In the name of God most gracious most merciful

The Art of Saying No: A Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Comparison of Saudi and Australian Refusal Appropriateness Applied in Academic settings

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# Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES.......................................................................................................................................... V

LIST OF FIGURES....................................................................................................................................... VII

DECLARATION ........................................................................................................................................ VIII

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................................ IX

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................................ X

INTRODUCTION: ........................................................................................................................................ 1

JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THIS RESEARCH: ................................................................................................. 3

September 11 and the aftermath: .................................................................................................................. 3

Saudi and Australian studies: ...................................................................................................................... 5

Saudi and Australian educational links: ..................................................................................................... 5

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: ........................................................................................................ 6


2. The politeness system of Scollon and Scollon (1995): ........................................................................ 7

3. Speech act theory: .............................................................................................................................. 8

4. Halls’ high and low context pattern: ................................................................................................ 8

5. Hofstede’s cultural patterns: .......................................................................................................... 11

LITERATURE REVIEW: ...................................................................................................................... 13

Arabic and English pragmatics comparison studies: ............................................................................. 15

HYPOTHESIS OF THE CURRENT STUDY: ......................................................................................... 22
QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY: ..................................................................................................................... 22

METHODOLOGY: .......................................................................................................................................... 23

Population and sample of the study: ........................................................................................................... 23

Instrumentation and data collection: ........................................................................................................... 25

Data analysis: ................................................................................................................................................ 27

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: ..................................................................................................................... 29

REFUSAL STRATEGIES AND FREQUENCIES IN THE FOUR GROUPS’ UTTERANCES: .................. 31

THE STUDY’S CATEGORY OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES: ................................................................. 31

THE FREQUENCIES OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES APPLIED BY EACH GROUP: ..................... 33

1. Saudi teachers group: ........................................................................................................................... 33
2. Australian teachers group: ..................................................................................................................... 35
3. Saudi students: .................................................................................................................................... 37
4. The Australian students: ....................................................................................................................... 40

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT LANGUAGE SPEAKERS: .... 41

Similarities: .................................................................................................................................................. 43
1. Tendency of saving face and indirect refusals: ....................................................................................... 43
2. The high frequency of explanation and reason strategies: ................................................................. 44

Differences: .................................................................................................................................................. 45
1. The use of direct refusal strategies: ....................................................................................................... 46
2. Length of refusals: .................................................................................................................................. 48

Different contents of semantic formulas: .............................................................................................. 52
1. Specified vs. unspecified reasons and explanations: ........................................................................... 52
2. The use of formal language: ................................................................................................................. 56
3. The use of religious semantics: ........................................................................................................... 59
4. Defying relations: ................................................................................................................................. 59

4. The use of different tactics: ................................................................................................................... 62
refusal strategies Exclusively applied by Saudi speakers: ................................................................. 63
1. Exaggeration: .............................................................................................................................................. 63
2. Prayer .......................................................................................................................................................... 64
3. Referring to God's Will ................................................................................................................................ 66
4. Acceptance .................................................................................................................................................. 68
5. Request to be excused ................................................................................................................................. 71
6. Asking for forgiveness ................................................................................................................................ 73

Refusal strategies applied mostly or exclusively by Australian speakers: ..................................................... 74
1. Regret .......................................................................................................................................................... 74
2. Explicit "no": .............................................................................................................................................. 75
3. Let interlocutor off the hook: ...................................................................................................................... 77
4. Laughter and explicit rejection .................................................................................................................... 80

THE COUNTER GROUPS’ PERSPECTIVE OF THE CONTRASTIVE REFUSAL STRATEGIES ....................................................... 80
1. Exaggeration ............................................................................................................................................... 81
2. Prayer .......................................................................................................................................................... 82
3. God willing .................................................................................................................................................. 83
4. The utilisation of religious phrases: ............................................................................................................ 84
5. Length of refusals: ....................................................................................................................................... 85
6. Defying relations: ........................................................................................................................................ 86
8. Laughter, direct no, and explicit rejections refusal strategies: ..................................................................... 88

CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................................... 90

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY: .................................................................................................................. 91

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES: ..................................................................................................... 93
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: High and low-context cultures............................................................ 10
Table 2: Previous related studies....................................................................22
Table 3: An example of a refusal analysis......................................................28
Table 4: The study’s category of refusal strategies.......................................33
Table 5: Frequently used strategies among Saudi teachers.........................34
Table 6: Less frequently used strategies among Saudi teachers..................34
Table 7: Frequently used strategies among Australian teachers...................36
Table 8: Less frequently used strategies among Australian teachers............36
Table 9: Frequently used strategies among Saudi students..........................38
Table 10: Less frequently used strategies among Saudi students..................38
Table 11: Frequently used strategies among Saudi students........................40
Table 12: Less frequently used strategies among Saudi students..................41
Table 13: Frequencies of direct refusals applied by the four groups............47
Table 14: Length of refusals...........................................................................49
Table 15: Examples of Saudis and Australians’ diversity

according to length of their refusals.............................................................49
Table 16: Specified vs. unspecified reasons and explanations......................45
Table 17: Examples of Specified and unspecified reasons and explanations applied by both language speakers...............................56

Table 18: The use of formal and informal language..........................................................58

Table 19: Example of defying relations strategy in Saudi refusals..............................60

Table 20: Example of defying relations strategy in Australian refusals.................61

Table 21: Example exaggeration in Saudi refusals.......................................................64

Table 22: Example of prayer strategy in Saudi refusals.............................................66

Table 23: Example of referring to God’s will in Saudi refusals.................................68

Table 24: Example of acceptance strategy in Saudi refusals....................................68

Table 25: Examples of less in indirect acceptance strategy in Saudi refusals...........71

Table 26: Examples of speakers request to be excused in Saudi refusals...............72

Table 27: Examples of speakers asking for listeners’ forgiveness in Saudi refusals.................................................................76

Table 28: Examples of explicit “no” applied in the given refusals .............................79
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Saudi Arabia and Australia according to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions..................................................................................28
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

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“He who does not thank God does not thank people”

Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him

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Abstract

The purpose of this present study is to investigate the cross-cultural pragmatics of refusal speech acts generated by Saudi native Arabic speakers and Australian native English speakers in academic settings. The Instrumentation of data collection developed by the study utilised a combination of discourse completion tests and role play. The participants in this study were composed of four groups: Saudi teachers, Australian teachers, Saudi students, and Australian students. Twenty Saudi teachers and students were interviewed in Um Al-Qura University in Makkah city, and resulted in 180 refusals. Similarly, twenty Australian teachers and students were interviewed in Adelaide University in Adelaide city, and resulted in 180 refusals as well. Each given refusal was analysed into speech acts and strategies, and formed semantic formulas for the given refusals. The generated data was analysed to identify the contrasting strategies adopted by both language speakers while formulating their refusal utterances and its frequencies. After determining the unshared refusal strategies among the counter participants of the study, further investigations were carried on, and collected from other participants to shed some light on the understandings and interpretations formed by the different language speakers. It was found that while all groups applied indirect refusal strategies adopting many similar strategies, they differed in many aspects, such as: length, strategies, frequencies, and content of the semantic formulas. The findings of this study also suggest that people from both countries when
using unshared refusal strategies, risk threatening the face of both interlocutors by sending negative messages and conveying negative personal images while interacting with each other. Another conclusion of the study suggests the inappropriateness of using written discourse completion tests, which have been conducted by most of the previous studies, as they fail to convey the Arabic language used in real life activities rather than formal written forms.