than Saudis (17.92% which means, again, that Americans were more courteous than Saudis. On the other hand, 'positive feeling,' 'future acceptance,' and 'negative ability' were used more by Saudis which can be explained by that Saudis as members of collectivistic cultures pay great attention to the implications of their refusals on the other members of their group and are highly concerned about social approval and strive to gain it. The following table shows the frequencies and percentages of semantic formulas for situation 7.

Table 9: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 7

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	1	0.94	3	3.53
Negative Ability	11	10.38	4	4.71
Regret	10	9.43	-	-
Explanation	47	44.34	48	56.47
Future Acceptance	6	5.66	2	2.35
Positive Feeling	12	11.32	7	8.24
Gratitude	19	17.92	28	32.94
Total	106	99.99	85	100

The common responses used by Americans were to say "I just ate dinner and I'm full," whereas Saudis would say "I have a troubled stomach." Saudis resort to uncontrollable excuses as 'troubled stomach' to refuse the offer. They don't express their real inclination and internal desires straightforward because they believe that these things are not good excuses to refuse their friend's offer. Americans, on the other hand

expressed their real inclination straightforward and that they are full and can eat no more.

Situation 8

Table 10: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 8

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	1	1.25	1	1.3
Negative Ability	1	1.25	5	6.49
Explanation	39	48.75	43	55.84
Alternative	16	20.0	9	11.69
Future Acceptance	2	2.5	2	2.6
Question	4	5.0	5	6.49
Hedge	2	2.5	1	1.3
Positive Feeling	12	15.0	10	12.99
Pause Fillers	2	2.5	-	-
Sarcasm	1	1.25	1	1.3
Total	80	100	77	100

In this situation, in which a friend suggests a course, both groups of respondents employed similar semantic formulas. Saudis used more 'alternatives' (2o.o%) than did Americans (11.69%) as table 10 shows. Saudis as part of collectivistic cultures tend not to express their real inclination and feelings about what they exactly want. Instead, they resort to different strategies like alternatives to preserve their self-image and the other party's face and to avoid direct refusal. They tended to employ 'alternatives' by saying "Instead of this course, why don't I take the other course." Unlike Saudis, Americans tended to express their real feelings and inclinations straightforward in their refusals as stated in

previous situation. On the other hand, Americans used more 'negative ability' (6.49%) than did Saudis (1.25%). They tend to say "I can't take this course now because it is very difficult". The content of 'explanations' differed in that the most common American explanations were based on time conflicts, while none of the Saudi responses included this explanation.

Situation 9

Table 11: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 9

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	5	5.56
Negative Ability	8	7.92	6	6.67
Regret	15	14.85	10	11.11
Explanation	32	31.68	34	37.78
Alternative	24	23.76	20	22.22
Future Acceptance	5	4.95	3	3.33
Hedge	6	5.94	3	3.33
Positive Feeling	6	5.94	8	8.89
Empathy Building	3	2.97	1	1.11
Pause Fillers	2	1.98	-	-
Sarcasm	-	-	1	1.11
Total	101	99.99	90	100.11

The highest percentage of the employment of 'alternatives,' for both American and Saudi respondents, was found in situation 9, in which a freshman asks for help. However, Saudis used 'alternatives (23.76%) more than Americans (22.22%) as happened in all situations. Also, they used more 'regret' (15.31%) than did Americans (11.11%). On the other hand,

Americans used more 'explanations' (37.78%) than Saudis (31.68%). Saudis again did not use direct 'no' at all, while Americans did (5.56%). The above table shows the list of semantic formulas and its percentages which were employed in situation 9. 'Hedges' were used more by Saudis (5.94%) than Americans (3.33%) in this situation. 'sarcasm' formula was used once by Americans (1.11%). 'Pause fillers' were used only twice by Saudis (1.98%) which might mean that Saudis are more embarrassed and less straightforward than Americans in their refusals. Americans, on the other hand, show some sense of humor by using sarcasm. Again, this situation supports what we have already seen in other situations that Americans are more self-expression than Saudis and that Saudis show some collectivistic qualities by employing 'regret,' 'wish,' 'future acceptance,' and 'positive feeling.'

Situation 10

In situation 10, in which a freshman invites a teaching assistant out to a good restaurant, both groups employed similar semantic formulas except in the use of direct 'no' which was not used by Saudis. Saudis used a greater number of 'regret' (15.63%), 'future acceptance (7.81%), 'positive feeling' (9.38%), and 'wish' (5.47%) formulas more than Americans (6.14%, 4.39%, 6.14%, and 1.75%). This supports our previous explanation that Saudis are more concern about the social

approval and strive to gain it which is a characteristic of collectivistic cultures. Consideration for members of their group is an important factor in Saudi culture. This can be seen by the continuos employment of the above formulas which show that Saudis are extremely concerned about their group member to the extent that they can not refuse without showing care and concern and promise to comply in future. This also demonstrates that Saudi culture is a negative politeness culture. The following table shows the percentages of semantic formulas in situation 10:

Table 12: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 10

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	6	5.26
Negative Ability	9	7.03	7	6.14
Regret	20	15.63	7	6.14
Wish	7	5.47	2	1.75
Explanation	44	34.38	47	41.23
Future Acceptance	10	7.81	5	4.39
Hedge	3	2.34	2	1.75
Positive Feeling	12	9.38	7	6.14
Pause Fillers	1	0.78	1	0.88
Gratitude	22	17.19	30	26.32
Total	128	100.01	114	100

In refusing this situation, Americans preferred to say "I have to finish some papers for my students," "I'm too tired, or "I'm running out of money these days," while Saudis preferred "Next time I promise, I'm sorry" or "I can't make it tonight, I have to stay home," or "May Allah reward you for this, but I can't make it tonight." Some religious

expressions were used by Saudis such as the one just mentioned above which is considered a 'gratitude' and appreciation to the invitee. This reveals that Saudis are religious people in general. Almost all Saudi respondents used religious expressions, particularly when they express their thanks and gratitude to others which they consider the highest and the most respectable expressions they may say.

