

Doaa Fawzy Abdelrahman Yousseif

Socio-Pragmatic Variation in Everyday English and Cairene Arabic Refusal Conversations

Submitted by:
Doaa Fawzy Abdelrahman Yousseif
Department Of English
Faculty of Education
Ain Shams University

ABSTRACT

This study investigates similarities and differences in Cairene Arabic (CA) and American English(AE) refusals, using a modified discourse completion test (DCT) consisting of three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Each situation includes one refusal to a person of higher status, one to a person of equal status, and one to a person of lower status. Interactions were oral. Thirty United States interviews resulted in 358 refusals and 25 Cairene Arabic interviews resulted in 300 refusals. The refusals are categorized by formula and analyzed for order, directness, and frequency of semantic formulas. Results suggest that both groups use similar semantic formulas with similar frequency in making refusals and use a similar number of direct and indirect formulas, although Cairene Arabic interviews used more direct formulas in the equal-status situations. Both groups have similar reasons for refusing. In some situations, however, the order of semantic formulas varies and the American respondents used more expressions of gratitude.

Keywords:

Speech acts, Sociopragmatic Variation, Contrastive Linguistics, Social Status.

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Introduction

Language is one of the most important aspects of communication. Nowadays, we can find almost everybody around us using a particular language to communicate. Language is a wonder as it helps to spread our ideas, thoughts and let others know about our mood through time, space and culture. Language is no longer viewed “as a closed system, but as one which is in perpetual flux” (Johnson, 2002: P.16). Moreover, the extraordinary growth of sociolinguistics in the last decade or so has shown convincingly that language is closely linked to its context and that isolating it artificially for study ignores its complex and intricate relation to society.

Language is not only linguistic as being regarded traditionally; rather it is both linguistic and sociolinguistic (in the sense of pragmatic and ethnographic approaches to language). That is, language consists of two major dimensions: linguistic and socio-cultural. Linguistic dimension of language represents the knowledge of grammar and lexicon. This dimension is the structural facet of language which integrates phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Socio-cultural dimension of language represents the knowledge of language in its pragmatic and ethnographic aspect. Pragmatics, for Leech (1980) is “the study of the use of application of meaning in communicative situations” (P.33). Pragmatics is defined, by many scholars, as individual language use in social context, or as the rules governing the use of language in context.

Seemingly, people use language according to certain implicit rules or factors which constrain what they say, or they unconsciously follow a large number of social and cultural rules which constrain their linguistic behavior. Crystal (1971) attempts to characterize pragmatics as “that area of study which deals with the factors which govern individual choice of language” (P.243). Such characterization would imply that speaking a language depends on individual choice according to the various factors of a speech situation which dictate that choice. Pragmatics is, therefore, the study of situational, social or cultural factors which may affect (or ‘colour’) the literal meaning of an utterance in interactional activity.

Building on this perspective (that language is more than linguistic; it is linguistic and something else as well, language can be defined as a mental, social and cultural phenomenon. This definition appears to be encompassing two different approaches to language: ‘formal’ and ‘functional’. According to the formal approach, language is viewed in terms of the forms of all the sentences that can be generated by the grammatical rules (Chomsky, 1957, 1965). The functional approach views language ‘externally’ (from outside inwards according to Halliday, 1978, P.4), as a social and cultural instrument; as a socially and culturally shared means of expressing ideas, performing action, and achieving goals (i.e., getting things done); as a means of social and cultural identification. Our conceptual knowledge about the world in which we live, our expectations, our system of values and beliefs are not really part of our linguistic knowledge. But they play a very important role in the way we understand language in actual use.

When we come to consider how any language is actually used in everyday life, then it becomes clear that far from being spoken and written in exactly the same way by everybody, language is in fact tremendously varied. The study of language variation is an important part of sociolinguistics. Languages vary from one place to another,

from one social group to another, and from one situation to another. Variation spans truly all areas of language analysis: not just the traditionally accepted structural and lexical- semantic domains but also all areas of pragmatic categories and patterns. Pragmatic variation examines how language use in context varies during the negotiation of meaning in specific socio-cultural contexts, and may reflect different cultural norms. Socio-pragmatic variation may thus be defined as the way in which speakers vary their use of language in similar situational contexts with similar communicative purposes and thus exhibit different interactional features/patterns (Ma´rquez Reiter and Placencia 2005). These, in turn, possibly reflect different cultural norms. The primary concern of sociopragmatic variation is, therefore, to identify/compare the interactional patterns of given social groups in given situational contexts. There are four types of sociopragmatic variation; namely, variation in speech act realization, variation in speech act perception, politeness variation and variation in conversational organization. Speakers vary their speech act production (e.g., apologizing, refusing, requesting, etc.), perceive speech acts differently, convey and perceive politeness differently, and display different interactional patterns during conversational interaction (e.g., greetings, opening and closing sequences, turn-taking, laughter). Unlike previous work on dialectology and linguistic variation which focuses on phonological, lexical, and morpho-syntactic variation in different varieties of English, little systematic attention has been given to socio-pragmatic variation during the negotiation of speech acts in a language (Silva-Corvala´n2001; Barron 2005; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006).

Sociopragmatic variation is generally defined as the way in which speakers vary their language use in comparable situational contexts with similar communicative purposes and how they show different interactional patterns (Ma´rquez Reiter and Placencia 2005). The main goal of socio-pragmatic research is the examination of ‘meaning in interaction’. Here, meaning is seen as a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between

speaker and hearer, the context utterance (physical, social, linguistic) and the meaning potential of what is being said' (Thomas, 1995, p.22). as culture is seen as a model of and for reality that individuals internalize, without necessarily being conscious of it (Geertz, 1973), scholars argue that the interactants' assigning of meaning will, to a greater or lesser extent, reflect their own socio-cultural knowledge and norms.

The term "speech act" has been defined as a minimal unit of discourse (Searle, 1969), a basic and functional unit of communication (Cohen, 1995). Examples of speech acts include giving and responding to compliments, asking questions, apologizing, leave taking, making introductions, and making refusals. Cross-cultural comparisons of speech acts are of interest to applied linguists (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972, 1974; Wolfson, 1981, 1983, 1989) in part because they provide insight into the linguistic and sociolinguistic rules of a language: Many cross-cultural speech act studies have been conducted under the theoretical framework of contrastive pragmatics. Comparisons of speech acts are also of interest because they contribute to understanding cultural differences in communication style. Speech acts theory was developed by John Austin and John Searle in their books *How to Do things with words* (Austin, 1962) and *Speech Acts* (Searle, 1969). In this paper, a speech act is considered to be a unit for the study of language and of cultural differences in Cairene Arabic and American English. Speech act theory is becoming increasingly important in sociopragmatics.

Refusals are important speech acts to investigate cross-culturally because they are face-threatening, and the possibility of offending someone is inherent in the act itself (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). In making a refusal, an individual rejects an offer initiated by another or backs out of an agreement. By refusing, the individual risks offending the initiator. Because of this risk, "some degree of

indirectness usually exists" (p.56). In other words, the person who refuses may need to mitigate the force of the refusal.

