

Refusal strategies used by Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Jordan

Oraib Mousa Alshmaseen, Marwan Jarrah and Sharif Alghazo

This study investigates the use and linguistic properties of refusal strategies by Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Jordan. To achieve this objective, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), consisting of 10 situations: three requests, three offers, two invitations, and two suggestions was used. The participants were 40 (20 male and 20 female) Jordanians and 40 (20 male and 20 female) Syrian refugees in Jordan. The mixed-method data analysis resulted in a total of 1351 refusals: 719 Jordanian refusals and 632 Syrian refugees' refusals. The refusals were classified by semantic formulas, directness (a dimension of communication style), and frequency of semantic formulas. The results show that the two groups utilize different semantic formulas with different frequencies when making their refusals. The two groups used a different number of direct and indirect formulas. Although the two groups belong to the Arabic culture, the differences were significant. One main difference is that Jordanians' refusals were more direct and were often expressed as negative willingness, while the Syrian refugees' refusals were less direct, providing an explanation of their refusals. The results also indicate that gender is a significant variable where females in the two samples tended to respond with lengthy responses when making their refusals, employing at least three refusal strategies.

Keywords: refusals; Jordanians; Syrian refugees; DCT; gender; (in)directness.

1. Introduction

In pragmatic research, the study of speech acts has received much attention in different languages and cultures (e.g., Henstock 2003; Kwon 2004; Al-Kahtani 2005; Chunli and Nor 2016; Hong-lin 2007; Alghazo *et al.* 2021; Benyakoub *et al.* 2022).¹ In his articulation of the SAT, Austin (1962) suggests that uttering something can involve performing something else. For example, by saying 'I am sorry', a speaker is not only saying a phrase, but s/he is also doing an act, that of apologizing. Speech acts help us to develop a better understanding of how human communication is accomplished using linguistic structures

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(Olshtain and Blum-Kulka 1985). Such an exploration reveals the similarities and differences of interactions between people of different languages and cultures. In addition, the study of speech acts within different communities showed that cultures, norms, and beliefs play a major role in influencing the performance of speech acts (Richards and Schmidt 1983; Meier 1995). Many theories and concepts formed a theoretical framework of empirical studies on speech acts cross-culturally. The works by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) formed the basis of our perception and understanding of speech acts. Other concepts and theories include politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987), communicative competence (Hymes 1972; Canale and Swain 1980), pragmatic competence (Leech 1983), and intercultural communication (Hofstede 1980).

One of the important speech acts is that of refusing, which occurs in all languages but is performed differently. In fact, each culture or language has its own way of refusing which is manifested in certain strategies of refusing. Refusals occur when a speaker says 'No' directly or indirectly to an invitation, offer or request (Al-Eryani 2007). They are identified as face-threatening acts (FTAs) due to their contradiction to the listener's, requester's, and inviter's expectations and, hence, can cause damage to the interlocutors' honour. Refusals are often comprehended using indirect strategies because refusing might be offensive (Beebe and Takahashi 1989). Refusals are complex because they involve long sequences and vary according to sociolinguistic factors such as gender and status. Thus, refusals are important to investigate cross-culturally. Searle and Vanderveken (1985) argue that refusals are "[t]he negative counterparts to acceptances and consentings" and continues to note that "[j]ust as one can accept offers, applications and invitations, so each of these can be refused or rejected" (p. 195). Beebe et al. (1990) see refusals as an act of interpersonal negotiation that involves utterances which listeners are not pleased to hear. This, in turn, requires hearers to respond in a way that avoids embarrassing the speaker and to offer support to the listener's face (Beebe et al., 1990). Indeed, performing refusals may cause harm to the relationship between interlocutors as they direct a threat to the positive face of the hearer by suggesting that their desires are not welcomed or wanted. In this case, the person who refuses faces a challenge which is overcome by the speaker maintaining his negative face and reducing the threat to his interlocutor's positive face (Brown and Levinson 1987).

This study investigates the use and linguistic properties of refusals by Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Jordan highlighting the similarities and/or differences, the degree of (in)directness, and the role of gender. The study seeks to answer the following three questions:

1. Do Jordanians and Syrian refugees adopt different communication styles? If yes, what communication style does each group adopt?
2. What are the refusal strategies employed by each group?

3. To what extent do women employ different refusal strategies than men in two groups?

2. Theoretical framework

The SAT, which was articulated by Austin in 1962, stipulates that language is not only used to inform or describe entities, but it can also be used to do things, that is, to perform actions via utterances (Austin, 1962). Over the past 25 years, linguists have exerted significant efforts studying the strategies of speech acts across cultures and languages (Morkus 2009). Speech acts are utterances that carry some performative functions in language and communication (Austin 1962). Speech acts include three aspects: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. A locutionary act is the literal meaning of an utterance, an illocutionary act is the action performed when saying something, and a perlocutionary act is the consequence or the effect of saying something (Austin 1962). Austin (1962) indicates that illocutionary acts are performatives which can be implicit and explicit. Ethnographers of communication also investigated speech acts. Hymes (1968), for example, viewed speech acts as functional units that serve interactants during communication and as being guided by the socio-cultural rules of communication in a given speech community. Hymes (1968) proposed a taxonomy which comprises speech situations, speech events, and speech acts. Another taxonomy was devised by Searle (1969) who divided speech acts into five types: commissives (e.g., swearing, offering, etc.), declarations (e.g., resigning, sentencing, etc.), expressives (e.g., thanking, apologizing, etc.), assertives (e.g., claiming, announcing, etc.), and directives (e.g., requesting, ordering, etc.). The speech act of refusing is considered a commissive speech act (Jiang 2015). Searle (1969: 95) defines commissives as “statements which commit the speakers to a course of action as described by propositional content.”

3. Literature review

Much comparative research has been conducted on the speech act of refusing in different languages. For example, Beebe *et al.* (1990) examined the refusals performed by native speakers of Japanese and native speakers of English utilizing a DCT, with structurally written situations: three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. The findings showed the importance of status regarding the refusal strategies given by the respondents: Americans adopted a pattern when refusing requests from higher to lower status people. In refusing a request from an equal status person, Americans usually initiate the refusal with an expression of regret and then illustrate the motive for the refusal. On the other hand, the Japanese respondents showed more direct style of refusing when

they were interacting with a lower status person. The Japanese respondents omitted apology and regret when refusing a person of a lower status.