Situation 11

In situation 11, in which a cleaning lady offers to pay for a broken vase, Saudis employed a greater number of 'threat' formulas (38.24%) than did Americans (12.22%). Both groups used similar semantic formulas except in the attempt to dissuade the interlocutor by letting her off the hook by saying 'Don't worry about it' which was used only by American respondents (18.89%). The employment of 'no, no problem' and 'no, that's OK ('M?alesh in Arabic') was used by both groups, as the following table shows. Saudis used direct 'no' in this situation but directly followed by another expression to smooth and reduce its reaction such as 'M?alesh' (that's OK). Saudis used this formula only with lower class, while American used almost in every situation and with all social status. Even with lower class, Saudis show concern and sought the social approval of the other person (the cleaning lady) by employing other expression that preserve their self-face as well as the other person's face.

Table 13: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 11

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
Threat	39	38.24	11	12.22
No, that's OK (M?alesh)	37	36.27	39	43.33
No, no problem	26	25.49	23	25.56
Don't worry about it	-	-	17	18.89
Total	102	100	90	100

Situation 12

Table 14: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 12

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	1	0.85	2	2.3
Negative Ability	2	1.71	4	4.6
Regret	2	1.71	1	1.15
Explanation	24	20.51	35	40.23
Alternative	13	14.94	7	8.05
Principle	3	2.56	1	1.15
Philosophy	2	1.71	-	-
Criticism	19	16.24	3	3.45
Self Defense	39	33.33	27	31.03
Positive Feeling	3	2.56	2	2.3
Empathy Building	3	2.56	1	1.15
Pause Fillers	4	3.42	3	3.45
Sarcasm	2	1.71	1	1.15
Total	117	103.81	87	100.01

In situation 12, in which a freshman student suggests alternative exercises instead of the ones in the regular book to a graduate student tutor, both groups used a high percentage of 'self defense' formulas. Saudis employed more 'self defense' formulas (33.33%) than did Americans (31.03%). On the contrary, Saudis used more 'criticism (16.24%) than did Americans (3.45%). 'Principle' formulas were used by

both groups (2.56% in Saudi responses and 1.15% in American responses). 'Alternatives' were employed by both groups (14.94% in Saudi responses and 8.05% in American responses). In this situation, only Saudis used the 'philosophy' formula (1.71%). Saudis were likely to say "You should study harder at home if you want to pass this course" or use a 'principle' formula as "I don't like to give examples outside the book" or a 'philosophy' formula such as "Excuse is worse than a sin" which means you really did not do your best in understanding this course. Americans, on the other hand, tended to say "Life is full of difficult examples," or "There won't be easy examples on the exam." The percentages of all semantic formulas in situation 12 are listed in the table above.

Situation 13

In situation 13, in which an acquaintance asks for a favor, both groups used similar semantic formulas except in the use of direct 'no', 'hedge,' and 'empathy building' formulas as the table below shows. Both groups employed higher percentages of 'regret' (29.36% in Saudi responses and 28.13% in American responses) compared to other situations. Saudis once again did not use direct 'no'. Both used a great number of 'explanations' (45.87% for Saudis and 52.08% for Americans) which is a common semantic formula throughout all situations. The

most common explanations given by both groups were " I'm running out of money these days, check with me later" or "I'm facing the same problem, and I'm looking for someone who can lend me money". Eventhough the person is not a close friend, both groups showed concern and provided explanations for not lending him the money. The following table shows the percentages of all semantic formulas in this situation:

Table 15: Frequencies and Percentages of Semantic Formulas for Situation 13

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	4	4.17
Negative Ability	10	9.17	2	2.08
Regret	32	29.36	27	28.13
Wish	2	1.83	2	2.08
Explanation	50	45.87	50	52.08
Alternative	9	8.26	6	6.25
Hedge	1	0.92	-	-
Positive Feeling	2	1.83	4	4.17
Empathy Building	1	0.92	-	-
Pause Fillers	2	1.83	1	1.04
Total	109	99.99	96	100

In fact 'explanation' formula was used in great numbers in all situations which means that Saudis and Americans are self-expression and that they regard refusal without providing an explanation is extremely an impolite way. Both groups try to preserve their face image and convince the hearer that they are concerned about his situation. This is an indirect way of refusing or let's say a polite way of rejecting the hearer.

Situation 14

In situation 14, in which a stranger offers a ride, both Saudis and Americans used similar semantic formulas except in the use of direct 'no.' Saudis did not use direct 'no' but instead they used 'no thanks' which is considered by Saudis more polite than saying plain 'no'. Both groups gave brief responses by only saying 'no thanks' (38.46% in Saudi responses and 40% in American responses). Most of the responses included 'gratitude' (12.82 for Saudis and 13.33% for Americans) and 'explanations.' Common response explanations used by both groups were "My car is parked in the next block," "My home is around this block," or "I'm almost home'. All the percentages of semantic formulas are listed in the following table:

Table 16: Frequencies and Percentages for Semantic Formulas for Situation 14

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
No	-	-	3	3.33
Negative Ability	1	1.28	1	1.11
Regret	1	1.28	-	-
Explanation	35	44.87	37	41.11
Pause Fillers	1	1.28	1	1.11
No Thanks	30	38.46	36	40.0
Gratitude	10	12.82	12	13.33
Total	78	99.99	90	99.99

Analysis of Semantic Formulas found in this Study:

Mann-Whitney Test was run to show if there is a significant difference in the rank order of semantic formulas used by Saudis and Americans. The overall results show no significant differences in the rank order of semantic formulas employed by both groups. Null hypothesis is significant at p=0.5362. All semantic formulas occurred in more than one situation will be presented in the following sections:

Table 17: The overall Frequencies and percentages of Semantic Formulas used by both groups in all Situations