Moreover, refusals are interesting socioinguistically in that they are complex, involving long sequences, and vary according to sociolinguistic variables such as status (Beebe et al., 1990; Houck & Gass, 1995). They are also interesting because "their form and content vary according to the eliciting speech act (e.g., invitation, request, offer, or suggestion)" (Beebe et al., 1990, p. 56).

Refusals are types of speech acts that are proposed as a reaction to another individual's request, invitation, offer or suggestion; in other words, they are not speaker-initiative. Since refusals are speech acts involving a certain level of offensiveness and are inherently discourteous, applying improper refusal strategies may damage the relationship between the people concerned. Consequently, appropriate production of refusals necessitates a certain degree of culture-specific awareness. To avoid appearing rude or discourteous, non-native speakers often overuse indirect strategies which might be misunderstood by the target community. Refusals are considered to be a speech act by which a speaker "[fails] to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor" (Chen et al. 1995: 121). A refusal response is sensitive to social factors such as social distance and social power between the interlocutors. Furthermore, the negotiation of a refusal may entail frequent attempts at directness or indirectness and various degrees of politeness or impoliteness that are appropriate to the situation. With regard to sociopragmatic variation, what is considered appropriate refusal behavior may vary across cultures and even across varieties of one language.

Cairene Arabic and American English are different from word order to sound system. The difference becomes more transparent when culture is considered in language meaning and function. Arabic is usually described as collective, high context and in group, where

religion and family are given priority (cf. Barakat, 1993; Hofstede, 2001; Joseph, 2003; Zaharna, 1995 and 2009). English on the other hand is described as a low context culture, less collective and more individualistic with a more egalitarian perspective and a marginal role for religion and family relations (cf. Schwartz, 1999; Cragan, 2009; Deardorff, 2009). This study tries to show the differences between American English and Cairene Arabic in the performance of refusal strategies and level of directness.

This study investigated American English and Cairene Arabic refusals to determine similarities and differences in 1) the order and frequency of semantic formulas, 2) the degree of directness/indirectness, 3) the role of status, and 4) the kinds of reasons given to justify the refusal.

Review of Related Literature

Few comparative studies have been conducted on refusals. A major study (Beebe et al., 1990) compared the refusals given by native speakers of Japanese and native speakers of English' using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). A DCT consists of structured written discourse part of which is left open and part of which is closed, "providing both the speech act and the rejoinder" (Cohen, 1995, p. 24). The rejoinder makes it clear that the subject is to make a refusal. The DCT situations in Beebe et al.'s study consist of three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions.

The findings of Beebe et al. (1990) clearly demonstrate the importance of status in the refusal strategies selected by the respondents. Americans, in refusing requests from higher and lower status persons, followed a similar pattern. They frequently began by expressing a positive feeling or opinion, then expressed regret, and ended the refusal with a reason. However, when higher status Americans refused individuals of lower status, they at times ended

the refusal with a direct formula. In refusing a request from an equal status person, the Americans usually began with an expression of regret and then gave a reason for the refusal. In contrast, the Japanese were more direct if the respondent were addressing a lower status person. As Beebe et al. note, the Japanese "omitted apology/regret when they were higher status than the requester" (p. 59).

Status was also an important factor in refusing invitations. When Japanese respondents were in the higher status position refusing an invitation from someone of lower status, they generally omitted expressions of apology or regret in a manner similar to refusing requests. In making refusals to persons of higher status, the Japanese were more polite, using more mitigations strategies (e.g., statements of positive opinion and empathy) than in addressing persons of lower status. On the other hand, Americans used similar strategies in refusing all invitations, often beginning with an adjunct, followed by an expression of regret and a reason for the refusal. With status equals, Americans often ended the refusal with a "thank you. "In their analysis of the reasons that each group used for refusing, Beebe et al found differences between the Americans and Japanese. One difference was specificity; Americans tended to be more specific in their reasons, whereas Japanese excuses tended to be "nonspecific as to place, time, or parties involved"(p. 66).

Stevens (1993) studied Arabic and English refusals, also using a written DCT. His DCT consisted of 15 situations, eight requests and seven offers/invitations. His findings, similar to those of Beebe et al.(1990),revealed that refusals involve multiple formulas and that interlocutors seldom refuse outright. His analysis indicated that both Arabic and English speakers used many of-the same formulas (e.g., explanations, non-committal strategies, partial acceptances, and white lies).Because of the similarities between Egyptian and American refusal strategies, Stevens concludes that Egyptian learners may not need to be explicitly taught refusal strategies since there may be a good deal of positive pragmatic transfer from Arabic

to English. Steven's study was valuable in that it is one of the first studies to compare Arabic and English refusals, yet the study does not investigate the role of status nor the order of formulas in making refusals. It also does not indicate the frequency of each formula type nor analyze the types of reasons given for refusing.

Hussien (1995) discusses refusals in Arabic as part of his study of speech acts in Arabic. He lists some of the strategies used by Arabic native speakers in refusals and maintains that indirect refusals are used with acquaintances of equal status and with close friends of unequal status. Hussein's study is descriptive in nature and is based on examples which he gathered by means of participant observation. A problem exists, however, with his examples. Although he maintains that the data occurred naturalistically (i.e., the utterances were spoken), the examples used are written in Modern Standard Arabic, a formal variety of Arabic that is not used for daily communication.

Recent research on both cross-cultural and interlanguage refusals has indicated that refusals vary by language and culture, and speakers from different cultural backgrounds perform refusals differently, in terms of their degree of directness/indirectness, frequencies, sensitivity to social variables, and performance with respect to the content of strategies (Al-Issa, 2003; Beebe et al., 1990; Chang, 2009; Félix-Brasdefer, 2003; Kwon, 2004; Liao & Bresnahan, 1996; Nelson et. al., 2002; Wannaruk, 2008). In that sense, the majority of these studies have made comparisons among responses to different elicitation acts to interpret results pertaining to these aforementioned variables. Hence, aligning with previous literature, one of the aims of this study is to attest what similarities and differences Cairene Arabic NSs, American NSs, and Cairene Arabic EFL speakers do share while accomplishing the speech act of refusals. Such a contrastive analysis among Arabic, English, and Arabic EFL refusals might enable us to understand some possible reasons for miscommunication between Americans and Arabic

speakers of English, and provide several implications for instructional pragmatics at EFL programs in Egypt.

Research on the speech act of refusals falls into two broad strands: one investigated refusals across different languages and cultures; the other examined the certain features of refusals by NNSs in their target language. The following section presents an overview of these two major research categories:

Cross-cultural studies on refusals show that different cultures perform refusals differently. Their degree of directness in refusals, their sensitivity to social variables, and their performance in terms of the content of strategies might vary. A select review of cross-cultural refusal strategies is presented below.