In another study, Stevens (1993) analysed Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals, also utilizing a written DCT, with 15 situations: eight requests and seven offers/invitations. Steven's conclusions, similar to those of Beebe *et al.* (1990), revealed that refusals included a number of formulas and that respondents rarely refuse outright. His analysis showed that both Arabic and English speakers adopted many of the similar formulas (e.g., explanations, non-committal strategies, partial acceptances, and white lies). Because of the analogy between Egyptian and American refusal strategies, the researcher concludes that it is not a necessity that Egyptian learners explicitly learn refusal strategies since there may be a great deal of positive pragmatic transfer from Arabic to English. Steven's research is important because it is one of the first studies that investigated the differences between Arabic and English refusals, yet his study lacks certain elements. Steven's study examines neither the role of status nor the sequence of formulas in implementing refusals. Furthermore, the study does not point out the frequency of each semantic formula type nor does it indicate the reasons provided for refusing.

Hussein (1995) investigated the speech act of refusing in Arabic. Unlike the studies detailed above, Hussein's study adopted only naturalistic data that he elicited through observing Arabic speakers in naturally occurring situations. The participants were university graduates and professionals from Palestinian and Jordanian speech communities. He also investigated written communication in letters and newspapers. The researcher categorized Arabic refusals into direct and indirect strategies. The findings of the study indicate that indirect strategies are more frequently utilized among close friends of unequal status and acquaintances of both equal and unequal status. Examples of indirect strategies adopted by Arabs are expressions of positive opinion, expressions of regret, excuses, alternative statements, statements of principle and indefinite replies. However, this study suffers from some methodological limitations. The researcher did not present any detailed information on how the data was procured or transcribed. In addition, he did not illustrate any systematic approach in analysing the data. More importantly, all scenarios the researcher included in the DCT are written in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), which is the formal written variety of the language, and no examples were included from any dialect of Arabic.

Al-Issa (1998) investigated the realization patterns of the speech act of refusal by Jordanian EFL learners, native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, and native speakers of American English. The study aimed to see whether there was evidence of pragmatic transfer from Arabic and the rationales causing this transfer if any. The researcher adopted a DCT to collect the data from the three groups (50

participants in each group) mentioned above. The three groups were equally divided according to gender. The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with the Jordanian EFL learners to figure out the factors for pragmatic transfer from L1. The findings showed evidence of pragmatic transfer especially with regard to type, frequency, number, and content of semantic formulas adopted. Also, the researcher indicated that there are specific semantic formulas that were only used by the Arab participants. In addition, it was recognized, that the refusals of the Jordanian participants, in comparison to their American counterparts, were lengthy, elaborate and less direct. Also, the excuses offered by the Jordanian participants were more vague and less specific than the American excuses.

Finally, Nelson et al. (2002) adopted a modified version of a DCT that was used by Beebe *et al.* (1990) in order to collect refusal data from 30 Americans and 25 Egyptians. The DCT consisted of 10 situations aiming at eliciting four different types of refusals: 3 invitations, 2 requests, 3 offers and 2 suggestions. The findings revealed that the two groups adopted similar semantic formulas to realize the speech act of refusing and utilized, to some extent, the same number of direct and indirect strategies. Nevertheless, it was found that in some situations the order of the semantic formulas differed between the two groups. Surprisingly, the Egyptian sample showed more utilization of the direct formulas than their American counterparts in the status-equal situations. Additionally, the American and Egyptian respondents expressed similar rationales for their refusals. However, the American respondents adopted more expressions of gratitude. Also, the Egyptian respondents made use of fewer face-saving strategies in their refusals than the Americans.

Al Masaeed, Taguchi and Tamimi (2020) investigated the connection the use of refusal strategies and second language (L2) proficiency using a spoken DCT. The participants were 45 learners of Arabic and 15 native Arabic speakers. The L2 learners were grouped based on their proficiency level in Arabic into three proficiency levels. The variables of power and social distance were considered in the construction of situations in the DCT. The results indicated that the use of refusals and the appropriateness of refusing were positively correlated with the proficiency level of learners. The findings also showed that native Arabic speakers tend to use vague explanations to refuse whereas L2 learners provided more specific explanations to refuse.

4. Methodology

This study examines the speech act of refusing as realized in Syrian Arabic and Jordanian Arabic and compares the strategies adopted by the speakers.

4.1. Sample

As for the sample, the study elicited responses from on 80 participants (40 Jordanians and 40 Syrian refugees). Each group was divided equally according to the gender of the respondent. The first group included 40 Jordanians who work at Queen Zain Al-Sharaf Centre for Development in Amman, Jordan. This group includes both males and females ranging from ages 20 to 50. It is worth indicating that age is not considered as a variable in the present study due to the insufficient numbers of Syrian refugees who could be arranged into age groups. Accordingly, both Jordanians and Syrian refugees were chosen and divided only according to gender. Most of the Jordanian respondents were recent graduates or graduate students at major colleges and universities in Jordan. All the participants used colloquial Jordanian Arabic as a medium of communication in their everyday interactions. The second group included 40 Syrian refugees who receive support from Queen Zain Al-Sharaf Centre for Development in Amman, Jordan. This sample consisted of refugees who fled Syria due to the 2011 Syrian crisis and sought shelter and safety in Jordan. The respondents' ages ranged between 20 and 40 years. Upon a discussion with the respondents during the data collection procedure, the researcher found that 80% received education up until twelfth grade.

4.2. Data collection instrument

The data was collected using a DCT. Mackey and Gass (2021: 467) define DCTs as “a means of gathering contextualized data. Generally, a situation is provided and then the respondent is asked what he or she would say in that particular situation.” Before the scenarios were distributed, background questions were administered to all the respondents to determine their gender, age, and nationality to verify eligibility for participation in the study (see Appendix A). The study utilized open scenarios for data elicitation. The DCT was composed of 10 situations/scenarios and include four types of stimuli to refusal (i.e., requests, offers, invitations, suggestion). The situations also differ with regard to setting, social distance, and the relative status of the interlocutors to each other. These situations were piloted and found to be valid and effective in collecting the data. The situations in this study were composed based on previous research due to the similar situations that have been utilized in multiple previous refusal studies investigating refusals in American English, Chinese, Turkish, and Arabic. The researcher altered these situations and edited them in some ways in order to meet the context and the needs of the present study. Also, the researcher created a number of situations. These situations are shown in Table 1.

