

Refusal Strategies Used in Algerian Spoken Arabic in Response to Offers

Amel Benbouya
University of Jordan, Jordan

Ghaleb Rabab'ah
University of Sharjah, UAE

Abstract—This study reports the findings of a study on strategies of refusal used in Algerian Spoken Arabic (ASA) in response to offers. The study included 30 native Algerians (15 males and 15 females) enrolled at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, Algeria. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researchers used an Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT), which included six hypothetical scenarios representing three social statuses (Equal-Equal, Low-High, and High-Low). The findings revealed that Algerian Arabic speakers recorded preference to use direct refusal strategies in their response to offers from all status interlocutors (equal, higher, and lower). It was also found that *negative willingness/ability* was the most frequently used strategy to refuse all status interlocutors' offers. The researchers recommend conducting a further research on the realization of the speech act of refusal in English as a foreign language by Algerians.

Index Terms—Algerian Arabic, refusal strategies, semantic formulas, speech act

I. INTRODUCTION

According to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), the central notion around the speech act is that language is used in order to perform actions. Austin (1962) states that performing communicative actions in everyday life requires using the necessary words under appropriate circumstances. He further argues that when we say something, we automatically perform a speech act by the use of words in life.

Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) posit that speech acts, such as warning, agreement, refusal, and compliment, are realized by universal rules. That is, such speech acts are similarly produced in different languages. However, other researchers (Blum-Kulka, 1987; Wierzbicka, 1991) hypothesize that every culture and language has its own way of performing a speech act. They maintain that the linguistic realization of a given speech act varies according to different social factors which are culture specific.

Refusal as a speech act refers to an expression of unwillingness to accept or grant something. It is a negative response to someone else's request, invitation, offer, suggestion, and apology. Beebe et al. (1990) confirm that refusals are "a major cross-cultural sticking point for many nonnative speakers" (p.56). They maintain that language speakers may refuse a request, invitation, offer and suggestion.

Refusals are so important because of their central place in people's everyday communication. It may be difficult to nonnative speakers for example to reject people's requests, offers, suggestions, etc. since rejecting appropriately involves not only linguistic knowledge, but also pragmatic knowledge. Although one may have a wide range of vocabulary and sound knowledge of grammar, misunderstandings may still arise if one does not appropriately apply pragmatic knowledge. According to Olshtain (1983) and Wolfson (1989), this misunderstanding may lead to cultural stereotyping and to the perception of nonnative speakers as being rude or ill-mannered.

Importantly, Brown and Levinson (1987) believe that refusal speech act has the potential to threaten the speaker or hearer's face or both. Thus, such speech acts have been categorized by Brown and Levinson as dual face-threatening acts (FTAs). Therefore, to avoid threatening the interlocutor's face, speakers of any language need to know not only about grammatical knowledge, but also about the socio-cultural norms and the underlying pragmatics of the given language they are interacting with. Interestingly, Bachman (1990) argues that it is crucial for second language learners (L2) to have knowledge of pragmatics, grammar and text organization so as to communicate successfully in the target language. Therefore, in order to minimize the offense the refusal speech act may cause, politeness is necessarily called for whenever the act of refusal is performed. Brown and Levinson (1987) assert that the choice of strategies in performing a threatening act, such as refusal, is determined by social distance, social status, and severity of the act. That is, when performing the speech act of refusal, speakers are faced with their interlocutors' social variables that may affect their choice of strategy in the realization of the speech act of refusal.

Previous research on the strategies of refusal in ASA is lacking. It is, therefore, the aim of the present research to explore how the speech act of refusal in response to offers is realized in ASA. It also aims to examine the impact of the social status (equal, low and high) on the use of strategies of refusal. More specifically, the study intends to answer two

research questions: 1) What are the refusal strategies used in ASA in response to offers, and 2) What is the impact of social status (equal, higher, and lower) on the participants' use of refusal strategies in response to offers in ASA?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been conducted on the speech act of refusal which are classified under three headings: intra-lingual studies which focus on investigating refusal behavior within a single culture or language, cross-cultural studies focusing on the speech act of refusal across two or more cultural groups or languages, and learner-centered studies, which are referred to in the literature as interlanguage studies which examine the characteristics of refusals of language learners (Morkus, 2014).

The most influential study of the speech act of refusal was conducted by Beebe et al. (1990) who examined the pragmatic transfer in the realization of the speech act of refusal by Japanese learners of English (JEs). The participants of the study included 20 Japanese speaking Japanese (JJs), 20 Japanese speaking English (JEs), and 20 Americans speaking English (AEs). To collect data, the researchers designed a written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) consisting of three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Each situation type included one refusal to a person of higher status, one to a person of equal status, and one to a person of lower status. Data were analyzed based on the frequency, order and content of semantic formulas used in each situation. The results of the study indicated that there was evidence of negative transfer in JE refusals in three areas: (1) the order, (2) the frequency, and (3) the content of semantic formulas. The study showed that Americans used direct refusals more frequently than the Japanese, mainly when refusing offers. As for the social status, the findings showed that Japanese speakers used more direct strategies when refusing lower status interlocutors but fewer direct strategies when refusing higher status interlocutors. However, American participants used indirect strategies in all situations.