Semantic Formula	Saudi		American	
	F	%	F	%
Explanation	543	36.79	576	43.67
Gratitude	98	6.64	136	10.31
Regret	187	12.67	119	9.02
Alternative	98	6.64	66	5.0
Threat	39	2.64	11	0.83
No, that's Ok	37	2.51	39	2.96
No, no problem	26	1.76	23	1.74
Don't worry about it	-	-	17	1.29
Criticism	19	1.29	3	0.23
No, Thanks	30	2.03	36	2.73
Wish	65	4.4	19	1.44
Positive Feeling	89	6.03	71	5.38
Question	10	0.68	9	0.68
Future Acceptance	61	4.13	24	1.82
Negative Ability	87	5.89	62	4.7
Repeat	7	0.47	3	0.23
Hedge	34	2.3	15	1.14
Postpone	9	0.61	5	0.38
Pause Fillers	20	1.36	14	1.06
Philosophy	3	0.2	-	-
Principle	3	0.2	1	0.08
Sarcasm	1	0.07	2	0.15
Empathy building	7	0.47	2	0.15
Direct 'No'	3	0.2	36	2.72

The overall percentages show that both groups employed similar semantic formulas. The three most common semantic formulas used were 'explanation,' 'regret,' and 'gratitude'.

Explanation:

The overall percentages of this study show that the major semantic formula used in refusing any speech act (i.e., request, invitation, offer, and suggestion) was the 'explanation' (36.79% in Saudi responses and 43.67% in American responses). Both American and Saudi respondents used this formula most commonly, even though the employment of this semantic formula varied among situations.

The above table presents the overall percentages of all refusal formulas used by both groups in all 14 situations. Americans used more explanations than Saudis in all situations except in S#14 where Saudis have more percentage 44.87%. Some situations, however, elicited fewer 'explanation' strategies than others. The use of 'explanations' was consistent with what Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1991, 1992) found in their study of native and nonnative rejections collected from academic advising sessions. They found that 'explanation' was used most commonly for rejections by both native and nonnative students. Native and nonnative speakers, however, differed in the employment of the

'alternative' strategy which is the second most common semantic formulas.

In giving explanations, Americans gave specific details in their explanations, e.g., "I cannot stay because I have an appointment with the dentist after half an hour" or "I have a group study in the library within 15 minutes" (responding to the professor's request to stay by the phone). Saudis, in the other hand, did not give specific times or places in most of their explanations. Common explanations given by Saudis were, "I have something to do," or "I have an important appointment" (responding to the professor's request to stay by the phone). This might be explained by different characteristics of high and low-context cultures. In low-context cultures such as America most of the necessary information is mentioned explicitly. A high-context culture as Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, tends to give little information and vague expression because they believe that the details of their refusals are personal thing and they need not to tell others about it. This also shows that Saudis are less self-expression than Americans. Americans tended to be more direct in their explanations and gave their own inclinations as reasons for their refusal, while Saudis tended to be less direct and resort to explanations other than their own inclinations in refusing. For example, Saudis used family circumstances very commonly in their explanations such as, "I have a problem in my family," "My family needs me to stay home," or "I have to

take my family out" (responding to the professor's invitation to the party),

while Americans gave explanations that express their own inclinations

such as "I have to study" or "I am not in the mood" (responding to the

same situation). This kind of explanation can be explained by cultural

differences. Saudi culture is considered a collectivistic culture in which

in-group interest is more important than individual interest and the

harmony among group members has the utmost importance. In

contrast, American culture is considered an individualistic culture, in

which individual interest is more important than group interest. As a

result of this cultural differences, Saudis used uncontrollable excuses

(e.g., their family, health) as reasons for their explanations. For example,

they used family circumstances which they consider beyond their control

as an explanation. Americans also used family-related explanations, but

less often than Saudis. Saudi responses included a higher percentage of

family explanations in most of the situations. In situation one, in which

a professor asks a student to stay by the phone, 25 out of 50 (50%) of the

Saudi responses contained family-related explanations such as, "I have

to take my kids to school after 15 minutes," "I promised my family to be

home immediately after the lecture." Only 2 out of 50 (4.0%) American

responses contained family-related explanations. In situation 2, in

which a professor invites one of his students to a party, 38 out of 50

(76%) of the Saudi responses contained family explanations, while only

17 out of 50 (34%) of the American responses did so. In situation 6, in which a friend invites the respondent to a small party in his house, 32 out of 50 (64%) Saudi responses included family-related explanations, whereas only 1 out of 50 (2.0%) of the American responses did so. The same thing happened in situation 10, in which a student invites a teaching assistant to a good restaurant. This inclination to use family-related explanations might be due to different cultural differences.

Another interesting difference between Saudis and Americans was seen in explanations that mention their financial situations. Saudis were more private about their financial situations, and they tended not to say that they did not have money. On the other hand, Americans stated that they were running out of money. Also, religious expressions were found in Saudi explanations such as "inshaa? Allah, I will do it" which reflect how much Saudis are connected to their religion. In contrast, American responses did not contain any religious expressions.   Both groups preferred three semantic formulas, 'explanation,' 'regret,' and 'gratitude.'

Regret:

The 'regret' formula was used by both groups, but Saudi respondents tended to use it more than the Americans (12.67% in Saudi responses and 9.02%). This might show that Saudis are more humble and more down to earth than Americans. They have to show their

sorrow for not complying to the desire of the other member of their group. By doing this, they try to maintain and protect their face and the hearer's face too. In 10 out of 14 situations, Saudi responses contained a higher percentage of regrets, whereas in only 9 out of 14 situations did American responses included a regret strategy at all. Both Saudis and American tended to use a higher percentages of regrets when refusing requests (situation 1, 5, 9, and 13). The next highest percentage occurred in situations involving invitations and offers (situations 2, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 14). The lowest percentage involved suggestions (situations 4 and 12). These results show that the types of speech act used to elicit responses (e.g., request, invitation, offer, or suggestion) were a stronger factor in determining the kind of refusal strategy used by both groups than the social status and social distance. The highest percentage (25.0%) of regret employed by Saudi respondents was in situation 1, in which they refused a professor's request.