Situation	Setting	Stimulus	Object of Refusal	Status
1	Respondent's house	Invitation	Dinner	Equal status
2	Workplace	Request	Report	High to low
3	College campus	Request	Lecture notes	Equal Status
4	Workplace	Offer	Promotion and relocation	High to low
5	Friend's house	Offer	More dessert	Equal status
6	College class	Request	A novel	High to low
7	Public transportation	Offer	money for dirtying a shirt	Equal status
8	Study area	Invitation	Relaxing during work	Equal status
9	Workplace	Invitation	Lunch	High to low

Table 1. Refusal situations

4.3. Scenarios and pilot study

The nine scenarios were piloted through distributing the DCT survey on participants who receive an English training course along with the researcher. The nine refusal scenarios were not modified based on the results received from the pilot study because the respondents in the pilot study managed to respond to the refusal scenarios required for the ultimate purposes of the study. The interactions also continued as expected. In addition, and after the respondents responded to the scenarios, the participants reflected on the scenarios as being “realistic and that a refusal was possible for each scenario.” The respondents in the pilot study also declared that the “scenarios took them a reasonable amount of time to respond to.” However, based on the feedback of the participants, a scenario was omitted. The tenth refusal scenario showed that the participant had to respond to his friend who suggests escaping work for some time and taking a couple of days off and relaxing in Aqaba. The participants pointed out that the type of stimuli to refusing in Scenario (10) stands out in comparison to all the other scenarios mentioned before. As the tenth scenario was designed to elicit a refusal to a suggestion, all the aforementioned scenarios included types of stimuli to refusals (e.g., requests, invitations, and offers). Accordingly, the listed modified version of the DCT in the present study includes nine refusal scenarios. The researcher felt that the modified version delivers a more coherent and related scenarios for the participants to respond.

4.4. Data collection procedures

Before the data elicitation, the researcher contacted Queen Zain Al- Sharaf Centre for Development and obtained an approval for conducting the research. An official statement was issued to ensure official coordination and smooth collection of data. Consent forms were composed and signed by all the respondents prior to their participation in the research. The data were elicited at Queen Zain Al-Sharaf Centre for Development because it used to receive Syrian refugees on a daily basis (at the time of data collection). In addition, the centre employs Jordanians for several positions. Accordingly, the centre is considered as a suitable setting. The data were collected in Arabic from Syrian refugees who usually attend the centre’s services and events and from Jordanians who work daily at the centre. Both groups were native speakers of Arabic. Convenient sampling was used through the communication office of Queen Zain Al-Sharaf centre. Appointments and meetings were also arranged and set up in coordination with the researchers. Meetings were held inside the centre for 15-20 minutes.

5. Results

The analysis below presents answers to the research questions about the use of refusal strategies by the participants and the effect of the examined variables (nationality and gender) on the use of refusal strategies. The strategies are classified into direct and indirect strategies based on Beebe *et al.* (1990) refusal semantic formulas. The findings of the direct and indirect strategies in relation to nationality and gender are presented in Tables 2. and 3. below. The study used frequency and percentage techniques to illustrate the preferred refusal strategies employed by Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Jordan and a Chi-square test to show the statistically significant differences between the two groups regarding the strategies.

			Jordanian	Syrian	Total	Chi2	Sig.
Style	Direct style	Count	334	127	461	103.956	0.00*
		%	72.5%	27.5%	100.0%		
	Indirect style	Count	385	505	890		
		%	43.3%	56.7%	100.0%		
Total	Count	719	632	1351			
	%	53.2%	46.8%	100.0%			

Table 2. Frequency, percentage, and Chi-square test results as for the nationality variable

Table 2. shows that the Jordanians and Syrian refugees preferred the indirect style in their refusals, with 53.5% of the strategies used by the Jordanians and 79.9% of the ones used by the Syrian refugees being indirect. The variance between the direct and indirect types was presented by ($\text{Chi}^2 = 103.956$) and its significance at level of 0.05, the variance was in favour of the indirect strategy type. The results also show that the direct strategy type was more employed by the Jordanians than by the Syrian refugees, while the indirect strategy type was more employed by the Syrian refugees. As for the categories for each refusal strategy style (direct and indirect) according to the nationality variable (Jordanian and Syrian), see Table 3. below.

			Jordanian	Syrian	Total	Chi2	Sig.
Direct	Performative	Count	38	11	49	1.849	0.397
		%	11.4%	8.7%	10.6%		
	Non-Performative statement (No)	Count	124	42	166		
		%	37.1%	33.1%	36.0%		
	Negative Willingness	Count	172	74	246		
		%	51.5%	58.3%	53.4%		
Total	Count	334	127	461			
	%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%			
	Statement of regret	Count	28	76	104		
		%	7.3%	15.0%	11.7%		
	Reason	Count	159	198	357		
		%	41.3%	39.2%	40.1%		
	Statement of alternative	Count	10	9	19		
		%	2.6%	1.8%	2.1%		
	Set condition for future or past acceptance	Count	1	0	1		
		%	0.3%	0.0%	0.1%		
	Promise of future acceptance	Count	8	11	19		
		%	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%		
	Statement of principle	Count	0	2	2		
		%	0.0%	0.4%	0.2%		
	Criticize the request / requester	Count	30	31	61		
		%	7.8%	6.1%	6.9%		

Indirect	Let off hook	Count	50	24	74	39.180	0.00*
		%	13.0%	4.8%	8.3%		
	Postponement	Count	22	35	57		
		%	5.7%	6.9%	6.4%		
	Statement/positive feeling	Count	11	11	22		
		%	2.9%	2.2%	2.5%		
	Statement of empathy	Count	21	32	53		
		%	5.5%	6.3%	6.0%		
	Gratitude	Count	42	75	117		
		%	10.9%	14.9%	13.1%		
	Other	Count	3	1	4		
		%	0.8%	0.2%	0.4%		
	Total	Count	385	505	890		
		%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		

Table 3. Frequency of semantic formulas, percentages, and Chi-square results in relation to nationality