Al-Eryani (2007) examined the speech act of refusal as made by Yemeni EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. The participants of the study were 60 graduate students divided into three groups; 20 Yemeni native speakers of Arabic (YANSs), 20 Yemeni learners of English (YELs), and 20 Americans native speakers of English (AENSs). To collect data, the researcher used a WDCT which involved six written situations which included two requests, two invitations, one offer and one suggestion, and which involved refusals to a higher status person, lower status person and equal status person. Regarding the YANSs, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic with the necessary changes to make it familiar with the situations. Data were analyzed based on the classification of refusal strategies proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). The results of the study indicated that YANSs were less direct than the AENSs. The findings also showed that the two groups differed in their order of the semantic formulas. Moreover, the study revealed that YELs showed indications of pragmatic competence of the target language as they showed similarities with the AENSs in three areas: the order, the frequency, and the content of semantic formulas.

Abdul Sattar et al. (2009) examined the preferred semantic formulas used in refusing suggestions in Iraqi Arabic. 30 Iraqi male university students participated in the study. To elicit data, the researchers used a WDCT which consisted of three different situations to elicit refusals to suggestions. The situations included one refusal to a person of higher status, one to a person of equal status, and one to a person of lower status. To analyze data, the researchers used a modified classification of refusal strategies established by Beebe et al. (1990). The Results of the study revealed that the Iraqis were found to employ some preferred types of refusal indirect patterns when refusing a suggestion. They used 'no' followed by explanation. That is, their refusals are always mitigated and justified by giving reasons, explanations and other indirect strategies. Regarding the social status of the interlocutor, the participants used certain semantic formulas such as apology, opener, future acceptance, and agreement when refusing a higher status interlocutor (professor), and strategies such as negative opinion, repetition when refusing an equal status interlocutor (classmate) and criticism, attack, and principle when refusing a lower status interlocutor (student).

Morkus (2009) investigated how the speech act of refusal is realized in Egyptian Arabic by intermediate and advanced American learners of Arabic as a foreign language. The researcher also compared the performance of the learners to that of the native speakers of Egyptian Arabic and native speakers of American English. Moreover, the study explored the relationship between the learners' language proficiency and their pragmatic competence. Further, it examined the extent of pragmatic transfer from L1 and whether there was a relationship between the degree of pragmatic transfer and the level of L2 proficiency. The study also explored how refusals are structured and organized at the discourse level. To collect data, enhanced open-ended role plays which consisted of six scenarios for eliciting refusals to offers and requests in equal and unequal status situations were used. Data were analyzed according to the refusal taxonomy of Beebe et al. (1990). The results of the study showed that the two learner groups and the native speakers of Egyptian Arabic differed in their frequency of direct and indirect strategies. In other words, the learners were found to use a higher percentage of direct strategies and a lower percentage of indirect strategies than the native speakers of Egyptian Arabic. Moreover, the findings indicated that the advanced learners were able to engage in more negotiation and used an overall lower percentage of direct strategies and a higher percentage of indirect strategies than the intermediate learners. The study showed positive and negative pragmatic transfer in the two learner groups. However, the study indicated a higher degree of transfer in the advanced students.

Guo (2012) examined the refusal speech act of both Chinese and Americans. To that end, 120 participants took part in the study: 60 Chinese college students and teachers, and 60 American college students and teachers. To collect data,

the researcher used a WDCT consisting of eight situations. Variables like relative power, social distance and ranking of imposition were taken into consideration. Data were categorized based on the classification system developed by Beebe et al. (1990). The study indicated that there were more similarities than differences among the Chinese and Americans in making refusals. Both American and Chinese groups preferred to use indirect refusal strategies rather than direct ones and preferred the strategies of reason, statement of alternative and regret. However, the American group used more direct strategies than did the Chinese subjects, but that was not in all situations. That is, when refusing requests, for example, Americans used much more direct strategies. However, when declining invitations and offers, Chinese used slightly more direct refusal strategies than Americans did.

Alrashoodi (2020) conducted a study on refusal strategies used in Saudi Arabic, with a focus on the influence of gender and social status on speech act behavior. The study consisted of 80 participants divided into two groups; 40 male native speakers of Saudi Arabic, and 40 female native speakers of Saudi Arabic. To collect data, the researcher used an ODCT which consisted of three situations. The situations required a refusal to a request made by a person equal, lower and higher in status. Data were analyzed using the classification scheme of refusal strategies established by Beebe et al. (1990) as well as certain coding schemes used in certain Arabic and other refusal studies. The results of the study indicated that the females were less direct than the males in all the situations. It was found that the most frequently used strategies by both males and females were the indirect refusal strategies. However, females used more of these strategies than males. With regards to social status, the study revealed that the participants used the lowest number of strategies when refusing lower status interlocutors. Nevertheless, they used the highest percentage of strategies when responding to higher status interlocutors. Moreover, the results showed that the excuse strategy was the most frequently used by both genders in all situations, whereas, the least frequently used strategy was the postponement strategy. As far as adjuncts are concerned, the findings showed that both genders used three types of strategies. Furthermore, the study indicated that there were common strategies employed by both genders, while there were some strategies used by females that were not used by males and vice versa.