A number of studies investigating refusals in Arabic have been conducted. Studies concerning refusals conducted by Stevens (1993), Al Issa (1998), Al Shalawi (1997), Al Eryani (2007) and Morkus (2009) are reviewed. All of these studies are cross-cultural studies, investigating refusals in Arabic and English. Other studies also looked at how refusals are realized by Arab EFL learners. Almost all of these studies used a DCT for collecting the data (except Morkus, 2009 who used Role Plays). Furthermore, as the present study investigates refusals in Cairene Arabic dialect, these above-mentioned studies correspond to the present study in that they investigated refusals in different Arabic dialects including Egyptian, Jordanian, Saudi, and Yemeni. These studies are being reviewed here in some detail because they have informed the present study with regard to design and data analysis method. They are also reviewed in order to demonstrate how the present study improves on previous research and bridges some of the gaps in the literature. With regard to findings from these studies, they are important to the present study since these studies are in part similar to the present study with regard to the data collection method and their analytical framework. It will be important to review their findings to see how they are comparable with findings from the present study.

Another study on Arabic refusals was conducted by Al-Shalawi (1997) who investigated the refusal strategies used by Saudis and Americans. He used a written, open-ended DCT to elicit refusals of requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions from 50 American males and 50 Saudi males. He then analyzed the data with regard to the semantic formulae used following Beebe and Cummings' (1985) classification scheme of refusal strategies, and also adding new categories e.g., sarcasm Why don't you teach the class instead of me?, or I didn't think that you were a genius to account for his data. He calculated frequency counts of all formulae, and ran a t-test to determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups, and he analyzed the situations on two variables: status and social distance. Al-Shalawi's study is particularly significant since it attempted to interpret the results within the framework of cultural differences between the two speech communities. It also reports many important findings that provide important insights into Arab culture and communication style. The difference between the present study and Al-Shalawi's is that the latter's participants were all males, while equal numbers of males and females have taken part in this study. Al-Shalawi elicited his data depending on written, open-ended DCT.

Another study on refusals was conducted by Al-Eryani (2007) researching the refusal strategies of Yemeni EFL learners compared with those of native speakers of Yemeni Arabic and native speakers of American English. All the participants in his study were males. The researcher used a written DCT which consisted of 6 situations in which participants refused offers, requests, invitations, and suggestions from someone higher, lower, and equal in status. Data analysis was based on the scheme used by Beebe et al. (1990). Results of the study indicate that native speakers of Yemeni Arabic tended to be less direct in their refusals when compared with their

American counterparts. The order of the semantic formulae was also different between the two groups. The EFL learners showed similarities with native speakers of English in three areas: order of semantic formulae, their frequency, and their content.

Al-Eryani's study is significant in many ways. First, it is one of only three Arabic studies that examined refusals as realized by the language learner, particularly by Arab learners of English as a foreign language. Findings from this study are similar to findings from other studies (Al-Isaa, 1998; Al-Shalawi, 1997) with regard to Arabic preference for indirect refusal strategies. It also indicates that there was limited pragmatic transfer in the realization of refusals by advanced EFL learners. This study is also significant because it investigates refusals in an Arabic dialect that is rarely examined in speech act research. It is particularly relevant to the present study because it looks at pragmatic transfer and it investigates many of the areas that the present study will examine, such as the frequency, type, and order of the semantic formulae. One of its limitations, however, is that, as with Al-Shalaw's study, no females have participated. In addition, only 6 situations have been used by Al-Eryani, while in this study 12 situations were implemented in the DCT covering a wide variety of situations where refusals take place.

Finally, Morkus (2009) researched how refusal strategies are perceived in Egyptian Arabic by some American learners of Arabic as a foreign language. Further, the study attempts to discover if there are any similarities or differences in the latter group's responses in comparison with that of Egyptian native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of American English. Another objective is to examine the relationship between the learners' language proficiency and their pragmatic competence. Furthermore, it investigates if there is a pragmatic transfer from the source language and whether there is a relationship between the degree of pragmatic transfer and the level of L2 proficiency. His research also explored how refusals are utilized and arranged in the sequences of

interactions. Arguably, Morkus's (2009) study supports findings from the literature that Arabic communication style tends towards verbosity (Al Issa, 1998, and Al Shalawi, 1997). Moreover, some of the participants' excuses were family-oriented, and this might reflect the role of family in Egyptian culture. A point that corresponds to that of Al Shalawi (2007) is Invoking the name of God, commonly used by the Egyptians. This strategy was used more frequently by the advanced students than the intermediate students due to their linguistic knowledge which allowed them to be more aware of such expressions and the way in which they are used in everyday communication in Arabic. Morkus suggests that the use of this strategy, which literally means I swear to God, may not be as straightforward as it seems. This study is important for the improvements the researcher made with regard to data collection and data analysis. Morkus adopted the Beebe et al (1990) classification scheme. Morkus's study, however, has some limitations. Firstly, he collected the data only orally via the role plays and did not exploit the benefits of DCT, such as surveying a large number of participants, controlling the different cultural variables and allowing a cross-cultural comparison. Furthermore, Morkus investigated only one contextual variable between his interlocutors which is the social status, whereas this study investigates two distinct variables (namely, social power and social distance) in accounting for the variation in the realization of refusals in Cairene Arabic and American English.

The studies reviewed above (with the exception of Morkus, 2009) used a data collection instrument that elicited single-turn responses, namely a written DCT. Also all of these studies used DCT scenarios that are similar to ones used in the literature, especially by Beebe et al. (1990). In addition, these studies used refusal classification schemes that are based on the schemes proposed by Beebe et al. (1990), and Beebe and Cummings (1985).

For the most part these studies are consistent in their findings. For example, Morkus (2009) and Al-Eryani (2007) observed that while Arabs and Americans used similar semantic formulae, they ordered them differently when realizing refusals. Al-Shalawi (1997), Al-Issa (1998), and Morkus (2009), all revealed that Arabic explanations and excuses tended to be lengthy when compared with the American ones. Both Al-Shalawi (1997) and Al-Issa ascertained that Arabic explanations and excuses were less specific than the American ones. Al-Shalawi and Morkus (2009) observed that the Arabic excuses were family-related whereas the American ones were about the speaker's personal life. Both Al-Shalawi (1997) and Al-Issa (1998) observed the high frequency of religious reference in the Arabic data whereas the American data did not include such reference. Morkus (2009) noted that Egyptians, except for Christians who consider it inappropriate, also invoke the name of God to mitigate the illocutionary force of the speech act of refusal. However, while Al-Issa (1997) and Al Eryani (2007) discerned that Arabs tended to use more indirect strategies in their refusals, Morkus (2009) did not find such a difference in his data. It is important to note that these differences may be the result of differences in data collection methods (e.g., written DCT, role plays), and can also be due to the different dialects investigated. With regard to studies investigating the language learner (Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 1998; Stevens, 1993; Morkus, 2009), they all reported evidence of negative pragmatic transfer from L1.

Overall, the cross-cultural studies on refusals reveal that although different cultures may share similar refusal strategies, the choice of directness, mitigation and the reasons for refusing may vary across cultures. In addition, the frequency of refusal strategies in relation to the status of interlocutors has been reported to show cross-cultural variation.

Based on findings from these studies the following characteristics of Arabic refusals can be posited:

- Tendency to use indirect refusal strategies especially when refusing an interlocutor of a higher status.
- Tendency to use more direct refusal strategies in equal status situations.
- Frequency of religious reference, especially invoking the name of God.
- Tendency towards giving vague or unspecified reasons and explanations for refusals.
- Arabic refusal strategies are used in a different order from American refusal Strategies.

