Refusal Strategies by Ammani Arabic Monolingual and English-Arabic Bilingual Speakers

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Abstract This research explored refusal strategies among 15 Ammani Arabic monolinguals and 15 English-Arabic bilinguals, aiming to uncover cross-cultural variations. Data were collected through a discourse completion test (DCT) following Beebe et al. (1990), featuring scenarios of requests, invitations, suggestions, and offers. Participants respond to each scenario, refusing to individuals of equal, higher, and lower status, shedding light on diverse communication patterns in intercultural contexts. Results showed that Ammani Arabic monolinguals use more direct strategies than English-Arabic bilinguals in refusing requests and suggestions, especially when dealing with lower status. English-Arabic bilinguals use more adjunct strategies when dealing with higher-status people, while Ammani Arabic monolinguals use "care of the interlocutor's feelings" strategy. Pragma-linguistic failures were observed, revealing differences in the length, content, and order of semantic formulas, showcasing potential challenges in cross-cultural communication. This study's results can help understand the norms of both languages and be used in language teaching contexts.

Keywords: Ammani Arabic monolinguals, English-Arabic bilinguals, Refusal strategies, DCT, Pragma-linguistic failure

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1. Introduction

People usually use language not only to convey information but also to perform an action. Language acts are known as speech acts. The notion of speech act was first developed by Austin (1962), who defined it as an utterance that serves a function in communication, such as refusing, greeting, and promising. Within this view, the minimal unit of communication is not a sentence or expression but rather a performance act.

Using utterances, speakers can perform speech acts like rejection. The speech act of refusal takes place when a speaker directly or indirectly says "no" to a request, invitation, offer, or suggestion (Al-Erayani, 2007). Using utterances, speakers can perform speech acts like rejection. The speech act of refusal

takes place when a speaker directly or indirectly says "no" to a request, invitation, offer, or suggestion (Al-Erayani, 2007). Refusals are face-threatening acts because they violate the requester's and listener's expectations, and they are usually carried out indirectly (Chen et al., 1995). Refusals vary in directness and indirectness as a way to avoid upsetting interlocutors, depending on position, age, and culture (Sarf, 2011).

All languages provide a means of executing speech acts, but the 'form' utilized in particular speech acts varies by culture; therefore, the act of refusing may be expressed differently across cultures, languages, and even within the same culture (Al-Erayani, 2007). Persons from one culture may reject differently from those in another culture, even when speaking the same language (Al-Kahtani, 2005). This leads Al-Kahtani (2005) to conclude that the speech act of refusing requires a high level of pragmatic competence, where appropriate forms should be used to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context. To ensure successful speech act performance and reduce the risk of pragmatic failure, second and foreign language learners should understand sociocultural constraints specific to the second language (L2). This awareness is essential for achieving pragmatic competence (Abed, 2011; Fitri et al., 2020). Pragmatic failure, on the other hand, consists of two types: sociopragmatic failure and pragmalinguistic failure (Thomas, 1983). Thomas (1983) pointed out that sociopragmatic failure arises from the inability to accurately clarify a situation. Additionally, he highlighted that pragma-linguistic failure occurs when the illocutionary force of an utterance systematically differs from the force assigned to it by native speakers or when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from the first language to the second language.

Numerous studies highlight the challenges faced by Arabic speakers in effectively communicating refusals in English. This struggle is often attributed to pragmatic incompetence and the sociocultural transfer from their native language. Some of these studies include Yemeni learners of English (Al-Eryani, 2007), Saudi and American students (Al-Shalawi, 1997), Egyptian Arabic and American English speakers (Nelson et al., 2002), Americans, Arabs, and Japanese (Al-Kahtani, 2005), Jordanians (Al-Issa, 2003), and between Jordanian Arabic and American English (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2016). To extend the literature, this study aims to fill a gap concerning the pragmatic transfer of Ammani Arabic monolingual and Arabic-English bilingual students. The significance of this study lies in its exploration of how two distinct cultures manifest refusals, contributing to the cultural and pragmatic awareness of both bilingual and monolingual individuals. Furthermore, the study is significant for second language learners by facilitating their understanding of appropriate forms, functions, and contextual usage in the target language. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to investigate pragmatic transfer in the face-threatening act of refusal, considering social status as a crucial factor. Moreover, it aims to analyze the variations in refusal strategies (semantic formulas) between these two linguistic groups.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Speech Act of Refusal in Cross-Cultural Studies

Numerous studies have examined the speech act of refusal across different cultures, often making comparisons between foreign language speakers and American English speakers. These cross-cultural investigations include but are not limited to those between American and Japanese speakers by Beebe et al. (1990), American and Chinese speakers by Chen (1996), Australian and Vietnamese speakers by Phuong (2006), and Germans and Americans by Johnson (2014).