Alternative:

The results of this study show that both American and Saudi respondents used alternative formulas and that Saudis employed more alternatives in the overall 6,64% than Americans 5.0%. The use of 'alternatives' in situation 4, in which an academic advisor recommends a course, is not similar to those found by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford

(1991) who found that American students used more alternatives than did nonnative speakers in rejecting the adviser's suggestions. This may be due to the different elicitation method, natural conversations, which they used in collecting data which is different from my DCT method. Saudis showed a higher tendency for alternatives more than Americans in situation 4, which is the most similar to an advising session and other situations.

Avoidance:

The data showed that Saudi respondents used varieties of 'avoidance' formulas more often than did Americans. Repetition of part of a request, invitation, or suggestion was employed by Saudi (0.47%) respondents in 3 situations (2, 4, and 6), but by Americans (0.23%) in only 2 situations (2, and 6). Both groups used the 'question' (0.68%) as a refusal formula to avoid direct refusal in situations (4, and 8), but, within the situations, Saudi respondents employed more questions than Americans did. Saudis and Americans asked questions to have more information in order to delay their refusal. For example, Saudis asked "Is it required to graduate," or "Can I take it as an ungraded course", while Americans asked "Is it difficult" in situation 4, in which an adviser suggests a research method course to help the student in his research. The use of 'hedges' as an avoidance strategy was used by both groups in

situations (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 13). Saudi respondents again employed more hedges (2.3%) than Americans (1.14%) did in situations (1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 13). The use of postponement as an avoidance formula did not show any important differences (0.61% in Saudi responses and 0.38 in American responses).

Wish:

The use of the 'wish' formula was used by both American and Saudi respondents, but Saudis showed more employment of this formula (4.4%) than did the Americans (1.44%) in situations (1, 2, 4, 6, 10, and 13). The higher percentages of wishes employed by Saudi respondents when refusing requests (15.0%) and invitations (14.5%) of higher status is evident in situations 1 and 2. The use of the 'wish' formula is significant in this data which might mean that in Saudi culture using wishes in refusing a request or invitation is important and considered a polite way of refusing. Saudis as other Arabs are requested to comply to others' request or invitation, and since they cannot achieve this, they try to provide less direct expression to seek the approval of the other part. They are concerned about the in-group harmony and they try hard to keep their relations with other members of the society. Saudis use this formula with all members of their in-group regardless their social status. This also might reflect the inner feeling and the humbleness of Saudis.

These characteristics are common in all collectivistic cultures which provides a good evidence that Saudi culture is a collectivistic culture.

Gratitude:

Gratitude' was used by both groups. The higher percentages of 'gratitude' were found in 6 situations. The first two were found in refusing higher status offer (13.95% in Saudi responses and 21.52% in American responses) as in situation 3, in which a boss offers a promotion to one of his employees, and invitation (8.4% in Saudi responses and 17.59% in American responses) as in situation 2, in which a professor invites the subject to a party. In situation 6, in which a friend invites the respondent to a party, the percentages were 15.07% for Saudis and 21.26% for Americans. In situation 7, in which a friend offers a drink. the percentages were 17.92% and 32.94%. The other two high percentages occurred in situation 10 and 14. 'Gratitude' percentages in situation 10 in which a freshman student invites a teaching assistant were 17.19% in Saudi responses and 26.32% in American responses. In situation 14, in which a stranger offers a ride to the subject, the percentages were 13.7% for Saudis and 13.33% for Americans. Saudis used religious expressions in their 'gratitude' such as "Jazaka-laahu-xer-an" which means 'May Allah (God) reward you for that.' In contrast, Americans did not include any religious expressions at all.

The percentages show that American use 'gratitude' more than Saudi did when they refuse higher status invitation (S#2) or offers (S#3), and a friend's invitation (S#6) or offer (S#7). The overall percentages (6.64% in Saudi responses and 10.31% in American responses) show that Americans are more courteous than Saudis.

Direct "No"

The overall results of this study show that Saudi respondents almost never used direct "no." (overall 0.2%). Saudi responses contained direct 'no' only in situations 7, 8, and 12. The percentage were 0.94%, 1.25% and 0.85%. Direct 'no' was rarely used by Saudis and only with equal and lower status interlocutor but never with ones of higher status or a stranger. In contrast, Americans (2.72%) used direct 'no' with all these different social status groups (high, equal, and low) and strangers, but the higher percentages were found in refusing lower status interlocutor (6.06%). In situation 14, in which a stranger offers a ride, Saudi respondents used direct 'no' but attached 'thanks,' which is a very polite way of refusing in Saudi culture.

This inclination of avoiding direct 'no' by Saudis might be due to the fact that Saudis, like other collectivistic cultures, consider harmony in human relationships more important than sincerity. They consider direct 'no' as an impolite way of refusing and it might affect the social

relationships between both interlocutors. Moreover, both Saudi and American respondents did not use performative verbs, such as "I have to refuse" in this collected data.

Philosophy and Principle:

The data show that both groups stated 'principle' (overall 0.2% and 0.08%) in refusing a suggestion as in situation 12, in which a graduate student tutored a freshman student. However, it was Saudis, not American who also stated 'philosophy' in refusing suggestions in the same situation. Saudis refused their tutored student by quoting part of the Holy Qura'n which reflects a philosophy. The meaning of the verse is "Don't ask about something if you know it, it would sadden you". In other words, don't ask too much questions. Saudis again used religious expressions as they did in 'gratitude' formula which means that they are religious persons or at least are influenced to great extent by their religion, Islam. Also, Saudi refused by saying "I don't like to give examples outside the book." American, on the other hand, refused by saying " life is full of difficult examples."