As noted above, the direct strategy type was more employed by the Jordanians than by the Syrian refugees. Table 3. shows that 11.4% of the direct strategies used by the Jordanians were performative; 37.1% of them were the non-performative statement (No); and 51.5% of them were the negative willingness strategy. As for Syrians, the scores were 8.7%, 33.1% and 58.3% respectively. Table 3. also shows that the three direct strategies were used more by the Jordanians than by the Syrian refugees. To identify the statistically significant differences between the above-mentioned strategies, a Chi-square test was used. The result was 1.849, and it is not significant at level of (0.05). As for the indirect strategies, the analysis shows that this type was more employed by the Syrian refugees than by the Jordanians. Table 3 above shows that the statement of regret strategy constituted 15% of the indirect strategies used by the Syrian refugees, the reason strategy 39.2% of them, the statement of alternative strategy 1.8%, promise of future acceptance 2.2%, and the statement of principle 0.4%. As also shown in Table 3., other indirect strategies employed by the Syrian refugees include criticize the request/requester, with 6.1%; let off hook, with 4.8%; postponement, with 6.9%; statement positive feeling, with 2.2%; statement of empathy, with 6.3%; and gratitude, with (14.9%). The Syrian refugees did not use set condition for future and past acceptance strategies.

As for the Jordanian participants, Table 3. shows that the statement of regret strategy constituted 7.3% of the indirect strategies used by the Jordanians; the reason strategy 41.3%; the statement of alternative strategy 2.6%; the set condition for future or past acceptance 0.3%; and promise of future acceptance 2.1%. The Jordanians did not use the statement of principle strategy. The strategies also employed by the Jordanians include criticize the request/requester, with 7.8%; let off hook, with 13%; postponement, with 5.7%; statement positive feeling, with 2.9%; statement of empathy, with 5.5%; gratitude, with 10.9%; and other strategies, with 0.8%. To identify the statistically significant differences between the above-mentioned strategies, a Chi-square test was used showing 39.180 and its significance at the level of 0.05.

In relation to the effect of gender on the use of refusal strategies, the study used frequencies of semantic formulas, percentages, and results of Crosstab Test to show whether women employ different refusal strategies than men. Table 4. below shows the use of direct strategies by the Jordanians according to gender. It demonstrates that 57.9% of the performative strategy occurrences were used by the Jordanian male participants, and 42.1% of its occurrences were cited by the females. 58.9% of the occurrences of the non-performative statement (No) strategy was used by the Jordanian males, and 41.1% was employed by the females. Finally, 62.8% of the negative willingness strategy was employed by the Jordanian female participants, and 37.2% was employed by the males. Collectively, the results show that females tend to employ more refusal strategies than males among the Jordanian sample.

			Jordanians			Syrians		Total
			Gender		Total	Gender		
			Male	Female		Male	Female	
Direct	Performative	Count	22	16	38	3	8	11
		%	57.9%	42.1%	100.0%	27.3%	72.7%	100.0%
	Non-Performative statement (No)	Count	73	51	124	14	28	42
		%	58.9%	41.1%	100.0%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	Negative Willingness	Count	64	108	172	26	48	74
		%	37.2%	62.8%	100.0%	35.1%	64.9%	100.0%
Total		Count	159	175	334	43	84	127
		%	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%	33.9%	66.1%	100.0%

Table 4. Frequencies, percentages, and Crosstab Test results of the direct strategy use as for gender

As for the Syrians, the results show that 72.7% of the performative strategy occurrences were used by females and 27.3% by males. In addition, 66.7% of the non-performative statement (No) strategy occurrences were used by females and 33.3% by males. Finally, 64.9% of the negative willingness strategy occurrences were cited by females, 35.1% by males. Collectively, the results show that the females tend to employ more refusal strategies than males among the Syrian refugees.

As for the indirect refusal strategies, the results show differences between the two groups. Table 5. in the next page shows the results.

The results show that 82.1% of the statement of regret strategy occurrences were used by the Jordanian females, and 17.9% by the males; that 64.2% of the reason strategy occurrences were cited by the Jordanian females, and 35.8% by the males; and that 80% of the statement of alternative strategy occurrences were employed by the Jordanian females, and 20% by the males. The table also shows that 75% of the promise of future acceptance strategy occurrences were employed by the Jordanian females, and 25% by the males; that 60% of criticize the request/requester strategy by males and 40% by females; that 48% of the let off hook strategy by females and 52% by males; that 59.1% of the postponement strategy by females, and 40.9% by males; that 72.7% of the statement/positive feeling strategy by females, and 27.3% by males; that 71.4% of the statement of empathy strategy by females, and 28.6% by males; and that 57.1 of the gratitude strategy by females, and 42.9% by males. Finally, other strategies were employed (3=100%) by females. Collectively, the results show that the females used more indirect refusal strategies than did the males.

As for Syrian refugees, the results show that 56.6% of the statement of regret strategy occurrences were used by the females, 43.4% by the males; that 57.1% of the reason strategy by females, and 42.9% by males; that 66.7% of the statement of alternative strategy by males, and 33.3% by females; and that 72.7% of the set condition for future or past acceptance strategy by males, and 27.3% by females. The table also shows that the promise of future acceptance strategy was employed by males. The results indicate that 71% of the criticize the request/requester strategy occurrences were employed by females, and 29% by males; that 66.7% of the let off hook strategy by females, and 33.3% by males; that 57.1% of the postponement strategy by females, and 42.9% by males; and that 72.7% of the statement/positive feeling strategy by males, and 27.3% by females. The results reveal that 68.8% of the statement of empathy strategy occurrences were cited by females, and 31.3% by males; that 57.3% of the gratitude strategy by females, and 42.7% by males; and that other strategies were employed 100% by males. Collectively, the results show that the Syrian females used more indirect refusal strategies than did the males.