Beebe et al. (1990) used a discourse completion test (DCT) with four hypothetical circumstances (requests, offers, recommendations, and invitations) to examine American English and Japanese native speaker refusals. Participants had to deny one circumstance to a higher, lesser, or equal rank in each. The sequence, frequency, and substance of semantic formulas in refusals varied greatly between Americans and Japanese. Japanese refusals were based on social rank, whereas American refusals were based on familiarity or social distance. They also highlighted Japanese pragmatic transfer. Japanese EFL learners provided less detailed reasons in Japanese and English than American participants. Another important transfer was that Japanese EFL learners' replies varied depending on the interlocutor's status (high or low) and were culture-specific to Japanese, meaning they responded in their own language.

Because the speech act of refusals occurs in all cultures, several studies have compared foreign languages to American English. For example, Chen (1996) compared American and Chinese English refusal speech behaviors using semantic formulas. Findings demonstrated that no matter their cultural or linguistic backgrounds, speakers from both groups seldom said "no" or "I refuse". In addition, while American speakers' refusals showed expressions of sorrow, Chinese speakers did not use these phrases. Phoug (2006) analyzed Australian native speakers' and Vietnamese English learners' refusals to requests cross-culturally. The study showed that Australian refusals vary from Vietnamese. They said "no" differently to conversational partners. Australians rejected more directly, particularly when using "no" expressions. However, Vietnamese learners used to reject indirectly to prevent communication breakdown. Johnson (2014) examined German and American English refusal techniques in another cross-cultural research. Johnson employed Beebe's (1990) DCT to gather data. The results revealed that both groups utilized indirect techniques more than direct ones. In particular, Germans adopted 88.4% of indirect strategies and 11.6% of direct strategies. This contrasts with 87.3% indirect and 12.7% direct techniques by American participants.

Al-Sallal and Ahmed (2022) examined how Bahraini and Indian EFL learners refuse requests and offers following the framework adopted by Brown and Levinson (1987) and Beebe et al. (1990). Results showed a strong impact of culture on the pragmatic competence of L2 learners. Additionally, results reported differences between the two groups in refusing requests and offers. For example, Indian EFL learners used more direct strategies (24.6%) compared to Bahriani EFL learners (20%). Arabic refusal literature is scarcer than in other civilizations. Several investigations employing native Arabic speakers follow Beebe et al.'s (1990) study. These studies showed that Arabic speakers failed to communicate in English when refusing, owing to pragmatic incompetence and sociocultural transfer of the mother language. These studies include Yemeni English learners (Al-Eryani, 2007), Saudi and American students (Al-Shalawi, 1997), Egyptian Arabic and American English speakers (Nelson et al., 2002), Americans, Arabs, and Japanese (Al-Kahtani, 2005), Jordanians (Al-Issa, 2003), and Jordanian Arabic and American English.

Al-Kahatani (2005) analyzed how Americans, Arabs, and Japanese refuse. They varied in how they did the verbal act of refusing based on semantic formula order, frequency, and content. For instance, when the refuser was greater in social standing than the refusee, the semantic formulas matter: Americans said thanks)first, then self-defense, whereas most Japanese said explanation. Arabs did not show appreciation. Since they started their refusals with "no", most Americans and Arabs chose straightforward ways, even if they were similar. Al-Shalawi (1997) studied Saudi and American male college students' semantic formulations for speech refusal. The findings revealed that Saudis tend to produced a greater variety of semantic formulas than their American counterparts. Moreover, Saudi refusals were collectivistic, whereas American refusals were individualistic. The research also found that both groups used the same refusal formulations, except for outright refusals when Saudis provided unclear replies. Saudis wanted generic justifications, but Americans wanted personal ones.

Nelson et al. (2002) used a modified DCT to compare Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals. The study showed that both groups tended to use the same semantic equations and refuse for comparable reasons. They also used similar indirect and direct approaches. Egyptian Arabic speakers refused directly in equal status circumstances, whereas American English speakers used thankfulness more than Egyptians. Al-Eryani(2007) showed cultural differences and pragmatic transfer between Yemeni Arabic and American English native speakers in refusal. His research employed Beebe's (1990) DCT. Results showed that American and Yemeni rejection techniques were similar, but semantic formula frequency and substance varied between cultures. For example, Yemenis tended to provide a rationale or explanation before refusing, but Americans refused more directly with expressions of remorse first.