In general, plenty of research has been conducted on the speech act of refusal in many languages and various Arabic dialects, such as Yemeni, Iraqi, Egyptian, Jordanian, and Saudi Arabic. However, to the researcher's best knowledge, this particular speech act has not been examined in ASA, a variety of Arabic which is completely different from all the dialects examined in previous studies because it is influenced by French. Hence, the present study fills this gap in literature by exploring the various strategies of refusal as used by Algerian Arabic speakers in their response to offers, and the impact of social status (equal, high and low) on the realization of this speech act.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Subjects

Convenience sampling was used in the present study. The sample consisted of 30 Algerian Arabic-speaking students including 15 males and 15 females who ranged in age from 21 to 40 years. They were third year university students majoring in a specialization other than Arabic and foreign languages at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel, Algeria. The researchers excluded students whose major was Arabic and Foreign Languages to minimize the influence of these languages on the participants' refusal strategies.

B. Data Collection and Procedures

Unlike many previous studies, the data in the present study was collected using an Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT). ODCTs are questionnaires containing written descriptions of given scenarios reflecting natural situations to which respondents are asked to react to orally. The researchers used an ODCT as a data collection tool in order to sound more natural and provide an opportunity for the participants to respond in ASA. The ODCT consisted of six scenarios which varied by social status relationship between the interlocutors. That is, there were two equal-equal scenarios, two low-high scenarios and two high-low scenarios. For the purpose of this study, the scenarios' scripts were prepared and recorded by the researcher who is a native speaker of Algerian Arabic, and the stimulus scenarios were audiotaped by the researcher as well.

In order to check the validity of the tool, the ODCT scripts and audios were judged by three native speakers of Algerian Arabic. The judges' feedback was taken into consideration to write the final version of the ODCT.

To collect data, the native Algerian speaker (i.e. researcher) first explained the purpose of the study to the participants. Then she instructed them to listen to the stimulus scenarios to which they need to respond with refusal to offers. The participants were also informed that their responses will be recorded. After getting the approval of the participants to participate in the study, the researcher sat with each subject individually, and recorded his/her responses to the audio scenarios.

C. Data Analysis

The present study analyzed the data according to the semantic formulas and categorized them using the classification of refusal strategies established by Beebe et al. (1990). A semantic formula refers to "a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy, any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question" (Cohen 1996, p. 265). For example, if a respondent refused his/her friend's invitation for dinner, saying "I'm sorry, I

have theater tickets that night. Maybe I could come by later for a drink.” this was coded as: [expression of regret] [excuse] [offer of alternative] (Beebe et al. 1990, p.57).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Strategies of Refusal in ASA in Response to Offers According to Social Status

The data showed that the respondents resorted to several strategies in Algerian Arabic to express refusal in response to offers. The data analysis also revealed that the use of refusal strategy is not significantly influenced by the status of the interlocutor. This implies that the status of the interlocutor (equal, high, and low) does not have a significant impact on the strategy type and strategy choice. Table 1 below presents the results related to the refusal strategies used by Algerian Arabic speakers in their response to offers from equal status interlocutors.

TABLE 1.
FREQUENCIES AND MEAN SCORES OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES USED IN ASA (EQUAL TO EQUAL STATUS INTERLOCUTORS)

Refusal Strategies	N	Frequency	%	Mean	Std.Deviation
Direct Strategies	30	61	51.7	2.03	.809
Non-performative	30	61	51.7	2.03	.809
<i>a.No</i>	30	26	22	.867	.819
<i>b.Negative Willingness/Ability</i>	30	35	29.7	1.17	.791
Indirect Strategies	30	27	22.9	.900	.923
Statement of Regret	30	3	2.5	.100	.305
Excuse/Reason/Explanation	30	18	15.3	.600	.724
Statement of Principle	30	1	0.9	.033	.183
Attempt to Dissuade Interlocutor : <i>Let Interlocutor off the Hook</i>	30	5	4.2	.167	.379
Adjuncts	30	30	25.4	1.00	.947
Pause Fillers	30	9	7.6	.300	.596
Gratitude/Appreciation	30	11	9.3	.367	.556
Invoking the Name of God	30	10	8.5	.333	.606
Total	30	118	100		

The most distinctive feature of table 1 is that the direct strategies recorded the highest number of cases (61 instances) with a mean score of 2.03, implying that Algerian Arabic speakers used strategies that are more direct when refusing an offer coming from an equal status interlocutor. The table also shows that *negative willingness/ability* registered 35 instances with the highest mean score of 1.17. However, the direct *no* recorded the lowest frequency (26) with a mean score of .867, implying that the participants were more likely to avoid the direct *no* when refusing an equal status offerer. It is also noticed that the second highest strategies used were adjuncts (30 cases) with a mean score of 1.00. Regarding adjuncts, *gratitude/ appreciation* and *invoking the name of God* registered the highest frequencies (11 and ten cases) with mean scores of .367 and .333, respectively. This implies that these two adjuncts were the most used to refuse an offer from an equal status interlocutor. The least used adjunct was *pause fillers*, which recorded nine instances with a mean score of .300. The table also shows that the indirect strategies were the least used. It was found that, *excuse/reason/explanation* recorded 18 instances with the highest mean score of .600, indicating that it was the most used strategy by the participants when refusing an offer from an equal status interlocutor. The least employed indirect strategy was *statement of principle* (one instance) with a mean score of .033, followed by *statement of regret* (three instances) with a mean score of .100.