			Jordanian			Syrian		
			Gender		Total	Gender		Total
			Male	Female		Male	Female	
Indirect	Statement of regret	Count	5	23	28	33	43	76
		%	17.9%	82.1%	100%	43.4%	56.6%	100%
	Reason	Count	57	102	159	85	113	198
		%	35.8%	64.2%	100%	42.9%	57.1%	100%
	Statement of alternative	Count	2	8	10	6	3	9
		%	20.0%	80.0%	100%	66.7%	33.3%	100%
	Set condition for future or past acceptance	Count	0	1	1	8	3	11
		%	0.0%	100.0%	100%	72.7%	27.3%	100%
	Promise of future acceptance	Count	2	6	8	2	0	2
		%	25.0%	75.0%	100%	100.0%	0.0%	100%
	Criticize the request / requester	Count	18	12	30	9	22	31
		%	60.0%	40.0%	100%	29.0%	71.0%	100%
	Let off hook	Count	26	24	50	8	16	24
		%	52.0%	48.0%	100%	33.3%	66.7%	100%
	Postponement	Count	9	13	22	15	20	35
		%	40.9%	59.1%	100%	42.9%	57.1%	100%
	Statement/positive feeling	Count	3	8	11	8	3	11
		%	27.3%	72.7%	100%	72.7%	27.3%	100%
	Statement of empathy	Count	6	15	21	10	22	32
		%	28.6%	71.4%	100%	31.3%	68.8%	100%
Gratitude	Count	18	24	42	32	43	75	
	%	42.9%	57.1%	100%	42.7%	57.3%	100%	
Other	Count	0	3	3	1	0	1	
	%	0.0%	100.0%	100%	100.0%	0.0%	100%	
Total		Count	146	239	385	217	288	505
		%	37.9%	62.1%	100%	43.0%	57.0%	100%

Table 5. Frequencies, percentages, and Crosstab Test results of the indirect strategy use as for gender

6. Remarks

We coded and analysed the data according to the semantic formulas implemented in each situation based on frequency and corresponding directness/indirectness of the employed semantic formulas. Adopting Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification, semantic formulas classified as direct included performative (e.g., I refuse), non- performative (e.g., No), and a statement of negative willingness (e.g., I can't). All the other formulas adopted from Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification were coded as indirect. Through the analysis of the coded data, the researchers determined the sets of strategies for each situation employed by the Jordanians and Syrian refugees. As indicated by Houck and Gass (1995: 49), refusals are perceived as complex speech acts "primarily because they often involve lengthy negotiations as well as face- saving maneuvers." In order to compare the frequency of strategies, the number of each semantic formula, utilized by the Jordanians and Syrian refugees, was counted. It was found that the Jordanians employ more refusal strategies than the Syrian refugees in their refusals. In the Jordanian data, the number of semantic formulas was 719, whereas the Syrian refugees' refusals amounted to 632. A total number of 1351 semantic formulas were employed by the whole sample. As shown in Table 2, direct strategies (three categories) accounted for approximately 34.12% of the total number of formulas employed by the Jordanians and Syrian refugees, whereas the indirect strategies (12 categories) accounted for approximately 65.87% of the formula's total number employed by the two groups.

There were 334 frequencies of strategies (direct style) used in the Jordanian refusals. By far the greatest number was identified in the implementation of the negative willingness strategy whenever refusing an offer, request, or invitation. Negative willingness accounted for 172 or 51.5% of the total number of strategies used. Providing reason or excuse for the refusal was the second most popular formula and was used 159 times, accounting for 41.3% of the strategies. Formulas coded as non-performative "No" accounted for 124 or 37.1% of strategies and the performative for 38 or 11.4% frequencies of the total. The Jordanian respondents also employed the let off hook strategy, accounting for 50 frequencies or 13.0% of the total data.

There were 632 strategies used in the Syrian refugee refusals. The most common refusals employed by Syrian refugee respondents were different from those used by the Jordanian respondents. Providing reasons was the most common refusal method used, at 198 cases or 39.2% of the refusals employed. Statement of regret was the second most common formula at 76 cases or 15% of the overall strategies. Negative willingness was used in 74 cases or 58.3% of the refusals. Non-performative as a direct strategy was accounted for in 42 cases or 33.1% of refusals. Gratitude was employed with a frequency of 74 cases as well, however, with a percentage of 14.9% of the total indirect data elicited.

The Syrian refugee respondents also differed from the Jordanian respondents. The performative strategy was used in only 11 cases or 8.7% of the refusals.

7. Qualitative analysis of the data

In this phase, we demonstrate common refusal strategies employed by the Jordanians and Syrian refugee respondents by providing examples on the strategies used. In the first example, the respondent is refusing a request from his boss who is asking him to spend extra time at work. A Syrian male responds:

- (1) *ʔana ʔal-jawm ʔind-i dʕjuuf bi-l-bajt w-mifʕaʔdar ʔatʔaxar bitʕuyul* (Reason)
 ‘I have people who are visiting over today, and I can’t stay late at work’
bas kuun mitʔakkid ʔinni raʕ ʔasalm-ak ʔal-taqariir ʔabkar min ʔal-mawʕid ʔal-matʕluub (Statement of alternative)
 ‘But I guarantee you that I’ll submit the report earlier than expected.’
ʔuʕḏurni (Statement of regret)
 ‘I’m sorry.’

In the same situation, a Jordanian male explains:

- (2) *maa baʔdar* (Negative willingness)
 ‘I can’t.’
ʔana mrattib ʔumuuri ʕala ʕajr hajk ʔal-jawm (Reason)
 ‘I have other plans for today.’
mawʕid tasliim ʔal-taqariir lissa bakiir ʕalaj-h ʔinʕaaʔ ʔallah ʕasalmuh ʕasab ʔal-mawʕid (Statement of alternative; i.e., the submission is not due yet; I will submit the report on time)

In another situation, a Syrian female refused an offer of promotion and relocation from her boss by saying:

- (3) *ʔana mʔadrah ʕarḏ-ak ʔal-zamiil* (Statement of empathy)
 ‘I appreciate your kind offer.’
ʔaj ʕad maʕhalli mustaʕiil jurʕudʕ (Gratitude)
 ‘No one would refuse it.’
bas jaa rajit tuʕḏur-ni w-taʕtʕi ʔal-rutbah l-aʕad ʕajri (Statement of regret)
 ‘But I hope that you might grant this promotion on to someone else.’

ʔana maa baʔdar ʔatrūk haj ʔal-madiinah (Negative willingness)

‘I can’t leave this city.’

ʔajlt-i hawn maa baʔdar ʔatrūk-hum (Reason)

‘My family is here, and I cannot leave them.’