Positive feeling, Empathy building, Sarcasm, Future acceptance, and Negative ability:

The overall results did not show any significant percentages for the above formulas except the 'positive feeling' (6.03% and 5.38%), 'negative ability' (5.89% and 4.7%) and 'future acceptance' (4.13% and 1.82%). 'Empathy building' (0.47 % and 0.15%) and Sarcasm (0.07 % and 0.15%), on the other hand, have lower percentages in both groups.

Brown and Levinson Positive and negative politeness

Brown and Levinson proposed two sets of strategies: Positive politeness and negative politeness. The strategies used by both American and Saudi respondents can be categorized into either of these two politeness strategies. Semantic formulas of regret, and hedge can be classified as negative politeness strategies. Semantic formulas of positive feeling, future acceptance, gratitude, and empathy building can be classified as positive politeness strategies. The data of semantic formulas show that Saudis used more negative politeness strategies than did Americans. Saudis, as stated before, employed a much higher percentage of regrets than did Americans in 11 out of 14 situations. Similarly, Saudi responses contained a higher percentage of hedges. On the other hand, the employment of positive politeness strategies did not reflect clear and consistent pictures as the negative politeness strategies

did. The results also show that Saudis employed positive feeling, future acceptance, gratitude, and empathy building more than American did. In fact, the results of this study did not clearly show whether Saudi Arabia is a negative politeness culture and the United State is a positive politeness culture, as B&L (1978, 87) claimed, or vice versa. In other words, Saudis tended to employ both negative and positive politeness strategies more than Americans did. The use of pause fillers was employed by both groups in situations (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, and 14), but it did not reveal any significant differences.

In general, Saudi society is hierarchical in the sense that social status differences play a crucial role. Age, wealth, power and religious or governmental positions are all sources of status differences. Saudis believe social harmony is best maintained by avoiding unnecessary friction or turbulence in their contacts with others. In general, people will do their utmost to avoid personal conflict. This social harmony is one of the reasons for Saudis to be polite and indirect. Respect for parents and elders in general are taught at a very early age. Saudis believe in God (Allah), acknowledges His power and has a religious affiliation. They believe that humans cannot control all events; something depend on God (i.e., fate). Also, there should be no separation between "church and state".

As a result of this, in all interpersonal communications in Saudi culture, only superiors (e.g., parents, uncles, aunts, scholars of religion, bosses, teachers, king, princes, etc.) are expressive, and others just listen. Saudis are far more sensitive to status differences than are Americans. A good example of this was seen in situation 12, in which a tutor was faced with his student's suggestion. The tutor became defensive and expressed authority because he thought his rank or position was being challenged.

Conclusion

The speech act of refusal is a very sensitive issue for Saudis. In Saudi culture, a person is strongly encouraged to comply with a request for help; to accept an invitation, or offer, and to provide requested suggestions. If a person can not comply, then appropriate linguistic refusal formulas depends on the status and social relationship of the interlocutors is used (Anwar A. H. 1995).

This study showed that both American and Saudis employed similar semantic formulas in their refusals except in the employment of direct 'no'. They, however, differed in the content of their explanation. Saudis gave little information and ambiguous explanations, whereas Americans gave specific details and clear explanations. This means that Americans were more concerned about the clarity of the message in their

refusals than Saudis. The study also showed that Saudis used religious expressions in their refusals more than Americans which proves that religion is deep rooted in the Saudi culture. Saudis demonstrated the characteristics of collectivistic cultures, whereas Americans reflected individualistic cultures. For example, Saudis showed consideration of the implications of their refusals for other members of the collective or in-group. Unlike Americans, Saudis were highly concerned about social approval and strive to gain it. Shame is what they feel when they fail to respond to others' invitation, request, offer, or suggestion. They also tended to keep their financial situations unknown to others because they consider this a personal thing and a good man should not tell others about his income or how much he has. This might be explained in two ways; the first is that if a person shows that he has no money, other members of the group will try to help him or give him what we call charity which a person might consider an insult to receive; the second is that if he shows that he has money, other members might disturb him asking for money or somebody might hurt him by jealous. Saudis gave family- related circumstances the greatest priority and importance in their explanations which reflect the value of family in Saudi culture. Loyalty and duty to the family are greater than other social or business related responsibility in Saudi culture because as abdrabboh (1984:37) stated "status of the individual in Saudi Arabia is derived from his

membership in the group family, village and tribe, and is not determined by his individual capacity." Americans, on the other hand, were more straightforward and used direct communication styles more than Saudis. They were more concerned about their own individual interests than in-group. This was clear in the content of their explanation. For example, they used their homework, studying for exams, visiting the dentist and group study in the library as excuses for their refusals which all aims at their own sake and not for the group. Americans also had no problem telling about their financial situations and expressed it straightforward.

Now the researcher can say with confidence that American culture is individualistic and Saudi culture is collectivistic. This conclusion is consistent with the strong agreement among psychologists that American culture is highly individualistic (Miller, 1984) and with what Lyuh (1992) found among Americans in his Ph.D. dissertation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, APPLICATION, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the semantic formulas used by Saudi and American male undergraduate students in the speech act of refusal. The results of this research revealed that Saudis and Americans used similar formulas in refusing requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions except in the employment of direct 'no'. However, they differed in the content of their explanations which reflected some values of Saudi and American cultures.

The data of this study were collected through a DCT questionnaire and were analyzed as consisting of semantic formulas following Beebe and Cummings (1985). Semantic formulas of refusals of both groups varied according to the types of speech acts used to elicit responses rather than according to social status or distance. The highest percentage of semantic formulas was employed by both groups when refusing requests. The next highest percentage when refusing invitation or offers, and the lowest percentage occurred when refusing suggestions.