The data also revealed that Algerian Arabic speakers did not use several strategies, namely, the direct *performative* sub-strategy. This indicates that the subjects did not want to be so offensive in their refusal by clearly asserting the refusal expression. Moreover, two adjuncts were not used, namely, *statement of positive opinion* and *statement of empathy*, implying that the respondents had a negative feeling towards the interlocutor's offer and did not show concern for the interlocutor. It was also found that several indirect sub-strategies did not register any instances, namely, *wish*, *statement of alternative*, *set conditions for acceptance*, *promise of future acceptance*, *statement of philosophy*, *request for clarification*, *acceptance that functions as a refusal*, and *avoidance*. This implies that Algerian Arabic speakers did not wish to accept the offer nor did they propose an idea for the interlocutor instead of the refusal. Nevertheless, they expressed regret for their refusal and tended to show carefulness for their interlocutor's offer.

Table 2 below presents the results related to the refusal strategies used by Algerian Arabic speakers in their response to offers from higher status interlocutors.

TABLE 2.
FREQUENCIES AND MEAN SCORES OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES USED IN ASA (LOW TO HIGH STATUS INTERLOCUTORS)

Refusal Strategies	N	Frequency	%	Mean	Std.Deviation
Direct Strategies	30	80	70.8	2.67	.922
Non-performative	30	80	70.8	2.67	.922
a. No	30	34	30.1	1.13	.860
b. Negative Willingness/Ability	30	46	40.7	1.53	.681
Indirect Strategies	30	22	19.5	.733	.944
Statement of Regret	30	2	1.8	.067	.254
Excuse/Reason/Explanation	30	17	15	.567	.774
Promise of Future Acceptance	30	1	0.9	.033	.183
Attempt to Dissuade Interlocutor: <i>Criticism</i>	30	2	1.8	.067	.254
Adjuncts	30	11	9.7	.367	.809
Pause Fillers	30	6	5.3	.200	.484
Gratitude /Appreciation	30	1	0.9	.033	.183
Invoking the Name of God	30	4	3.5	.133	.434
Total	30	113	100		

The most significant finding of table 2 is that the direct strategies recorded the highest frequency (80 instances) with a mean score of 2.67, revealing that Algerian Arabic speakers preferred direct strategies the most when refusing an offer from a higher status interlocutor. It is also shown that *negative willingness/ability* recorded 46 instances with the highest mean score of 1.53, whereas the direct *no* registered the lowest frequency (34 cases) with a mean score of 1.13, indicating that the participants avoided the direct *no* when responding with a refusal to a higher status interlocutor. The table also shows that the second most frequently used strategies were the indirect ones (22 instances) with a mean score of .733. Regarding the indirect sub-strategies, it is shown that *excuse/reason/explanation* registered the highest frequency (17 instances) with a mean score of .567. This indicates that the subjects preferred to express their refusal to an offer made by a higher status interlocutor by providing a reason for doing so. However, the least employed indirect sub-strategy was *promise of future acceptance* (one instance) with a mean score of .033, followed by *statement of regret* and *criticism* (two instances each) with a mean score of .067 each. Regarding adjuncts, which were the least used by the participants, *pause fillers* recorded six instances with the highest mean score of .200, implying that they were the most used adjuncts when refusing an offer from a higher status interlocutor. The least employed adjunct was *gratitude /appreciation* (one case) with a mean score of .033, followed by *invoking the name of God* (four cases) with a mean score of .133.

The findings also revealed that the participants did not employ several strategies, namely, the direct *performative* sub-strategy, implying that the participants wanted to save the face of the interlocutor. Certain indirect sub-strategies were also not employed, namely, *wish*, *statement of alternative*, *set conditions for acceptance*, *statement of principle*, *statement of philosophy*, *request for clarification*, *acceptance that functions as a refusal*, and *avoidance*. This indicates that the subjects did not wish to accept the offer, nor did they express the refusal by proposing an idea for the interlocutor. Nonetheless, they showed regret for their refusal and cared about their interlocutor's offer. It is also noticed that two adjuncts were not used, namely, *statement of positive opinion* and *statement of empathy*. This implies that the respondents were more likely to have a negative opinion towards the offer and not to express empathy for the interlocutor.

Table 3 below presents the results related to the refusal strategies used by Algerian Arabic speakers in their response to offers from lower status interlocutors.

TABLE 3.
FREQUENCIES AND MEAN SCORES OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES USED IN ASA (HIGH TO LOW STATUS INTERLOCUTORS)

Refusal strategies	N	Frequency	%	Mean	Std.Deviation
Direct Strategies	30	72	65.5	2.40	.968
Performative	30	1	0.9	.033	.183
Non-performative	30	71	64.5	2.37	.999
a. No	30	30	27.3	1.00	.830
b. Negative Willingness/Ability	30	41	37.3	1.37	.850
Indirect Strategies	30	25	22.7	.833	1.05
Excuse /Reason/Explanation	30	5	4.5	.167	.379
Statement of Alternative	30	2	1.8	.067	.254
Set Conditions for Acceptance	30	1	0.9	.033	.183
Promise of Future Acceptance	30	1	0.9	.033	.183
Statement of Principle	30	2	1.8	.067	.254
Request for Clarification	30	2	1.8	.067	.254
Attempt to Dissuade Interlocutor:	30	12	10.9	.400	.498
a. <i>Criticism</i>	30	1	0.9	.033	.183
b. <i>Let Interlocutor off the Hook</i>	30	11	10	.367	.490
Adjuncts	30	13	11.8	.433	.817
Pause Fillers	30	7	6.4	.233	.568
Gratitude /Appreciation	30	4	3.6	.133	.434
Invoking the Name of God	30	2	1.8	.067	.254
Total	30	110	100		