When a Jordanian male is invited for dinner by his status-equal friend, he refuses as follows:

(4) *laa ʔana ʔaasif sʔadiiq-i* (Statement of regret)

‘I’m sorry, my friend.’

ʔana ʔind-i ʔuyul bukra (Reason)

‘I have work tomorrow.’

Another Jordanian male refuses an invitation from his boss to attend a staff lunch by saying:

(5) *ʔukran* (Gratitude)

‘Thank you.’

maa baʔdar ʔaaʔi (Negative willingness)

‘I can’t come.’

ʔind-i masʔuulijjah fi ʔil-bajt (Reason)

‘I have some responsibilities at home.’

When a Syrian male refugee refuses a piece of cake offered by a higher-status person, s/he comments:

(6) *laa* (Non-performative statement ‘No’)

‘No.’

ʔaʔtaʔir l-ak (Statement of regret)

‘I’m sorry.’

ʔukran ʔala husn ʔal-dʔjaafah (Gratitude)

‘Thank you for the nice hospitality.’

Many of the Jordanian refusals included a non-performative statement: ‘No’ strategy, often at the beginning of the response. An example is given below in a situation in which the Jordanian male student refuses to lend a colleague, who continues to be absent from lectures, a notebook:

(7) *laa* (Non-performative statement ‘No’)

‘No.’

maa baʔdar (Negative willingness)

‘I can’t.’

?ana bukra ?ind-i ?imtihaan (Reason)

‘Tomorrow, I have an exam.’

In the same exact situation, a Syrian male responds by saying:

(8) *?ana ktiir ?aasif* (Statement of regret)

‘I’m truly sorry.’

haj ?il-muḥaḍarah b-iḍ-ḍaat ?ana laazim ?adrus-il-ha ktiir w bi-ḥaazit ?al-daftar (Reason)

‘I really need to study hard for this subject, so I really need the notebook.’

badil-lak ?ala ḥal, ruuḥ ?ala kuḥk ?al-zamṣah w ?iftari ?il-maadah (Statement of alternative)

‘I suggest you go to the bookshop of the university and buy the lecture notes.’

The Jordanian respondents differed from the Syrian refugee respondents in that the strategy of statement of regret was used in only 7.3% of the refusals. The following example demonstrate the use of statement of regret by the Syrian refugee respondents and the low use by Jordanian respondents. In the following situation, a professor at college requests the respondent to lend his novel to another student who is interested in reading it. The novel is precious for the respondent as it is a gift from his grandmother. Many of the Syrian refugee refusals contained a statement of regret, often at the beginning or at the end. An example is:

(9) *?al-s’araaḥah ?ana maa ba?dar duktuur* (Negative willingness)

‘Honestly, I can’t, professor.’

haj yaaljah ktiir w-hadijjah maa ba?dar ?astayni ?an-ha (Reason)

‘It is so expensive; it is a gift, and I can’t lend it to anybody.’

b-aṣṭaḍir (Statement of regret)

‘I apologize.’

ba?dar ?sa?id bi-nusxit PDF ?aw bi-?aj ?as?ilah ?an-ha (Statement of alternative)

‘I can help with a PDF copy, or any questions needed about the novel.’

On the other hand, a Jordanian refused to lend his novel stating his refusal briefly. An example is (10):

(10) *s’aḥb* (Negative willingness)

‘It’s difficult.’

la?anu ?al-riwajah yaaljah ?alj w b-it-saafidni bi-dirast-i (Reason)

‘Because the novel is precious for me, and I am using it to study.’

In the following situation, a friend requests that the respondent let him go home to check his pet while they are working on a project one day prior to its deadline. Few Jordanian respondents used a statement of empathy in their refusals, with a percentage of 5.5% of responses. However, the Syrian refugee respondents used statement of empathy at a higher frequency, with 6.3% of their refusals. Typical examples are given below:

- (11) *s'adiiq-i ma txalli ?aaxir ?ijaam ?al-zam?a tintahi bi-za?al ?ax-i s'abarna ktir w-?it?ibna min-faan ?allah ?a?i ?al-mawd'uuf ?waj min wa?t-ak b-a?rif xaajif ?al-bissah bas laa ti?la? bistak bi-xeir* (Statement of empathy)

'My friend, don't let our last days of college end with sadness. We have worked hard to get here so please give some time to what we are doing. I know you want to check on your cat but believe me she is okay.'

laa tiz?al kamaan ?waj bi-nxallis w-baruu? ma?a-ak (Statement of alternative)

'Don't be sad. We are about to finish, and I will join you to check on the cat.'

A Jordanian male, responding shortly, says:

- (12) *laa maa fi ma?aal* (Non-performative statement 'No')

'No, this should not happen.'

laazim ?ijkuun ?al-ma?ruuf zaahiz la-bukra (Reason)

'The project has to be ready for tomorrow.'

ja?nii ma?uul ?illi ?am ti?kiih bidd-ak tutruk ?al-ma?ruuf la?ata truu? ti?t'amman ?al-bissah
(Criticize the requester)

'This is unbelievable. You want to leave our important project to check on the cat.'

As for directness and gender, the study also investigated the role of gender in the use of refusal strategies. The results of refusal strategies used by both genders in the Jordanian group and Syrian refugee group are presented earlier. The Crosstab test is adopted to inform whether gender has a significant effect on the use of refusal strategies. After refusals were grouped together and the statistical data analysis ran the Crosstab test, it was revealed that gender has a significant effect on the number of refusal strategies used and on the employment of directness. According to the results, the males in both the Jordanian group and Syrian refugee group demonstrated a considerable difference in the number of refusal strategies, employing the direct style (159 versus 43). Similarly, females in the Jordanian group utilized a relatively higher number of refusal strategies than the females in the Syrian

refugee group (175 versus 84). For both genders of the two samples, the most frequently utilized refusal strategies are

1. Negative willingness
2. Reason
3. Non-performative statement ‘No’
4. Statement of regret, and
5. Gratitude.

It is also noticed that the Jordanian females utilized the strategy of *negative willingness* far more frequently than the Syrian refugee females did (108 versus 42). Considerable differences are observed between the two genders of the Jordanian group and Syrian refugee group in almost all the refusal strategies.