Both Saudis and American differed in the employment of semantic formulas and in the content of refusals. Saudis used more semantic

formulas than did Americans in all situations except S#14. Saudis employed 'avoidance' strategies (e.g., 'postponement,' 'hedge,' 'repeat') more than did Americans. In general, Saudis used more politeness strategies (i. e., positive politeness strategies and negative politeness strategies) than did American respondents. Saudis gave unspecified and vague explanations. They tended to be less direct in their refusals and resort to explanations other than their own inclinations and desires in refusing. Americans, on the other hand, gave clear and detailed explanations and were more direct in their refusals. They also gave their own desires and inclinations as reasons for their refusals.

The choices of semantic formulas reflected the different characteristics of each cultures. Saudi refusals reflected collectivistic culture, while American refusals reflected individualistic culture. The study also showed that Saudis were more sensitive to status than were Americans.

Applications of this research

This study can contribute to and bridge the gap in cross-cultural pragmatics especially on the speech acts of refusals by Saudis. Refusals like other speech acts, however, reflect cultural values and enhance cross-cultural understanding. Awareness of the differences in speech acts of refusals between cultures can minimize potential

misunderstandings. For example, if Saudis keep asking questions or repeat the requester's statement, Americans should be aware that Saudis are trying to refuse indirectly. When Saudis give unspecified and vague explanations which are not acceptable to Americans, it is not that Saudis are indifferent or untruthful. It is simply their way of communication. Once again, explicit knowledge about other cultures, people are apt to misinterpret the intentions and behavior of their interlocutors who are from other cultural backgrounds on the light of their own values and norms. Knowing about the sociolinguistic differences of other cultures can prevent serious cross-cultural misunderstanding and can minimize unnecessary hostility toward other groups.

The current study can also contribute to language learning and teaching. Learners of language should learn both linguistic knowledge and pragmatic competence. They should be exposed to both correct forms and the proper way of speech to master the target language. The results of this study can help teachers become aware of the differences and provide information on how to refuse properly in both Arabic and American English. Language learners should be provided with important knowledge about the general patterns of refusals of target cultures in order to interact successfully with people from that culture. Saudis who are studying in the US are advised to refuse more directly and to give

more explicit explanations in their refusals. Americans will have to do the same when they acquire Arabic.

Suggestions for further research

Throughout the process of conducting and reporting this study, several thoughts and ideas related to this research have struck the mind of the researcher to search them. Nevertheless, since this study at hand has limits in terms of purpose, goal, and aim, the researcher believes that there is a need for replicating this empirical study using a larger sample allowing for stricter control of variables. A replica of this study can also focus on other languages with the purpose of investigating the similarities and differences between one language and another, and one culture and another. Similar studies should be undertaken on other speech acts which have not been dealt with such as promising and thanking in both Arabic and English.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
The English version of the Questionnaire

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Consent Form

Dear Participant:

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the cross-cultural differences in speech behavior. I request your participation in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you agree to participate, you will fill out the following questionnaire which will take approximately one hour. Your responses will be completely confidential and accessible only to the researcher and the advisory committee , so please do not write your name any where on your responses.

On the following pages you will fill 14 situations in which an individual is requesting that you do something for or with him. <u>Pretend that you do not want to comply with his request, invitation, offer, or suggestion</u>, and provide the suitable response <u>as if you would be in real situation.</u>

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Researcher
HAMDAN G. AL-SHALAWI
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS

I agree to participate in this study:

Major: ....

Age: ....

Signature: ....

Date: ....

Instructions

Please read the following 14 situations and provide the suitable response as if you would be in real situation.

1. In a meeting with your advisor in his office, he asks you to stay by the phone.

> Advisor: I'm expecting a very important phone call, but I have an meeting right now. Would you please stay here and answer the phone?
>
> You: --------------------------------------.

2. One of your professors in the university invites you to his house:

> Professor: I'm having a small party this weekend at my house. Will you be able to come?
>
> You: --------------------------------------.

3. You work in an automobile company. One day the boss calls you to his office:

> Boss: I'd like to offer you a good position in our new office in the neighboring town with a nice raise too. What do you say?
>
> You: --------------------------------------.

4. In a meeting with your professor to plan the next semester's courses, the professor suggests a course to be taken:

> Professor: It seems to me that you need to take a course in research methods. So, I would strongly suggest that you take this course before you start writing your thesis.
>
> You: --------------------------------------.

5. One of your classmate asks you a favor:

Classmate: I'm doing a project this semester that requires me to distribute questionnaires. Will you be able to help me on this and fill one of them ?

       You: ---------------------------------------.

6. One of your friends invites you to his house:

Friend: I'm having a small party this weekend at my house. Will you be able to come?

       You: ---------------------------------------.

7. One evening you visited your friend at his house and he offers you a juice:

Friend: I just bought this new kind of juice. Would you please try it and tell me about it?

       You: ---------------------------------------.

8. While you are planning your next semester's courses, you consulted one of your classmates who is in your department:

       Classmate: Well, that course is OK., but if you take this one first, it would better.

       You: ---------------------------------------.

9. You are a teaching assistant in the university. A freshman student approaches you and say:

       Freshman: Hi, in fact I'm having a lot of problems in one of the subjects which I'm taking this semester and I need some help. Will you be able to explain it to me?

       You: ---.

10. You are a teaching assistant in the university. One evening a freshman student invites you to a very good restaurant:

Freshman: some of our classmates are planning to have dinner in a good restaurant tonight. Would you like to join us?

       You: ---.

11. One day your cleaning lady rushes up to you and say:

Cleaning lady: Oh sir, I'm so sorry! I'm really sorry. While I was cleaning your office, I hit your valuable vase and it was broken. I'm so sorry, and I'll have to pay for it.

       You: ---.

12. You are a graduate student tutoring a freshman student.

Freshman student : I feel that this book is very difficult and the exercises are not well prepared. I think if we stick to the exercises that you prepared will be easier for us to understand this subject.

       You: ---.

13. An acquaintance stops by your house and asks you for a favor:
Acquaintance: I'm really in a big trouble. I should pay all my bills
this month or they will be sent to collection agency. Can you lend
some money and I promise I'll bring it back next month?
       You: ---------------------------------------.