In Jordan, Al-Issa (2003) analyzed sociopragmatic transfer in refusals by EFL students and Americans. The research aimed to find pragmatic transfer from Arabic to English. Al-Issa collected data using Beebe's (1990) DCT, and three settings were designed to elicit suggestion rejection. Speaker-hearer relationships were determined by social rank (upper, lower, and equal) and social distance (near, familiar, and far). His comparative analysis indicated that Jordanians say "I am sorry" more than Americans. The findings also demonstrated that Arabs felt obligated to pay attention to a higher-status

person's idea, even if they disagreed. They did it to prevent conflicts and shield the hearer's face. Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) illustrated how individuality and collectivism affected the way Jordanian Arabic and American English speakers refuse. Data was collected using Al-Issa's (1998) DCT. The findings revealed that the two language groups favored indirect and direct techniques. Americans were more straightforward than Jordanians, who tended to refuse indirectly.

It is clear from previous literature that the culture of the participants is more influential than some other factors, such as gender, age, topic, and proficiency level in the target language when they refuse. Therefore, it is possible to expect different ways of performing refusals when observing responses from participants from different cultures and when the participants are influenced by status factors, as in this study. This research examines Arabic-English bilingual and Ammani Arabic monolingual rejection speech behaviors. This research examines how two cultures see refusals to enhance bilingual and monolingual speakers' cultural and pragmatic awareness. Additionally, it helps second language learners understand the target language's proper forms, functions, and context. No research has examined the pragmatic transfer of Ammani Arabic monolingual and Arabic-English bilingual pupils. This study investigates pragmatic transfer in monolingual and bilingual refusal performances with social status in mind. Thus, it presents transfer data from bilingual and monolingual speakers and compares monolingual and bilingual rejection techniques (semantic formulas).

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants

For the present study, 30 participants were recruited and willingly agreed to complete a DCT. The participants were divided into two groups: 15 English-Arabic bilingual speakers and 15 Arabic monolingual speakers. Their ages ranged between 18 and 35. The English-Arabic bilingual speakers were native English speakers residing in America who developed proficiency in Arabic through communication with their parents, who were native speakers of Arabic. On the other hand, the Ammani Arabic monolingual speakers were native Arabic speakers, predominantly students, none of whom had lived outside Jordan. They were learning English as a foreign language. None of the participants in both groups reported any communication disorders.

3.2. Instruments

All participants were requested to do a DCT (see Appendix 1) modeled after Beebe et al.'s study (1990). The DCT, originally developed by Blum-Kulka in 1982, presents realistic situations to which participants are expected to respond by refusing. Widely used in collecting data on speech act realization within and across language groups, the DCT serves as a valuable tool for studying communication dynamics. The test has twelve written circumstances. There are three inquiries, three invites, three recommendations, and three offers. The inquiry is intended to allow one denial to someone of greater, lower, and equal rank. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic with minor changes.

3.3. Procedure

Data collection took place in a quiet room that was free from any noise. The first author informed the participants about the objectives of the study and how it aimed to find out any cultural gaps between monolingual and bilingual English-Arabic speakers. Each participant was given 45 minutes to complete the test. The taxonomy proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) was utilized to identify Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals' rejection methods to assess participant data. Next, the frequencies of refusal methods from the two groups were computed and displayed in tables to compare their utilization in each DCT condition. To identify pragma-linguistic failure, Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals were compared.

4. Results

This section begins by presenting the types of strategies found in data, followed by an exploration of the role of status in the speech act of refusal. Then, the study tackles pragma-linguistic failure, including considerations of length, content, and the order of semantic formulas.

4.1 Strategy types

4.1.1. Direct Strategies

Verbal communications that express the speaker's desires, needs, and discourse process are called these tactics. This research found that Ammani Arabic monolingual and English-Arabic bilingual speakers do not utilize the performative refuse to reject. However, they mostly use negative phrases like "no" and "not" and negative abilities like "I cannot, I will not, I do not think so". As an example:

(1) An example by a monolingual speaker: "*No, I apologize. I am unable to attend because I am overwhelmed with homework*".

(2) An example by a bilingual speaker: "*I'm sorry, but I won't be able to because I have other plans for tomorrow*".

Thus, Ammani Arabic monolingual speakers tend to employ more direct strategies than English-Arabic bilingual speakers (see Figure 1). Specifically, Ammani Arabic monolingual speakers exhibit the highest frequency of direct strategies in refusing requests and suggestions. By contrast, bilingual speakers employ direct strategies more often in refusing suggestions and offers (see appendices 2 and 3).