The most salient feature of table 3 is that the direct strategies were the most frequently used by the participants (72 cases) with a mean score of 2.40. This implies that Algerian Arabic speakers were more likely to use direct strategies when refusing an offer from a person lower in status. The table shows that the *non-performative* sub-strategy was the most frequently used (71 cases) with a mean score of 2.37 as compared with the *performative* sub-strategy which recorded the lowest frequency (one case) with a mean score of .033. This indicates that the participants avoided using the *performative* refusal when responding to an offer from a lower status interlocutor. It was also found that *negative willingness/ability* registered the highest frequency (41 cases) with a mean score of 1.37. However, the direct *no* recorded the lowest frequency (30 cases) with a mean score of 1.00, implying that the subjects were more likely to avoid the direct *no* when refusing an offer from a lower status interlocutor. The table also shows that the indirect strategies were the second most frequently used strategies (25 cases) with a mean score of .833. As far as indirect sub-strategies are concerned, *let interlocutor off the hook* registered the highest frequency (11 cases) with a mean score of .367, implying that it was the most preferred strategy by the participants in their response to a lower status offerer. The least employed indirect strategies were *set conditions for acceptance*, *promise of future acceptance* and *criticism* (one case each) with a mean score of .033 each, followed by *statement of alternative*, *statement of principle*, and *request for clarification* (two cases each), with a mean score of .067 each. As for Adjuncts, these were the least used by the participants. The table shows that *pause fillers* recorded seven instances with the highest mean score of .233. This implies that *pause fillers* were the most used adjuncts to refuse an offer from a lower status offerer. The least employed adjunct was *invoking the name of God*, which recorded two instances with a mean score of .067.

It is very obvious that certain indirect sub-strategies were not used. These were *statement of regret*, *wish*, *statement of philosophy*, *acceptance that functions as a refusal*, and *avoidance*. This implies that the subjects did not regret their refusal or wish to accept the offer. However, they showed carefulness for their interlocutor. It is also indicated that the participants did not resort to the use of two adjuncts, namely, *statement of positive opinion* and *statement of empathy*. This implies that the subjects had a negative opinion towards what was offered and they lacked empathy for their interlocutor.

B. Results of ANOVA Test Regarding the Impact of Social Status on the Use of Strategies of Refusal in ASA

As mentioned earlier, the study showed that the social status of the addressee does not significantly affect the use and choice of strategy of refusal. Table 4 below presents the results of ANOVA test regarding the differences in using the refusal strategies according to social status.

TABLE 4.
RESULTS OF ANOVA TEST TO FIGURE OUT THE DIFFERENCES IN THE USE OF REFUSAL STRATEGIES ACCORDING TO THE INTERLOCUTOR'S SOCIAL STATUS

Speech Act	Status of the interlocutors	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	F	Sig.
Refusals to Offers	Higher-Lower	30	3.67	1.60	2	.293	.747
	Equal-Equal	30	3.93	1.54			
	Lower-Higher	30	3.77	1.19			

The table above reveals that the participants had a higher mean score (3.93) for refusal strategies at the equal-equal status than the other two statuses, namely, lower-higher status (3.77) and higher-lower status (3.67). As can be noticed, although the mean scores of the three social statuses were different, the difference between them was not statistically significant (Sig. = .747). This implies that the social status did not have a significant impact on the use of refusal strategies among Algerian Arabic speakers when refusing offers.

C. Strategies of Refusal in Context

This section provides a qualitative analysis of the refusal strategies used by the respondents along with examples taken from the data. The strategy in question is underlined:

1. Direct Refusals

According to Beebe et al. (1990), the direct refusals are divided into two types: “performative” and “non-performative”. The performative refusal refers to the use of the actual refusal expression (e.g., I refuse). The non-performative refusal is divided into two types: “no” and “negative willingness/ability” (e.g., I can’t). The following are examples from the data:

a. Performative Refusal

نرفض هاد الشيء (I refuse this). Scenario (6)

In the above example, the employer refused the offer that she received from her employee by telling him/her that she refuses that offer. In doing so, the speaker was direct in her refusal response, hence, offending the interlocutor.

b. Non-performative Refusal

(1). Direct ‘no’

لا (no). Scenario (1)

لا، لا، لا (no, I will not accept it). Scenario (6)

In the first scenario, the speaker refused to eat his friend's cakes by responding using just the direct 'no'. In doing so, the participant did not care about maintaining the interlocutor's positive face and was deliberately offensive. However, in the sixth scenario, we observe a combination of two strategies. The employer refused her employee's offer by starting her response with the direct "لا (no)", then the expression "ما نقبلهاش (I will not accept it)" which is *negative willingness/ability*.