Participants

Fifty-five subjects participated in this study: 30 English – speaking Americans in the United States and 25 Cairene Arabic speaking Egyptians in Egypt. The American subjects were between 24 and 40 years of age; half were females and half males. All of the Americans had bachelors’ degrees. Sixteen worked in business (e.g., software engineering), eight were graduate students, and six were teachers. The Cairene Egyptians subjects were between 19 and 39 years of age; fifteen were male and ten were female. Fourteen were university students; the others had bachelors’ degrees and worked as professionals in their fields (e.g., engineers).

Method of Data Collection

Wolfson (1981, 1983) and others (Hymes, 1962; Wolfson, Maarmor & Jones, 1989) have argued for the study of naturally occurring speech act data using ethnomethodology. Other researchers, however, have pointed out the limitations of ethnographic data collection for cross-cultural studies due to problems of comparability (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) and problems of controlling gender and status, of note taking that relies on the researcher's memory, of the infrequent use of speech

act being studied, and of the time-consuming nature of data collection (Cohen, 1996).

In this study, a modified version of the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) used by Beebe et al. (1990) was used to collect the data. We chose to use the DCT because (1) the situations had already been developed and piloted and (2) our results could be more easily compared to those of other researchers. We did, however, modify the method. First, instead of subjects reading the situation and responding in writing, an interviewer read each situation aloud to the subjects and asked them to respond verbally on audiotape. Spoken elicitation and the corresponding refusals were used because they more closely resemble real life communication than written role plays. Evidence that supports the use of spoken elicitations and responses is provided by Beebe and Cumming (1995). They compared two methods of eliciting telephone data: talk versus written questionnaire responses. They found that subjects talked four times more than they wrote. In addition, oral responses are more appropriate for Arabic speakers. Arabic is a diglossic language with a written version (FusHa) and a spoken one (camiiyya). To ask respondents to write their responses would be unrealistic since they would be producing responses they do not use in real life.

A second modification was the elimination of the rejoinders. The elicitations were thus open-ended, allowing the respondents more flexibility in their responses. Finally, two situations in the DCT were slightly changed at the suggestion of the Egyptian researcher. In item 1 of the original version of the DCT, an employee asks for an increase in pay. Because it is uncommon for employees to ask for pay increases in Egypt, the situation was changed. In the version used in this study, the employee asks to take the week-end off. Item 8 was changed from asking a language teacher to provide more practice in conversation in class to asking a teacher to provide more application and case studies instead of lecturing all the time. This item was changed so that the content was

more applicable to a wider range of disciplines than foreign language instruction. The instrument consists of 12 situations that demand a refusal: three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Each situation type includes one refusal to a person of higher status, one to a person of equal status, and one to a person of lower status. Requests are defined as polite demands for something; the requester asks a favor of the other person (e.g., asking to borrow class notes). Invitations are types of requests, often for someone to come to dinner or a party; however, instead of asking a favor, the inviter is usually attempting to be thoughtful and kind. Offers refer to asking individuals if they want something (e.g., a piece of cake). Suggestions are ideas put forward for people to consider (e.g., to lecture less in class).

After the interviews were completed, the audiotapes were transcribed. The American tapes were transcribed into English and the Cairene Arabic tapes into Arabic. The Arabic transcriptions were also translated into English, but the primary analysis of the Arabic refusals was based on the Arabic transcripts, not the English translations. The 30 U.S. interviews resulted in 358 American English refusals (2 interviews yielded 11 refusals). The 25 Cairene Egyptians interviews resulted in 300 Cairene Egyptian Arabic refusals.

Data Analysis

As Cohen (1995) notes, one of the first concerns of speech act researchers is to arrive at a set of formulas "typically used by native speakers of the target language" (p. 21). In order to arrive at a set of formulas, the researchers first divided the utterances into separate formulas, also referred to as idea units (Chafe, 1980), thought groups (Fanselow, 1987) and T-units (Hunt, 1965). A formula is often a single independent clause. For example, the U.S. refusal below was divided into four formulas.

(1)(i) We really need you right now

(ii) and we've lost some good workers lately (iii) and I don't think you'll be able to leave.(iv) I'm sorry.(AF1)² For the Cairene Arabic data, the Arabic transcripts were used to parse the refusals into formulas. Dividing the refusals into formulas also keeps the researchers analytically honest; all the data are accounted for. As Miles and Huberman (1994) argue, qualitative data should be quantified as a test for possible researcher bias.

While parsing the refusals into formulas, the researchers became familiar with the data. They observed that the formulas seemed similar to the formulas discussed in Beebe et al., 1990(Appendix B).To determine if the data from this study did, in fact, match the classification system used in Beebe et al., the researchers, in a preliminary analysis, classified the U.S. data using the system developed by Beebe et al. .Because the data fit the classification scheme, the researchers used it.

The English data were then coded by two trained native-English speaking graduate research assistants. The Cairene Arabic data were coded by two native Arabic speakers, one of the researchers and a graduate research assistant. The coders worked independently and coded all of the formulas in each refusal. Based on the coding, the scheme was adjusted slightly. Intercoder reliability was 89% for the English data and 85% for the Arabic data. For items on which there was disagreement, the coders reviewed the coding guidelines and recoded the data until they came to a consensus. Following the guidelines set forth by Krippendorff(1980) and Holsti (1969), the categories were exhaustive (i.e., all data were represented in one of the categories) and mutually exclusive (i.e., a response could belong to only one category).A composite of all the coded formulas is presented later in the study.

Results and Discussion After the coding was completed, data were analyzed according to the order and directness/indirectness of the semantic formulas. Using Beebe et al.'s classification system,

formulas classified as direct were performatives (e.g., "I refuse"), nonperformatives (e.g., "No"), and statements of negative willingness ("I can't). All other formulas were coded as indirect. Data were also analyzed according to the frequency of semantic formulas and the reasons for refusing.

Order and Directness of Semantic Formulas

By analyzing the coded data, the researcher determined the sets of semantic formulas used by Native American English and Cairene Arabic speakers for each situation. As noted by Houck and Gass (1995), refusals are complex speech acts "primarily because they often involve lengthy negotiations as well as face-saving maneuvers" (p. 49). This complexity is illustrated by the number of formulas in each refusal. In the American data, the average number of formulas is 5.4 with a range of 1 to 19. The Cairene Arabic refusals averaged 3.2 formulas with a range from 1 to 11.

Refusing requests

Lower status person refuses request: American English. In the lower status request, a boss asks an employee to spend an extra hour or two at work. In over half of the American refusals, the respondents began with an utterance intended to mitigate the force of the refusal. Mitigations included (a) statements of regret such as (1) I'm sorry (b) wishes such as (2) I wish I could and (c) statements of positive opinion, as in (3) I'd love to do that.

In two thirds of the American refusals, respondents provided a reason for the refusal in the second position. As shown in the example below, most respondents elaborated on the reason and then closed with a statement of alternative, another form of mitigation. (4) I would really love to, (wish) but family matters are pressing. (reason) I really have to get home. (reason) Can we please do

it another time?(statement of alternative)I'd be glad to make it early tomorrow morning or evening.(statement of alternative).