In relation to directness, the females in both groups employed higher frequencies of refusal strategies than males did, in particular the strategy of *negative willingness*, which accounted for 175 or 52% of cases by Jordanian females and 84 or 66.1% by Syrian refugee females. In comparison, the Jordanian males employed direct refusal strategies in 159 or 74.6% of cases and Syrian refugee males in 43 or 33.9%. After coding the semantic formulas in the response of each situation, the results reveal that the females use lengthy responses, employing at least 3 or more refusal strategies per situation. To illustrate this result, examples are given below. The examples below show the responses of the two genders of each group to the same situation.

In (13), a Jordanian female refuses an offer from a higher-status person of promotion and relocation to another country, employing four different strategies, saying:

(13) *?aasfih* (Statement of regret)

‘I’m sorry.’

maa ba?dar (Negative willingness)

‘I can’t.’

la?anuh ?awlaad-ii wa-zawz-i b-il-bajt wa-maa ba?dar ?atruk-hum (Reason)

‘Because my children and husband are at home, and I can’t leave them.’

xalli wahda taanijih min zamiilaat-i taaxud ?atarqijah wi-truuħ makaan-i (Statement of alternative)

‘Let one of my female colleagues take it and go instead of me.’

A Jordanian male refused the same offer, commenting:

- (14) *bi-s'araaħa ?ana ktiir mirtaaħa hawn wa-maa b-afakkir ?ayajjir makaan sakan-i* (Reason)
'Honestly, I'm very comfortable working here, and I am not thinking of changing my place.'
fukran zaziilan (Gratitude)
'Thank you so much.'

A Syrian refugee female response to the same situation was as follows:

- (15) *fukran ktiir ?ala haad ?al-?ard'* (Gratitude)
'Thank you so much for this offer.'
?ana ktiir mamnuuniit-ak li-?anak fakkarit fi-j (Statement of empathy)
'I am so grateful to you because you thought of me.'
bas maa ba?dar (Negative willingness)
'But I can't.'
?ana ħaaljjan mirtaaħah bi-hal makaan wa-maa b-aħib ?anta?il la-makaan taanii (Reason)
'Working here is very convenient for me, and I wouldn't like to leave it.'

However, a Syrian male said:

- (16) *wallaahi s'afib* (Negative willingness)
'By God, this is difficult for me.'
bi-sabab madaaris ?awlaad-ii wa fuyul zawżt-ii (Reason)
'Because of my kids' schooling and my wife's work.'

In another situation in which an equal-status person offers more cake to a friend, a female Jordanian refuses by saying:

- (17) *jasallim ?iid-ak, bi-ħajaat-i ma ?akalit keik zaakii ħajk* (Gratitude)
'Thank you, the cake is so delicious.'
b-aħib wallaahi ?aakul kamaan (Statement of positive opinion)
'I would love to eat more.'
bas wallah bat'n-i ful (Reason)
'But I swear I'm full.'
balki kamaan fiwaj b-ażuu? wa b-aakul (Statement of alternative)
'Maybe in a while I will become hungry and eat.'

A Jordanian male responds by saying:

(18) *wallah ?iktafajt ?ana* (Reason)

‘I am full.’

fukran fukran (Gratitude)

‘Thank you so much.’

On the contrary, a Syrian refugee female refuses the same offer by employing several refusals in just one response:

(19) *wallah ?al-keik bifahi wi-ktiir bifahi* (Statement of empathy)

‘By God, the cake is delicious; it is so delicious.’

bas wallah ?ana maa b-akul ?aktar min hajk (Reason)

‘But I swear to God usually I don’t eat much.’

jaft’ii-k ?alf ?aafjih maa ?as’s’arri/ (Gratitude)

‘Thank you so much. That’s so nice of you.’

A Syrian male replied shortly by saying:

(20) *maa ba?dar* (Negative willingness)

‘I can’t.’

li?an-i miltizim bi-?imjah (Reason)

‘Because I’m on a diet.’

The above-mentioned examples assert the result quantified above that females in both groups tend to employ multiple refusal strategies in one lengthy response. More examples below are given to illustrate other refusal strategies.

A Jordanian female refuses an invitation from a higher-status person who is inviting her to a staff lunch. The respondent refuses the invitation by saying:

(21) *wallah ?aabih ktiir ?aazi* (Statement of empathy)

‘I really would like to join.’

?ana ktiir b-atfakar-ak ?al-?aziimah (Gratitude)

‘I’m so thankful that you’re inviting me.’

bas ?ind-i ?aylih d’aruurijjah w maa ba?dar ?alyii-ha (Reason)

‘But I have something urgent to do, and I can’t cancel it.’

?akiid h-a?d’ar ?al-marrah ?al-?aj (Promise of future acceptance)

‘Of course, I will come next time.’

A Jordanian male responds to the same situation by commenting:

- (22) *kthir b-a?addir hal-?aziimah* (Statement of empathy)
'I really appreciate your invitation.'
bas ?ana w zawzat-i ?inaa maw?id ma? ?al-duktawr (Reason)
'But my wife and I have a doctor's appointment.'

Similar to the Jordanian female's lengthy refusal, a Syrian refugee female refused the invitation by replying:

- (23) *?aasfih* (Statement of regret)
'I'm sorry.'
kaan bi-wid-i ?aa?j w-?ana b-a?hib ?al-?azawmaat (Statement of empathy)
'I really would like to come. I really love gatherings.'
bas ?ana ?ind-i maw?id maa ba?dar ?alyii-h (Reason)
'But I have an appointment that I can't cancel.'
?ukran kthir (Gratitude)
'Thank you so much.'

In this last example, a Syrian male refugee responds by commenting:

- (24) *?aasif* (Statement of regret)
'I'm sorry.'
wallah ?ana ?ind-i zaam?ah ba?id ?al-?uyul (Reason)
'I have to go to the university after work.'