(2). Negative Willingness/Ability

ما ندييش (I will not take it). Scenario (2)

ما نقدرش (I cannot). Scenario (4)

In the above examples, the subjects refused the offers by showing their unwillingness or inability to accept them. In the second scenario, the speaker refused his colleague's offer of a computer by telling him that he will not take it. Similarly, in the fourth scenario, the employee refused the offer that he received from his employer to have a pay raise on condition to move to a remote place by stating his inability to do so. This indicates that the respondents did not mitigate their refusal response.

2. Indirect Refusals

Indirect refusals refer to strategies that are used by a speaker to mitigate the illocutionary force of their refusals in order to minimize the offense to the interlocutor's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These strategies are outlined below along with examples from the data:

a. Statement of Regret

In this strategy, the speaker expresses regret for his/her inability to accept the interlocutor's offer. Hence, it serves to soften the illocutionary force of the refusal. The following are examples of *statement of regret*:

سمحلي (sorry). Scenario (1)

سمحلي، ما نقدرش (sorry, I cannot). Scenario (4)

The above examples show that in the first scenario, the speaker refused his friend's offer of cakes by showing regret (using the word "sorry"), while in the fourth scenario, we observe a combination of two strategies. The speaker refused his professor's offer by using the statement of regret "سمحلي (sorry)" and then the other expression "ما نقدرش (I cannot)". *Statements of regret* minimize the face-threatening nature of the speech act of refusal.

b. Excuse /Reason/ Explanation

It is considered one of the most frequently used strategies in refusal studies. In this strategy, the speaker tries to provide an explanation so as to reduce the illocutionary force of the refusal. Consider the following examples:

غير كيما غسلت سناني، شغل ما نقدرش نزيد ناكل (I have just brushed my teeth, like, I cannot eat after that). Scenario (1)

عندي ظروف، عندي والدنيا لازم نتاهل بيهم (I have circumstances, I have to take care of my parents). Scenario (4)

As noticed in the above examples, the respondents refused their interlocutors' offers by providing the offerer with a justification for not being able to accept the offer. In the first scenario, the speaker refused to eat his friend's cakes by explaining that he just brushed his teeth, hence, he cannot eat. In the fourth scenario, the employee refused her employer's offer to have a raise in pay on condition to move to a remote area by explaining that she cannot leave her parents as she has to take care of them. Therefore, by providing explanations, speakers preserve the hearer's positive face.

c. Statement of Alternative

It is also one of the most common strategies in refusal studies. Here, the speaker attempts at negotiating the offer in order to mitigate the severity of the refusal by offering the interlocutor options for the offer he/she gave. The following are examples from the data:

استفرح مرتك (make your wife happy with it). Scenario (6)

As noticed in the above example, the employer responded to his employee's offer of a watch by suggesting an alternative telling him to make his wife happy with the watch, instead.

d. Set Conditions for Acceptance

In this strategy, the speaker accepts the offer under a condition. It distracts the hearer from the severity of the refusal, thus, minimizes the threat to the hearer's positive face. Consider the following example:

اذا كان رشوة، ما نقبلهاش (if it is corruption, I will not accept it). Scenario (6)

In the above example, the employer avoided stating a refusal expression right away to his employee in order to mitigate his response. Therefore, he rather preferred setting a condition to accept the offer telling his interlocutor that if the purpose behind the gift is corruption, he would not accept that gift.

e. Promise of Future Acceptance

In this strategy, the speaker makes a promise to accept the offer in the future. This strategy serves to soften the illocutionary force of the refusal and protect the interlocutor's positive face. The following are examples from the data:

مرة خلاف ان شاء الله (another time, God willing). Scenario (4)

مزال الحال عليها، مع الوقت ممكن (it is early for it now, maybe in the future). Scenario (6)

As shown in the above examples, the participants provided the offerer with a promise for accepting at some point in the future. In doing so, they minimized the threat to the interlocutor's positive face. In the fourth scenario, the employee refused his employer's offer by telling him to accept the offer another time with God will. Whereas, in the sixth scenario, the employer refused his employee's offer by telling him/her that time is not appropriate for that gift but possibly in the future.

f. Statement of Principle

In this strategy, the speaker tries to mitigate his/her refusal by explaining to the interlocutor that the refusal stems from certain beliefs or principles, and not because of his/her wish to do so. The following is an example from the data:

ما كاتقبلش لي كادومن أي واحد (I do not accept gifts from whomever). Scenario (6)

In the above example, the employer refused the gift she received from her employee by communicating a fact related to her character that she does not accept gifts from whomever.

g. Criticism

Beebe et al. (1990) included this strategy under the category of “*attempt to dissuade interlocutor*”. In this strategy, the speaker tends to criticize the offerer. It aggravates rather than mitigates the illocutionary force of the refusal. Consider the following example:

نتي ديما هالك، ما تزُدش بالك كي تخدم (you are always like this, you are not careful when you do your work). Scenario (5)

In the above example, the speaker (householder) refused the offer he received from his interlocutor (cleaning lady) to pay the vase she broke by criticizing her telling her that she is always careless when doing her housework.