Lower status person refuses request: Cairene Arabic. In contrast, over half of the Cairene Arabic refusals began with the reason for refusing. A common formula used to mitigate the force of the refusal was a statement of alternative, used in a third of the refusals. The most common pattern, as illustrated below, began with a reason, followed by a statement of alternative.(5)ana lazim arawwaH dilwa'ti (reason)("I have to leave now")laakin mumkin agi bukra S-SubH wa-khaLLaS illianawzaa (statement of alternative) ("but could come tomorrow morning to finish what I need.").

Similar to the American refusals, 11% (n=9) of the formulas were coded as direct. Nine Cairene Arabic respondents included a direct formula in their refusal. Thus, in refusing requests from a lower to a higher status person, less than half of the American and Cairene Arabic respondents used direct refusal formulas.

Equal status person refuses request: American English. The equal status request, a classmate, who often misses class, asks to borrow the respondent's notes. In contrast to the lower status request, many of the American respondents in the equal status request did not initially attempt to mitigate the force of the refusal. Eight began the refusal with a direct nonperformative comment (e.g., "No") and four with statement of negative willingness. Approximately 85% of the American respondents provided a reason for refusing and the reason was usually in the first or second position. For example, (6)No.(nonperformative comment)You don't come to class.(reason)You don't take your own notes(reason)and I'm tired of pulling you along.(reason) . 36%of the formulas were coded as direct. Twenty-four (80%) of the respondents used at least one direct formula.

Equal status person refuses request: Cairene Arabic. Three formulas --reasons, negative willingness, and statements of alternatives were used in most of the Cairene Arabic refusals; however, no common order emerged. The following example illustrates atypical Arabic refusal:(7)Ana mumkin addihuu-lak bukra bacd 1-imtiHaan(statement of alternative)("I may be able to give them to you tomorrow after the exam")li'anni ana miHtaaaau n-naharda azaakir fiih.(reason)("because I need to study today.")vacni ma candiish isticdaad addihuu-lak innaharda(negative willingness)("I am not ready to give them to you today.")w-bukra bacd 1-imtiHaan addi-huu-lak zaakir fiih zap/ma-nta caaviz aw s-sanah 1-gavva law inta cavzu.(statement of alternative)("However, you may take them after the exam tomorrow or next year.") . The Cairene Arabic responses were similar to the American in terms of the percentage of direct formulas; 31% were coded as direct. A total of 19 or 80% of the respondents included direct formulas in their refusals.

Higher status person refuses request: American English. An employee asks a boss for the week-end off in the higher status request. It is the employee's mother's birthday. Most of the American respondents mitigated their refusals with a statement of either regret or empathy or with a reason. If the reason for refusing was not in the first position, it was almost always in the second position. Twenty-five per cent of the American formulas were coded as direct .In fact, a third of the American refusals ended with a statement of negative willingness.

Higher status person refuses request: Cairene Arabic. Most of the Cairene Arabic refusals began with a statement of regret or with a reason for refusing. A common pattern is illustrated in (8). (8)fii shughl ktiir vum 1-aumca (reason)("There is a lot of work on Friday.")wa bi-maa innak aHsan waaHid (reason)("Because you are the best,")fa-ana ma'darsh astaahna g-annak (negative

willingness)("I cannot spare you.").The percentage of direct refusal formulas in the Cairene Arabic data (24%)was almost identical to that of the American data (25%).Thirteen(52%) of the Cairene Arabic respondents used at least one direct formula in their refusals. In refusing requests, both the American and Cairene Arabic respondents varied their refusal strategies depending on the status of the interlocutors. What is particularly interesting is that little cultural variation existed as a result of status. Respondents from both countries used less directness when refusing requests from persons of higher status, used the most directness when refusing persons of equal status, and used an intermediate level of directness when refusing individuals of lower status.

Invitations

Lower status person refuses invitation: American English. In the lower status situation, the respondent refuses an invitation to the boss's party. Three fourths of the American respondents began their refusals with an attempt to soften the blow. Common beginnings were statements of regret, positive opinion, or gratitude. The mitigation was often followed by a reason for the refusal, often in the second but sometimes in the third position, and 75% of the refusals ended with a statement of negative willingness. A common pattern is illustrated below.

(9)Well, I would love to go.(positive opinion)I really hope that you can excuse me from going to this thing (request for help by dropping request)because we have important plans that we've had for months, you know, to attend a wedding.(reason)I just really can't come.(negative willingness). 24% of the American refusals were coded as direct. Twenty-three (77%) of the American respondents used at least one direct formula.

Lower status person refuses invitation: Cairene Arabic. The Cairene Arabic refusals were similar to the American refusals. Almost half of the respondents began by softening the blow with a statement of regret and then provided reasons for the refusal.

Eighty-eight percent included at least one reason for refusing and one third included a direct statement of negative willingness. A common pattern is illustrated in (10).

(10)ana aasif(statement of regret)("I am sorry.")ana ma'darsharuH ana w-mraati vum1-Hadd da (negativewillingness)("My wife and I cannot go this Sunday")feshaan bi-nukhrua fiihViand walditi. (reason)("because this is the day in which we visit my mother."). Sixteen percent of the Cairene Arabic formulas were coded as direct and only 9 Cairene Arabic respondents included any type of direct formula in their refusal. This frequency is lower than for the American respondents.

Equal status personrefuses invitation:American English.The respondents in the equal status situation refuses a friend's invitation to dinner. In the American refusals, a great deal of variation exists. For instance, beginning formulas included reasons, repetitions of part of the request, nonperformative comments, and so forth. Less variation exists, however, in the second position; approximately half of the respondents gave a reason. Variation occurs again in the third and/or fourth positions with formulas coded as negative willingness, regret, future acceptance, and gratitude.19%of the American formulas were coded as direct. Less than half of the American respondents uttered a direct formula.

Equal status person refuses invitation: Cairene Arabic. In the Egyptian refusals, variation also exists. First, second, and third position formulas included statements of regret, statements of alternative, reasons, and statements of negative willingness. A third of the respondents made a promise of future acceptance in the final position. A typical refusal is exemplified in (11).

la' (nonperformative)

("No")magleshsh. (Statement of regret)

("I'm sorry.")khalliiha yum taani (statement of alternative)

("Make it another day.")

s-sabt l-aavv, ana mashauula khaaliS (reason)
("I am very busy next Saturday.").

Cairene Arabic respondents employed a higher percentage of direct formulas than Americans. In addition, more Cairene Arabic respondents (16 or 64%) uttered at least one direct refusal.

Higher status person refuses invitation: American English. The respondents are presidents of a company in the higher status situation. A salesman from another company invites them to dinner. Over half of the American respondents began their refusal by mitigating its force. The most commonly used mitigations were statements of appreciation, regret, alternative, or positive opinion. A reason was frequently given in the second and/or third position and half of the responses included negative willingness. This pattern is illustrated below.

(12)I'm sorry. (Regret)

I've got a previous engagement. (reason)

My family's already doing something,(reason)

so I can't come tonight.(negative willingness).

In addition, eleven respondents expressed gratitude (e.g., "thanks "), usually in the first or last position of the refusal. Twenty-four per cent of the American formulas were direct and 22 (73%) respondents employed a direct formula at least once.