8. Discussion

This cross-cultural study investigated the refusal strategies employed by Jordanians and Syrian refugees in the Jordan. The study examined the preferred refusal strategies employed by each sample in different situations under various conditions. The study also investigated directness as related to nationality and gender. The researchers utilized a DCT as a data elicitation tool and adopted Beebe et al. (1990) taxonomy to examine the refusal strategies employed by the two groups in their refusals. Similar to Al-Kahtani (2005, p. 14) who concluded that "different cultures have different ways to realize speech acts," the present study found that the number of differences between the two groups, though they both belong to the Arabic culture, is significant. Though Arabic cultures have been renowned as

generally preferring an indirect communication style (Cohen 1987; Zaharna 1995), one main difference found among the two cultures is that Jordanian refusals were more direct and often expressed their refusals as negative willingness while the Syrian refugees' refusals were less direct, providing explanation for refusals. This is consistent with Steven's work (1993), as the two groups also employed, to some extent, some similar semantic formulas when making refusals. For example, in both groups, frequent formulas included providing reasons, making statements of negative willingness, using non-performatives, and stating alternatives. This also partially agrees with the study of Hussein (1995), whose data indicates certain indirect strategies are usually adopted by Arabs such as expressions of positive opinion, expressions of regret, excuses, alternative statements, and statements of principle. Hence, the Jordanians and Syrian refugees in this study are found to frequently implement the two refusal strategies: expression of regret and excuses. The groups also responded with similar reasons when refusing, using both specific and non-specific reasons and often making references to family commitments. The discrepancy between the literature on Arabic communication style and the findings of this study, however, suggests the importance of investigating language use in specific contexts. It also illustrates the danger of generalizing about a language or culture's communication style as if one style (e.g., direct vs. indirect) is used in all situations.

Moreover, it was also found that the Arab participants use frequent reference to God in the Arabic data. This finding is parallel to the study of Al-Issa (1998), who proposes that Arabs have a tendency towards referring to God when implementing their refusals. In terms of gender, the data clarified that females in both samples tend to respond lengthily in their refusals, employing at least three or more refusal strategies. Bataineh (2004) proposes that, among Arabic speakers, gender-based differences were found when realizing speech acts. Finally, since the findings indicate that Syrian refugees tend to implement an indirect style of communication, adopting indirect refusal strategies, this, in turn, suggests that there is a tendency for positive politeness strategies in the refusals of Syrian refugees. This, based on the researcher's interpretation, is due to the image given to the Syrian refugees as a minority group in the Jordanian context. It is widely recognised in the related literature that participants who are affiliated with minor groups use indirect communication strategies especially with reference to strategies which include (positive or negative) face threatening acts (see, e.g., Pearson 1988, among others). This research paper shows that Syrian refugees who are a minor group in Jordan significantly use indirect refusal strategies as compared to Jordanians who implement more direct strategies. Syrian refugees are linguistically signalling their minor status in their host community.

9. Conclusion

This study has been an attempt to find out the preferred strategies used in refusals by Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Jordan. The study has investigated similarities and differences in one aspect of Jordanians' and Syrian refugees' communication style: directness. It has also investigated the speech act of refusals examining two variables: nationality and gender. The situations selected for this study asked respondents to make refusals in a modified DCT consisting of 10 situations: three requests, three offers, two invitations, and two suggestions. The study has shown that the Jordanians and Syrian refugees adopt different styles of communication (direct/indirect). Jordanians use more direct strategies than Syrian refugees in their refusals. They use it to refuse requests, offers, invitations, and suggestions to people at work, public transportation, and college. Jordanians most commonly use the direct strategy 'negative willingness' in their responses, while Syrian refugees are less direct, giving reasons in their refusals. As for the impact of gender in adopting refusal strategies, the data show that gender is a significant variable in which women in the two groups used long utterances giving a string of reasons and employing at least three refusal strategies. The findings of this study reveal that overall, the frequency of direct and indirect refusal strategies used by Jordanians and the Syrian refugees are different. The study calls for more investigations of the speech acts of Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Arabic. The results of such studies would present very useful insights into Arabic communication styles and how Arabic speech acts are realized at the discourse level. Findings from such studies can also certainly present an invaluable recourse for ethnographers and linguists. With regard to research studies examining how Jordanians and Syrian refugees realize the speech act of refusal in Arabic, there is certainly an urgent need. It is important for future research to elicit interactional data through other data elicitation tools, aside from DCTs, in order to reach a better understanding of how speech acts are realized in Arabic by Jordanians and Syrian refugees and duplicate the findings of this study. Future research can also investigate other variables that have not been previously addressed, such as age, educational background, social status, and social distance. It is important to find out in what ways such variables affect the realization of refusals in Arabic. All the Syrian refugees' participants in the present study are placed in the Jordanian community, therefore it is important in future studies to find out to what extent Syrian refugees displaced in other countries would realize the speech act of refusal. Another area of research that is also very promising and useful is the investigation of the differences and similarities between Syrians who are still living in Syria and refugees who are displaced in host countries. Finally, there is a need for research that examines the reasons behind refusals and favouring certain refusal strategies over others. Interviewing the respondents after conducting role play in order to reach a better understanding of their decision-making process with regard to the strategy they used

and why is an example of how to pursue this information. Such interviews or verbal responses have been found to present very useful insights into participants' perceptions of refusals and their linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge (Félix-Brasdefer 2002).

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Oraib Mousa Alshmaseen is a full time-lecturer at the Faculty of Languages and Communication at the American University of Madaba, Jordan. She teaches courses in Intercultural & Interpersonal Communications, Cultural Development and Listening & Speaking. Ms. Alshmaseen received both her bachelor's degree in Applied Linguistics and master's degree in Language, Culture & Communication from the University of Jordan. Currently she is a participant in an advanced research methods seminar in a renowned knowledge center in Jordan, Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, investigating the future trends of reading in Jordan. She can be contacted at: o.khrisha@aum.edu.jo

Marwan Jarrah is an Associate professor at the University of Jordan. He got his PhD from Newcastle University in 2017. He is a specialist in language typology and syntactic theory. His scholarly work appears in *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, *Folia Linguistica*, *Studia Linguistica*, *Lingua*, *Word*, *Journal of Linguistics*, *Lingua*, *Canadian Journal of Linguistics*, *The Linguistic Review*, etc. He can be contacted at: m.jarrah@ju.edu.jo

Sharif Alghazo is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Sharjah and the University of Jordan. He received his Ph.D. degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Australia. His scholarly research has appeared in journals such as *System*, *Journal of Politeness Research*, *Journal of Pragmatics*, *European Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *Heliyon*, *Sage Open*, *Ampersand*, *Interchange*, *Lingue e Linguaggio*, and *Open Linguistics*. He can be contacted at: salghazo@sharjah.ac.ae