h. Let Interlocutor off the Hook

Beebe et al. (1990) used this strategy under the category of “*attempt to dissuade interlocutor*”. Let the offerer “off the hook” is considered a polite way to refuse an offer by acknowledging that the offer is at a cost to the offerer (Jasim, 2017). The following is an example from the data:

ما تشغيش روك (do not bother yourself).Scenario (2)

In the above example, the speaker refused his colleague's offer of a computer by letting him “off the hook” in an attempt to show empathy for him and avoid offense, thus, the speaker refused the offer by telling his colleague not to bother himself.

i. Request for Clarification

This is a new strategy found in the present study that was not reported by Beebe et al. (1990). However, it has been found in other refusal studies (Morkus, 2009; Jasim, 2017). Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) reported that interlocutors use this strategy in a refusal sequence as an avoidance strategy. In other words, as a way of delaying the refusal in the interaction so as to have enough time to plan for the refusal. The following is an example found in the data:

واش تمثل هاد الساعة بالنسبة ليك؟ (what does this watch represent to you?). Scenario (6)

As the above example shows, the employer responded to his employee's offer by asking for clarification about the gift, that is, he wanted to know what the gift was for. This makes the respondent avoid stating the refusal right away which contributes to soften the refusal speech act.

3. Adjuncts to Refusals

Adjuncts to refusal do not express refusal by themselves but are considered external modifications to the main act of refusal and they serve to reduce the severity of the refusal (Beebe et al.1990).

a. Pause Fillers

The following are examples of *pause fillers* found in the data:

أه، شبعانة، ما قادرش ناكل (Uhh, I am full , I cannot eat) Scenario (1)

أه، ما نقبلهاش (Ah, I will not accept it) Scenario (6)

The above examples indicate that the respondents started their response with certain pause fillers to show hesitation and uncertainty. They tended to begin their response with pause fillers (e.g., uhh, ah, etc.), then they performed their refusal response. The use of uncertainty expressions enables the speaker to make his/her response less direct and probably less threatening to the hearer's positive face.

b. Gratitude/Appreciation

The following are examples of expressing gratitude:

لا، لا، صحيت (no, thank you). Scenario (3)

صحيت، بضح لا (thank you, but no). Scenario (6)

As it is shown, the subjects refused their interlocutors' offers in a polite way using thanking. In the third scenario, the student refused his professor's offer by using the direct “لا(no)” and then the thanking expression “صحيت (thank you)”. However, in the sixth scenario, the employer refused his employee's offer by beginning his response with the thanking

expression “صَحِيَّتْ (thank you)” and then the direct “لا (no)”. As can be noticed, thanking the interlocutor softens the severity of the refusal speech act.

c. Invoking the Name of God

Invoking the name of God is a new strategy found in this study that was not reported by Beebe et al. (1990). However, it has been reported by other researchers such as Morkus (2009; Jasim, 2017). Abdel-Jawad (2000) defined swearing as “the speech act by which a person binds himself to do or not to do a certain specific physical or judicial act, by invoking the name of God or one of the divine attributes” (p.218). He also reported that swearing is a common strategy used in Arabic to mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusal speech act. The following are examples from the data:

والله شبعت (I swear to God, I am full) Scenario (1)

والله ما نقدر نقبلو (I swear to God, I cannot accept it) Scenario (6)

The above examples show that the participants refused the offers they received from their interlocutors by accompanying their refusal response with swearing so as to show the truth value of their refusal response, hence, mitigating it.

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the classification scheme of refusal strategies established by Beebe et al. (1990), the current study analyzed the strategies used by Algerian Arabic speakers to refuse offers from different social status interlocutors.

Concerning the first research question related to the strategies used by Algerian Arabic speakers to refuse offers, the study revealed that Algerian Arabic speakers used a variety of refusal strategies which fall into three types: direct strategies, indirect strategies, and adjuncts. In general, it was found that the direct strategies were the most frequently used by the participants in their response to all status interlocutors' offers. This implies that the respondents were mostly offensive towards their interlocutors, hence, threatening the interlocutors' positive face. This contradicts what has been reported about Arabs being more indirect than direct in face-threatening acts such as Abdul Sattar et al. (2009) who found that Iraqi participants preferred the indirect style when performing the refusal speech act. Similarly, this finding is inconsistent with that of El haj Said (2018) that Algerians were more likely to use positive politeness strategies which seek to maintain soft and conflict-free relationships. The difference in the findings of the current study and El haj Said's (2018) study might be due to the different regions of the participants since the participants of the present study were from the east of Algeria (Jijel Province), while El haj Said's participants were from the west of Algeria (Tlemcen Province).

A close examination of the direct sub-strategies shows that *negative willingness/ability* was the most frequently used direct strategy when refusing offers from all status interlocutors. This finding is inconsistent with Morkus (2009) who found that Egyptian participants used a lower percentage of *negative willingness/ability* in their refusals to offers.

Another important finding is that when expressing refusals indirectly, *excuse/reason/explanation* was the most frequently used strategy when responding to offers from someone equal and higher in status. This finding is in line with Morkus' (2009) study, which concluded that *excuse/reason/explanation* was the most frequently used strategy by the Egyptian participants when refusing offers from a higher status person. However, *let interlocutor off the hook* was the most frequently used strategy when refusing an offer from a lower status interlocutor. This finding is consistent with that reported by Morkus (2009) in which the Egyptian participants used a considerable number of this strategy to refuse an offer from a lower status interlocutor. Moreover, it confirms Darwish's (2018) finding that *let interlocutor off the hook* was the most frequent strategy used to refuse an offer from a lower status interlocutor.