14. While you are walking down the street, a stranger stops and says:
       Stranger: Would you like a ride?
       You: ---------------------------------------.

APPENDIX B
The Arabic version of the Questionnaire

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

استبيان

اقرار الموافقة على الاشتراك في البحث

عزيزي المشارك:

إن الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الدراسة هو استقصاء الاختلافات بين الثقافات المختلفة في السلوك الخطابي. أرجو منك المساهمة في هذه الدراسة. إن مساهمتك في هذه الدراسة اختيارية وبإمكانك الانسحاب في أي وقت. إذا وافقت على الاشتراك في هذه الدراسة فسوف تقوم بتعبئة الاستفتاء المرفق والذي يستغرق قرابة الساعة. جميع الاجابات ستكون موضع سرية تامة وفي متناول يد الباحث ولجنة الاشراف فقط. الرجاء عدم كتابة الاسم على إجاباتك.

في الصفحات التالية سوف تجيب على ١٤ موقفا، حيث يطلب منك شخص أن تقوم بعمل شيء له أو معه. أرجو منك أن تتظاهر بعدم الاستجابة لطلبه، أو دعوته، أوعرضه، أو إقتراحه، وأن تعبر بكل تلقائية وصراحة وواقعية عما ستقوله بالفعل كما لو كنت في نفس الموقف فعلا.

شكرا لتعاونك

الباحث

حمدان غريب الشلوي

قسم اللغويات

أوافق على المشاركة في هذه الدراسة

العمر..................... :

التخصص................. :

التوقيع................. :

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<u>التعليمات:</u>

أرجو قراءة المواقف الأربعة عشر التالية والإجابة عليها بالردود المناسبة كما لو كنت فعلاً في نفس الموقف .

١. في لقاء مع مشرفك الدراسي في مكتبه يطلب منك أن تبقى للرد على الهاتف :

المشرف: أنا بانتظار مكالمة مهمة جداً ولكنني مشغول جداً الآن، فهل بإمكانك البقاء لترد على المكالمة؟

و ترفض بقولك:

٢. أحد أساتذتك بالجامعة يدعوك إلى منزله:

الأستاذ: عندي حفلة صغيرة في نهاية هذا الأسبوع في منزلي، فهل يمكنك الحضور؟

و ترفض بقولك:

٣. أنت تعمل في شركة للسيارات، وفي أحد الأيام يدعوك رئيسك إلى مكتبه:

الرئيس: أحب أن أعرض عليك منصباً رفيعاً في مكتبنا الجديد في المدينة المجاورة مع علاوة مناسبة، فما رأيك؟

وترفض بقولك:

٤. في لقاء مع مشرفك الدراسي لإعداد مواد الفصل القادم، يقترح عليك المشرف تسجيل مادة:

المشرف: يبدو لي أنك تحتاج إلى مادة في طرق البحث العلمي، لذلك أقترح عليك أن تأخذ هذه المادة قبل أن تبدأ في كتابة بحث الماجستير.

وترفض بقولك:

٥. أحد زملائك في القاعة يطلب منك معروفاً:

الزميل: لدي بحث هذا الفصل يتطلب مني توزيع استبانات فهل يمكنك مساعدتي في هذا وتعبئة إحداها؟

وترفض بقولك:

٦. أحد أصدقائك يعوك إلى منزله:

الصديق: عندي حفلة صغيرة في نهاية هذا الأسبوع في منزلي، فهل يمكنك الحضور؟

وترفض بقولك:

٧. قمت بزيارة أحد أصدقائك في إحدى الأمسيات، وقدم لك مشروباً:

الصديق: لقد اشتريت هذا النوع الجديد من العصير لتوّي، فما رأيك أن تجربه وتخبرني برأيك؟

وترفض بقولك:

٨. بينما كنت تخطط لمواد الفصل القادم، استشرت أحد زملائك في القسم:

الزميل: هذه المادة لابأس بها، لكن لو أخذت هذه المادة أولاً لكان أولى.

وترفض بقولك:

٩. أنت معيد في الجامعة . اقترب منك أحد طلاب المستوى الثاني قائلا:

الطالب : مرحبا ، في الحقيقة إنني اواجه مشاكل كثيرة في إحدى مواد هذا الفصل، وأحتاج بعض المساعدة . هل بإمكانك شرحها لي ؟

وترفض بقولك:

١٠. أنت معيد في الجامعة ، في إحدى الامسيات دعاك طالب في المستوى الأول الى مطعم فاخر:

الطالب : يخطط بعض الزملاء للعشاء في مطعم فاخر الليلة . هل يمكنك مرافقتنا ؟

وترفض بقولك:

١١. في أحد الأيام ، هرعت إليك الخادمة مسرعة قائلة:

الخادمة : إنني اسفة ياسيدي، إنني اسفة حقا، بينما كنت انظف مكتبك ، ضربت المزهرية الثمينة بدون قصد فانكسرت ، إنني اسفة جدا ، وسوف ادفع لك ثمنها.

وترفض بقولك:

١٢. أنت طالب دراسات عليا ، تقوم بتدريس طالب في المستوى الأول

الطالب : انني أشعر أن هذا الكتاب صعب جدا ، والتمارين ليست معدة بصورة جيدة . وأعتقد أننا لو التزمنا بالتمارين التي تحضرها لنا فقط سوف يسهل علينا فهم هذه المادة

وترفض بقولك:

١٣. يمر عليك أحد المعارف ويطلب منك معروفا:

أحد المعارف : إنني في مشكلة كبيرة ، ويجب علي أن أدفع جميع فواتيري هذا الشهر أو سترسل الى قسم استحقاق الديون . هل يمكنك إقراضي بعض المال ، وأعدك أن أرجعه إليك الشهر القادم.