Higher status person refuses invitation: Egyptian Arabic. The Cairene Arabic respondents seemed less concerned with mitigating the force of the refusal in the opening utterance. Only four respondents began their refusals with statements of regret. Many began with nonperformative statements or statements of negative willingness. Reasons were often given in the second or third position as in (13).

(13)mish Ha'dar, (negative willingness) ("I can't.")

'iHna mumkin nitkallim fi l-mawDug- da fi mag-aad sh-shuahl(statement of alternative) ("We can discuss this matter during working hours")laakin ana mish mit-gewwida akhrug waHdii bi-l-leelreason)("because I am not used to going out alone at night.").

Twenty-five per cent of the formulas were direct. In this set of refusals, many of the Americans in the equal and higher status situations, expressed gratitude, a strategy not used in refusing requests. Although requests and invitations are both situations that often call for refusals, they differ in that, the interlocutor, in making a request is often asking a favor, while in issuing an invitation, the interlocutor is attempting to be kind and to please the other person. This difference may account for the amount of gratitude expressed by the Americans. Because the interlocutor was attempting to please, many Americans responded with a "thank you." As in their responses to requests, the American and Cairene Arabic respondents tended to use both direct and indirect formulas in all status situations. The American respondents tended to be more direct when refusing a person of higher status and the Cairene Arabic respondents were more direct with status equals. Both groups were similar in the frequency of directness when interacting with a person of lower status.

Offers

Lower status person refuses offer: American English. In the lower status offer, a boss offers the respondents a raise and promotion if they are willing to move to a small town. Over half of the American respondents began with an attempt to soften the blow, often with a statement of positive opinion. In all, 28 of the 30 respondents gave at least one reason for their refusal and half included a statement of negative willingness. Most of the refusals contained an expression of gratitude, often at the beginning or the end. An example is given below.

(14)As much as I'd like to say yes, (statement of positive opinion)
for a lot of professional and certain personal reasons,(reason)
I just can't. (negative willingness)
Thanks for the offer.(gratitude)

Over half of the respondents (19 or 63%) used a type of direct formula.

Lower status person refuses offer: Cairene Arabic. The Cairene Arabic respondents differed from the American respondents in that most did not cushion the refusal in the opening statement. Thirteen or 52% began with negative willingness or nonperformative statements. The most common formulas in the second and third positions were reasons. This pattern is given in refusal (15).

(15)ma'darsh aruuH (negative willingness) ("I cannot go,")
a'ud hinaak li-waHdi (reason)("and stay there by myself.")
(hivya)aiddan g-an ahlii(reason)("It is very far from my family.")
kamaan, laazim aakhud baali min mamti(reason)("Besides, I also have to take care of my mother.")
wa ma'darsh asaafir 1-massafa di kullaha(reason) ("I cannot travel all this distance,")
wa-1-gud li-waHdi fi 1 -wash 1-'ibli(reason)("and stay alone in Upper Egypt.")

The American and Cairene Arabic respondents both used direct formulas with similar frequency in refusing offers to higher status individuals. Nineteen or 63% of the American and 19 or 76% of the, Cairene Arabic respondents included at least one direct formula in their refusal.

Equal status person refuses offer: American English. In the equal status offer, a friend offers the respondent another piece of cake. Predominantly three types of formulas were used by the American respondents and they were usually in the same order. Almost all began with a nonperformative statement; followed by an expression of gratitude and a reason. This pattern is illustrated in (16).

(16)No,(nonperformative statement)

thanks.(expression of gratitude)

I'm on a diet.(reason)

Twenty-seven or 90% of the American respondents use a direct refusal.

Equal status person refuses offer: Cairene Arabic. The Arabic responses were similar to the English responses. Over half of the respondents began their refusal with a nonperformative statement or a statement of negative willingness. Almost 90% of the respondents gave a reason or a statement of negative willingness in the second and third positions. Refusal (17)illustrates this common Cairene Arabic pattern.

(17)la'(nonperformative)("No.")

bi-SaraaHa ana Sandi HumuuDa (reason)("Frankly, I suffer from some acidity")

mish Ha'dar aakul keek, (negative willingness)("and will not be able to eat cake.")

Eighteen or 72% of the Cairene Arabic respondents used a direct formula.

Higher status person refuses offer: American English. In the higher status situation, the respondent arrives home and notices that the cleaning lady has broken a vase. The cleaning lady offers to pay for it. The American responses to this situation were similar. All but one of the respondents employed the formula of letting the interlocutor off the hook, usually in the first, second, or last position. Many respondents gave reasons for letting the interlocutor off the hook and also used nonperformative comments, often in the first position. A common pattern is illustrated in (18).

(18)No.(nonperformative comment)

Don't sweat it.(let interlocutor off hook)

It was a wedding gift from people we haven't talked to in many years,(reason)
so don't worry about it.(let interlocutor off hook)

Half of the American respondents used a direct refusal formula.

Higher status person refuses offer: Cairene Arabic. The Cairene Arabic responses were similar to the American responses. Over 75% of the Cairene Arabic respondents also let the cleaning lady off the hook; 40% began their refusal with a nonperformative statement, and half gave a reason. Many of the Egyptian respondents "let interlocutor off the hook" based on some future action (e.g., the maid is let off the hook but she needs to pay more attention to such things in the future). There were nine instances in which such advice was given and seven of these involved the expression *khalli/khudi baalik* ("pay attention"). Two of the Cairene Arabic respondents made reference to Allah ("God") as the reason why this happened and why the maid is not responsible. These references illustrate the extent that religion (i.e., Islam) is integrated into Arabic (for further discussion, see Adelman & Lustig, 1981 and Davies, 1987). An example refusal is given below.

(19) *di Haaaa 'adar* (let interlocutor off hook)
("This a [a] destiny [thing]") *w-inti malkiish dhanb fiiha*, (let interlocutor off hook) ("and you have no fault in [committing] it.")
yag-ni di Haagha khalaas ba'a ma-daam rabbina mish raavidlaha. (let interlocutor off hook) ("This [the vase] is something that our God did not want for it (to exist).")

In refusing offers, both American and Cairene Arabic respondents used fewer direct strategies in refusing the higher status person than in the other status situations. Depending on the status of the interlocutors, both the American and Cairene Arabic respondents varied the directness of their formulas in refusing offers. Both groups employed more direct formulas in refusing

status equals and fewer direct formulas in refusing individuals of lower status.

Suggestions

Lower status person refuses suggestion: American English. In the lower status situation, the respondents (i.e., employees) are searching through the mess on their desks and the boss walks in and gives them a suggestion on how to be better organized. American responses to this situation varied greatly. Opening formulas included gratitude, negative willingness, reasons, and self-defense. Over half of the refusals included at least one reason and many expressed gratitude, used a statement of negative willingness, and/or used a statement of alternative.

Lower status person refuses suggestion: Cairene Arabic . Cairene Arabic responses to this situation also varied. Opening formulas included statements of philosophy, nonperformative statements, negative willingness, and reasons. Half of the refusals included a reason somewhere in the refusal.