With respect to the second research question concerning the effect of social status on the participants' use of refusal strategies, it was found that despite the fact that there were differences in the number of the strategies used by the participants to refuse equal, higher, and lower status interlocutors' offers, these differences were statistically insignificant, implying that the social status was not significantly influential on the participants' use of refusal strategies. This finding is inconsistent with that reported by Jasim (2017) that Iraqi Arabic speakers varied their refusal strategies according to status and distance.

Another interesting finding revealed in the present study is that Algerian Arabic speakers used two new strategies that were not reported in Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification scheme of refusal strategies. These were the indirect strategy *request for clarification* in which the participant asks his/her interlocutor about the offer, and the adjunct *invoking the name of God* in which the respondent refuses by swearing in an attempt to show the truth value of his/her proposition. The use of swearing in the context of refusal reflects the effect of Arab Islamic culture on Algerians. Indeed, these strategies seem to be a feature that characterizes Arabs' refusals as they were presented in other Arabic related studies on refusal such as Morkus (2009) who reported that *request for clarification*, and *invoking the name of God* were used by the Egyptian participants in their refusal responses, as well as Jasim's (2017) study which found that these two strategies were used by Iraqi participants when performing the refusal speech act.

Moreover, the results indicated that the subjects did not use certain indirect sub-strategies, namely, *wish*, *statement of philosophy*, *acceptance that functions as a refusal*, and *avoidance*. This indicates that the subjects did not wish to accept the offer. However, they showed carefulness for their interlocutor manifested mainly in their use of explanations and statements of regret. It is also indicated that the subjects did not resort to the use of two adjuncts, namely, *statement of*

positive opinion, and *statement of empathy*. This indicates that the subjects had a negative opinion towards the offers they received and they lacked empathy for their interlocutor. The absence of appearance of these strategies by the Algerian Arabic speakers may be due to the Algerian culture in which such strategies are not really common when expressing one's refusal.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conducted to contribute to the existing research on the speech act of refusal through examining the refusal strategies used in Algerian Arabic. The study revealed that Algerian Arabic speakers used three main strategies when expressing refusals. The first is direct in which they explicitly expressed their refusal, whilst the second is indirect in which speakers tended to mitigate the illocutionary force of their refusal so as to minimize the offense to the interlocutor's positive face by opting for different mitigating devices. The third is adjunct strategies which do not form part of the refusal itself since they are considered as external modifications to the main act of refusal. These three strategies are in turn divided into sub-strategies. Direct strategies included two sub-strategies, viz. *performative* refusal, and *non-performative* refusal. In contrast, indirect strategies comprised eight sub-strategies, viz., *statement of regret*, *excuse/reason/explanation*, *statement of alternative*, *set conditions for Acceptance*, *promise of future acceptance*, *statement of principle*, *attempt to dissuade interlocutor*, and *request for clarification*. Adjuncts to refusals included three types, viz., *pause fillers*, *gratitude/appreciation*, and *invoking the name of God*.

The study also indicated that Algerian Arabic speakers preferred direct refusal strategies the most when refusing offers from all status interlocutors, implying that they did not usually minimize the illocutionary force of their refusals in their response to all status interlocutors. Thus, they offend the interlocutors and threaten their positive face. Moreover, the results indicated that the social status did not have a significant effect on the participants' use of refusal strategies. This implies that the participants almost used a similar number of strategies when refusing equal, higher, and lower status interlocutors and, consequently, reflecting the Algerian Arabic speakers' unawareness of the status of the interlocutor when performing refusals to offers. Furthermore, the study revealed that the subjects used two new strategies that were not reported in the classification scheme of refusal strategies established by Beebe et al. (1990). These were: *request for clarification*, and *invoking the name of God* that were reported in other Arabic refusal studies. The findings also indicated that Algerian Arabic speakers did not resort to the use of certain indirect sub-strategies proposed by Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification scheme of refusal strategies, namely, *wish*, *statement of philosophy*, *acceptance that functions as a refusal*, and *avoidance*, as well as two adjuncts, namely, *statement of positive opinion*, and *statement of empathy*.

Since the present study was the first to investigate the refusal strategies in Algerian Arabic, there is no doubt that further research is needed. Future studies should address the impact of some variables (e.g., social distance, gender, and age) on the realization of the refusal strategies in Algerian Arabic. As for cross-cultural studies, it would be of interest to conduct a contrastive study on refusal between Algerian Arabic and another language as performed by its native speakers (e.g., English) to examine the similarities and differences in the realization of refusal strategies in two different languages and cultures. Since the current study dealt only with Algerian Arabic speakers, the results cannot be generalized to speakers of all dialects of Arabic or to standard Arabic.

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Amel Benbouya is a PhD student at the University of Jordan. Her research interests are discourse analysis and pragmatics.

Ghaleb Rabab'ah is professor of linguistics at the University of Sharjah, UAE. His research interests are discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, pragmatics, and psycholinguistics. He supervised and examined many MA theses and PhD dissertations. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1804-5859>.