وترفض بقولك:

١٤. بينما كنت تسير في الشارع ، توقف بجانبك غريب وقال:

الغريب : هل تحب أن أوصلك ؟

وترفض بقولك:

APPENDIX C
Classification of Refusals (Beebe and Cummings, 1985)

APPENDIX C

Classification of Refusals (Beebe and Cummings, 1985)

DIRECT

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

      Nonperformative statement:
            1. "No"
            2. Negative willingness / ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't
                think so.")

INDIRECT

      Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry...," "I feel terrible...")
          Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you...")

      Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that
          night," "I have a headache.")

      Statement of alternative
            1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather..." "I'd prefer...")
            2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask
               someone else?")

      Set condition for future or past acceptance:
            (e.g., "I'll do it next time," "I promise I'll..." or "Next time
               I'll..." -using "will" of promise or "promise")

      Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")

      Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")

      Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
            1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the
               requester (e.g., "I 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 living off people who just order
               coffee."

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." "You don't have to."
6. Self-defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can do." "I don't do nothing wrong.")

Acceptance that functions as a refusal
1. Unspecified or indefinite reply
2. Lack of enthusiasm

Avoidance

1. Nonverbal
   Silence
   Hesitation
   Do nothing
   Physical departure

2. Verbal
   Topic switch
   Joke
   Repetition of part of request, etc. (E.g., "Monday?")
   Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")
   Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure."

ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS
Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement ("That's a good idea..." ; "I'd love to...")
Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
Pause fillers (e.g., "uhh"; "Well"; "oh"; "uhm")
Gratitude/appreciation

APPENDIX D
Examples of Semantic Formulas quoted from the Questionnaire

Appendix D

Examples of Semantic Formulas quoted from the questionnaire

1. Direct no: 'No,'
   'laa,' 'no'

2. Negative ability:
   'I cannot,'
   'laa astatii?,'
   'ma?gdar,' 'I don't think I can make it'

   'I won't be able to come.' 'Laa astatii?'

3. Regret: 'I'm very sorry...,'
   'I'm sorry ...,'
   'Sorry'
   'anaa aasif jidan ...,' 'I'm very sorry'
   'ana assif.' 'I'm sorry'

4. Wish: 'I wish I can come ...,'
   'I wish I could, but I have ...,'
   'yaa layt,' 'I wish'
   'atamanaa' 'I wish'
   'I hope to attend but...'
   'that would be no problem, however, I have...'
   'I wish it is on Saturday'

5. Explanation: 'I have to stay home with my family,'
   'I have to take my family out this weekend,'
   'I have an exam'
   'I have troubled stomach,'
   'I have to study.'
   'I'm too busy'
   'I have a class in a couple of minutes'
   'I already have a dinner engagement'
   'I already have too many hours in this semester'
   'I'm broke and simply don't have any money.'

6. Alternative: 'Why don't you ask someone else,'
   ' If you ask another person would be better,'

'I can look into the possibility of having this course waived'

'If you work extra hours you can cover the cost for this damage,'

'this course is more related to my major than the first one.'

'Why don't you ask the secretary to transfer this call to the meeting room'

7. Future acceptance:

'I will come next time I promise,'

'I promise I'll accept your invitation next time,'

'I'm busy now, but next time I'll...'

'I'll take this course next semester.'

'... may be next time.'

8. Principle:

'I don't like to give examples outside the book,'

'My way of teaching is to stick to the book,'

'I don't like lazy students who like easy exercises.'

9. Philosophy:

'Life is full of difficult examples,'

'Excuse is worse than sin,'

'asking too many questions is a bad habit.'

10. Self-defense:

'You should blame yourself for not studying hard ...,'

'I'm trying to explain every thing in an easy way ...,'

'I'm trying my best ...,'

'It's your problem ...,'

'try to read before you come to class.'

11. Repeat::

'Next weekend ..uhm .. next weekend, I don't think I can'

'Research method ?,'

'party...party, oh, I'm sorry I cannot...'

12. Postpone:

'Check with me later'

'I'll think it over'

'try to remind me before the weekend'

'...I'll think about it'

13. Hedge:

'I don't know what to choose'

'I'm lost...'

'...I don't know what to say,....'

'I really don't know'

14. Positive feeling: 'I would love to do my advisor a favor but...'
    'I would love to come if I have time ...'
    'I will be happy to come and meet your wife...'
    'It's a great honor to be invited ...'

15. Empathy building:
    'I know that you are in a trouble, but I can do nothing   to you'
    'I'm sure that you need help in your studies...'
    'I know your difficult situation but I'm not the right person...'
    'I really understand how serious your problem are but ...'

16. Question: 'Is it required to take this course'
    'What weekend you are talking about'
    'Can I take this course instead of that one'
    'Can I waive it'
    'Do you really have a party?'

17. Threat: '...But if you do it again you blame yourself'
    'This time you have no problem but don't do it again'
    '...do not do it again and be careful when you clean my office'
    '...next time, you will pay for every thing'
    '...next time I'll deduct from your salary.'

18. Let interlocutor off the hook:
    1. 'No, that's Ok'
    2. 'Don't worry about it'
    3. 'No, no problem'
    4. 'M?alesh' 'that's Ok'
    5. 'That's Ok.'
    6. 'Masar i?la khair 'nothing happened'
    7. 'Laa, laa, mafih Mushkilah' 'no, no problem'

19. Pause fillers: 'wallahi' 'by God'
    'Well,...'
    'uhm'
    'uh'

20. Gratitude: 'Shukran' 'Thank you'
    'Thanks a lot'
    'Thank you'
    'Jazaka allahu khayran' 'May Allah reward for that'
    'Allah yukremuk' ' May God be generous with you'

'Allah yukremuk' ' May God be generous with you'
'I appreciate your offer...'
'I appreciate your suggestion...'

21. Sarcasm: 'a smart person like you doesn't need a help from a person like me'
'why don't you teach the class instead of me'
'I didn't think that you are a genius person'

22. No thanks

23. Criticism: 'Who do you think you are to suggest different exercises'
'I have never thought that you have stupid ideas'
'This is ridiculous'
'A student like you should not ask for easy exercises'

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