The American and Cairene Arabic respondents both used a small percentage of direct formulas when refusing an individual of higher status. In addition, only 7(28%) of the Cairene Arabic respondents used a direct formula in their refusals.

Equal status person refuses suggestion: American English. Respondents were asked by a friend to try a new diet in the equal status situation. Similar formulas were used by the American respondents, but the order of the formulas varied. Common formulas included reasons, gratitude, statements of principle, and negative willingness. This situation produced more statements of principal from the Americans than any other situation. An example is (20)I don't believe in fad dieting. (statement of principal)

Equal status person refuses suggestion: Cairene Arabic. The Cairene Arabic respondents used a more limited number of formulas

than the American respondents; in fact, two formulas were used predominantly. Half of the respondents provided reasons and half uttered statements of negative willingness. An example refusal is given below.

(21) *istiHaala!* (negative willingness)

("Impossible!") *ana mashya gala niZaam* (reason) ("I am following a diet,")

w-ma' darsh aahavvaru. (negative willingness) ("and cannot change it.")

The percentage of direct formulas used by Cairene Arabic respondents was twice as great as that used by the American respondents. Correspondingly, 17 or 68% of the Cairene Arabic respondents used at least one direct formula and less than half (46%) of the American respondents did.

Higher status person refuses suggestion: American English. In the higher status situation, a university student thinks that a professor has been lecturing too much in class. The student asks the professor to give more activities that involve application of the material. The respondent is the professor. American respondents used similar formulas in replying to this situation, but, as in the equal status situation, the order of the formulas varied. The respondents stated reasons, expressed gratitude at the beginning or end of the refusal, expressed negative willingness, and provided statements of alternative. A third used a direct formula in the refusal.

Higher status person refuses suggestion: Cairene Arabic. The Cairene Arabic responses differed from the English in that no expressions of gratitude were made and in six cases, the requester was criticized as illustrated below.

(22) *lamma tbaTTalu kalaam* (criticize requester) ("When you stop talking")

wi-taHtarimu nafsuku (criticize requester) ("and you respect yourselves,")

Doaa Fawzy Abdelrahman Yousseif

ab'a addiigu taTbiigaat zivaada(promise of future acceptance)("I will give you more practical applications.")

Moreover, in six cases, harsh alternatives were given, such as in(23).

(23)wallahi, inta mishHa-tfallim adarris izzaay(criticize requester)("By God, you are not going to teach me how to teach.")

iHna Tuul fumrina fit-tadriis(reason)("We have always been teaching.")

w-feabak tiHDar gala n-niZam daiHDar(threat of negative consequences)("If you accept the system, attend class.")

mish faabak tiHDar Haddtaani zaakir fi l-beet,(statement of alternative)("If you don't, attend another section of the course or study at home.")

titHammil natiatak akhri s-sana(threat of negative consequences)("You are responsible for your results at the end of the year.")

tis'aT ma Tis'aTsh maliishdafwa biik.(threat of negative consequences)("You fail or you don't fail.")

The Cairene Arabic refusals in this situation reflect the type of power relationship that often exists between professor and students. Professors have control over the curriculum, and students in most Egyptian universities do not have input in evaluating professors and/or their methods of teaching (Nelson, ElBakary, & Fathi,1996).Criticism of a professor's teaching can come from above(e.g., a supervisor or senior colleague)but not from below. Professors are likely to perceive such suggestions as an encroachment on their territory and power. In refusing suggestions, both groups employed a similar degree of direct formulas in the status unequal situations, but in the status equal situation, Cairene Arabic respondents used almost twice as many direct formulas as Americans. Thus, in all status equal situations, the Cairene Arabic

respondents uttered more direct formulas than in the status unequal situations.

Frequency of Semantic Formulas

In order to compare the frequency of semantic formulas used by American and Cairene Arabic respondents, the number of each semantic formula was counted. Seventeen categories accounted for approximately 94% of the formulas used in the American refusals and eighteen categories accounted for 92% of the formulas used in the Cairene Arabic refusals. There were 1605 formulas used in the American refusals. By far the greatest number was identified as providing a reason or excuse for the refusal. Reasons accounted for 498 or 31% of the total number of formulas used. Negative willingness was the second most popular formula and was used 204 times, accounting for 13% of the formulas. Formulas coded as nonperformative "no" and gratitude accounted for 7% of the total.

There were 963 formulas used in the Cairene Arabic refusals. The most common formulas used by the Cairene Arabic respondents were similar to those used by the American respondents. Reasons were the most common formula used with 408 or 42% of the formulas coded as reasons. Negative willingness was the second most common formula with 141 or 15% of the formulas. Nonperformative "no"s were used in 58 or 6% of the refusals. The Egyptian respondents also differed from the American respondents. Expressions of gratitude were used in only 14 or 2% of the refusals.

Reasons for Refusing

An important component of the refusals is the reasons that are given for refusing. To analyze the reasons that were given, all of the reasons for a specific situation were listed and then grouped by two of the researchers according to shared characteristics. Most of the reasons were classified as either general (e.g., "I have plans") or specific ("It's my husband's birthday and we're going to dinner." If

they were specific, they further classified according to the type of reason (e.g., family). Each respondent's reason was given only one classification. If a series of reasons were given and one was specific, the total set was coded as specific; if no specific reason was given, the set was coded as general. Reasons used in the situation about the maid dropping the vase were not included because they were not consistent with the other types of reasons.

The most notable finding was the similarity in the reasons given by the Cairene Arabic and the American respondents. 2, 66% of the American and 70% of the Cairene Arabic reasons were coded as specific. Both groups frequently cited specific commitments to families as grounds for a refusal. The frequency of non-specific reasons was also similar; 34% of the American and 30% of the Cairene Arabic reasons were coded as general. In the situation where the student asked the professor to use a different teaching style, the Cairene Arabic speakers gave reasons that were different from the Americans. The Cairene Arabic respondents were more likely to refer to their positions as professors as in *waLLaahiana raacril duktuur, ma-Haddishizzav adarris luku* ("By God, I am a professor, no one [can] tell me how to teach you.") The Americans, on the other hand, were more likely to explain that lecturing was the best way to teach the content of the course.

Focus on Second Language Learners

This study investigated similarities and differences between American and Cairene Arabic refusals. Perhaps the most surprising finding was the number of similarities between the two groups. Arabic cultures have been described as preferring an indirect communication style and the American one has been characterized as preferring direct communication (Cohen, 1987, 1990; Feghali, 1997; Katriel, 1986; Zaharna, 1995). The findings of this study, however, reveal that Cairene Arabic speakers often employed more direct refusal strategies than Americans. This discrepancy between

the literature on Arabic communication style and the findings of this study suggests the importance of investigating language use in specific contexts. It also illustrates the danger of making generalizations about a language's or culture's communication style as if one style (e.g., direct vs. indirect) is used in all situations.

Consistent with the work of Stevens (1993), both groups also employed similar semantic formulas when making refusals and many were used with equal degrees of frequency. For example, in both groups, frequent formulas included providing reasons, making statements of negative willingness, using nonperformatives, and stating alternatives. The groups also employed similar reasons when refusing, using both specific and non-specific reasons and often making references to family commitments. American learners of Arabic and Arabic learners of English can use these similarities to their advantage, for as noted by Kasper (1997) and Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993), strategies that are consistent across L1 and L2 usually result in communicative success.

In terms of status, the two groups shared similarities and differences. Katriel (1986) proposes that among Arabic speakers, a person in a lower status position frequently uses indirect communication strategies when addressing a person in a higher status position. The findings of this study suggest that the relationship between indirectness and status depends on the specific situation. For example, in refusing requests, invitations, and suggestions in the low to high status situation, the Cairene Arabic speakers used more indirect communication strategies than in refusing offers. Conversely, in refusing offers, the Cairene Arabic speakers used more direct strategies in the lower to higher status situation. Among the Cairene Arabic speakers, across all four situations, the greatest numbers of direct formulas were used among status equals. This finding contradicts Hussein (1995) who reports that indirect refusals are used in equal status relationships.

In the unequal status situations, the English and Cairene Arabic speakers exhibited similar levels of directness and indirectness. Again, these similarities, if used by L2 learners, can result in pragmatic success. However, in two equal status situations, invitations and suggestions, the English speakers differed from the Cairene Arabic speakers. Americans were less direct in their refusals. This difference could result in pragmatic failure, particularly if the native Arabic speakers refuse in a more direct manner than is considered polite by native English speakers.

Although both Cairene Arabic and American respondents used many of the same semantic formulas, at times they used them in different orders depending on the situation. Specific differences include the following: 1) Consistent with the findings of Beebe et al. (1990), for the higher and lower status requests, American respondents frequently began the refusal with a formula that mitigated the force of the rejection and then stated a reason for refusing. The Cairene Arabic respondents, on the other hand, in the unequal status requests, often began with a reason followed by a form of mitigation. 2) In refusing invitations from higher to lower status interlocutors, the Cairene Arabic respondents were more likely than the Americans to begin with a direct refusal followed by a reason. 3) In refusing offers from a lower to higher status person, Cairene Arabic respondents were less likely than Americans to begin the refusal with a form of mitigation. They were more likely to use a direct refusal formula followed by a reason. Overall, the order of formulas in the Cairene Arabic data revealed more variability than in the American data.

A final difference in refusal formulas is Americans' frequent use of expressions of gratitude (for further information on expressions of gratitude, see Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986), particularly in refusing invitations, offers, and suggestions. In order for students of English and Arabic to avoid pragmatic failure, the

sociolinguistic rules regarding differences in the role of status, the degree of directness and expressions of gratitude in making refusals should be explicitly taught. As Kasper (1997) points out; pragmatic competence does not necessarily develop naturally as students become more proficient in a second or foreign language. Pragmatic/sociolinguistic information needs to be taught.

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Doaa Fawzy Abdelrahman Yousseif

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Appendix A
Phonetic Transcription of Arabic Sounds

- Adapted from Ali Ezzat's Studies in Linguistics and the International phonetic Alphabet (IPA)
- [z] voiced denti- alveolar sulcal fricative, non-emphatic, as in /za:r/ "he visited".
- [ʔ] glottal plosive, as in /ʔalam/ "pen".
- [ʕ] voiced pharyngeal fricative, as in /ʕa:wiz/ "he wants".
- [Y] voiced unvular fricative, as in /Ya:li/ "expensive".

Emphatic consonants:

- d, s, z, t are "emphatic consonants corresponding to "non-emphatic" d,s,t,z respectively, as /da rab/ "he hit"; /sala:h/ "prayer"; /tabu:r/ "queue" /za:lim/ "unfair".

Vowels:

- [i] half-closed to close front spread vowel, close when long or final, as in /tin/ "a ton"; /ti:n/ "mud".
- [u] half-closed back to central rounded vowel, close rounded as in /xud/ "take"; /zu:r/ "visit".
- [e] Mid to half-closed front spread vowel, short and long, as in /betna/ "our house"; /be:t/ "house".
- [o] mid to half-closed back rounded vowel, short and long, as in /rohna/ "we went"; /xo:za/ "a helmet".
- [a] front open vowel, short and long, as in /balad/ "town".
- [a] back open vowel, short, and long as in /bass/ "he looked"; /a:t/ "he kicked".
- Germinated consonants are indicated by the consonants letter. They are pronounced longer and more tensely articulated than their single counterparts.

Appendix B
Refusal Situations: Modified Discourse Completion Test
Consent form

Dear Respondent,

The researcher is conducting this study under the title of **“Sociopragmatic Variation In Everyday English and Cairene Arabic Refusal Conversations”** for academic purposes related to an M.A. program. You are kindly requested to respond to the following situations as naturally as possible. The data collected from this study will be analyzed collectively and the answers are confidential. You totally have the right not to complete the study or to refrain from answering any of the questions if you like. The whole process of answering the 12 questions will take you less than 20 minutes. Thank you for volunteering in this research.

Demographic data:

1. Age:
2. Gender:
3. Email or any contact information: (optional)

Please read the following short scenarios that you could encounter in your daily life. Respond to each scenario with a refusal. Try to make your response as realistic and natural as possible bearing in mind that you are in daily conversations.

1. You are the owner of a book store. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private. The worker says, "I know that this will be a busy week-end at the store, but it's my mother's birthday and we have planned a big family get together. I'd like to take the week-end off.

2. You are in your third year of college. You attend classes and you take really good notes. Your classmate often misses a class and asks you for the lecture notes. On this occasion, your classmate says, "Oh no! We have an exam tomorrow but I don't have the notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again?"

Doaa Fawzy Abdelrahman Yousseif

3. You are the president of a printing company. A salesman from a company that sells paper invites you to an expensive dinner. The salesman says, "We have met several times to discuss your purchase of my company's products. I was wondering if you would like to be my guest at the (name of expensive restaurant) in order to firm-up the contract."

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

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

6. You're at your desk trying to find a report that your boss just asked for. While you're searching through the mess on your desk, your boss walks over and says, "You know, maybe you should try and organize yourself better. I always write myself little notes to remind me of things. Perhaps you should give it a try."

7. You arrive home and notice that your cleaning lady is extremely upset. She comes rushing up to you and says, "Oh God, I'm so sorry! I had an awful accident. While I was cleaning I bumped into the tables and your china vase fell and broke. I just feel terrible about it."

8. You're a teacher at a university. It is just about the middle of the term now and one of your students asks to speak to you. The student says, "Ah, excuse me. Some of the students were talking after class recently and we kind of feel that you lecture a lot in class. Could you give us more application or case studies in class?"

9. You're at a friend's house for lunch. Your friend says, "How about another piece of cake?"

10. A friend invites you to dinner, but you really can't stand this friend's fiancé Your friend says, "How about coming over for dinner Saturday night? We're having a small dinner party."

11. You've been working in an advertising agency now for some time. The boss offers you a raise and a promotion, but it involves moving. You don't want to go. Today, the boss calls you into his office. He says, "I'd like to offer you an executive position in our new offices in (name of smaller town).It's a great town only three hours from here by plane. And, a nice raise comes with the position."

12. You are at the office in a meeting with your boss .It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave work. But your boss says, "If you don't mind, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish this."