Figure 1
Direct Strategies Used by Ammani Arabic Monolinguals and English-Arabic Bilinguals
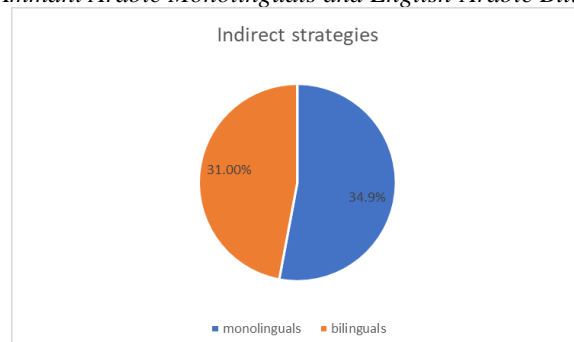

4.1.2. Indirect Strategies

Both Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals use more indirect strategies when refusing the four situations (requests, invitations, suggestions, and offers) than direct ones (see Figure 2).
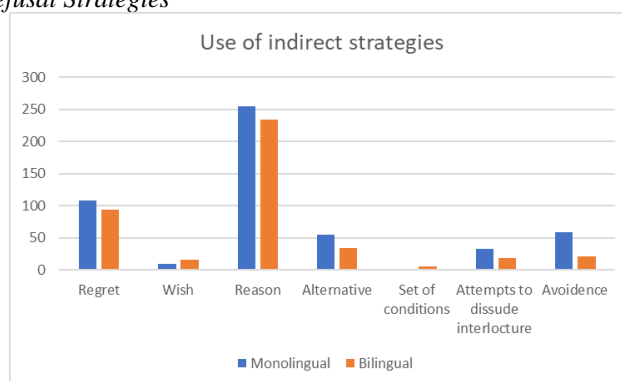
Figure 2
Indirect Strategies Used by Ammani Arabic Monolinguals and English-Arabic Bilinguals

The most frequent indirect strategy used by Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals is giving reason (see Figure 3). Five indirect strategies out of eleven are frequently used, as categorized in this study (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Comparison of Indirect Refusal Strategies

According to Figure 3, notable differences are observed in the frequency of indirect strategies between Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals. One significant difference is noticed in the reason strategy, which is frequently employed by Ammani Arabic monolingual participants, with 524 occurrences (34.9%), compared to 466 occurrences (31%) for English-Arabic bilingual participants. The second highest recorded indirect strategy by both groups is the regret strategy. Ammani Arabic monolingual participants employ the regret approach (7.2%) more than their English-Arabic bilingual counterparts (6.2%). One interesting finding is that Ammani Arabic monolingual participants tend to provide numerous reasons after expressing regret when refusing requests, such as aiding a friend, assisting a teacher, or declining an invitation to a teacher's son's birthday party (see Appendix 4). However, English-Arabic bilingual participants express regret with detailed explanations when refusing requests, particularly in scenarios involving assistance to a teacher. See examples (3) and (4) below, provided by a monolingual speaker and a bilingual speaker, respectively.

(3) *Sorry, I am invited to my friend's house on Saturday, and I have more important things to do.*

(4) *I apologize for the inconvenience. Tomorrow, I have a doctor's appointment.*

Another difference can be seen in the frequency of the Alternative strategy, which is more commonly utilized by Ammani Arabic monolingual participants (3.6%), while it is less employed by English-Arabic bilingual participants (2.2%). Ammani Arabic monolingual participants often employ this strategy when refusing suggestions and offers from people of lower social status, as can be seen in examples (5) and (6) by monolingual and bilingual speakers, respectively.

(5) *Actually, I do not enjoy broccoli soup; I would prefer lentil soup.*

(6) *I cannot stand its taste, and I would rather drink warm lemon juice instead.*

Furthermore, Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals show another difference in the frequency of the Attempt to dissuade interlocutor strategy, particularly in the context of "letting the interlocutor off the hook". Notably, Ammani Arabic monolinguals (2.2%) employ this strategy more commonly for this purpose compared to English-Arabic bilinguals (1.2%), as seen in examples (7) and (8) below, provided by a monolingual speaker and a bilingual speaker, respectively.

(7) *Do not worry about it; it is not your fault.*

(8) *It is OK, do not bother yourself.*

According to Figure 3, another evident distinction emerges in the utilization of the avoidance strategy, specifically through "repetition and hedge", which is more frequently employed by Ammani Arabic monolinguals (3.9%) and less frequently utilized by English-Arabic bilinguals (1.4%). This strategy is ranked as the fourth most popular among Ammani Arabic monolinguals, occurring 30 times. In contrast, it only occurs four times in the data from English-Arabic bilinguals, particularly when refusing invitations from someone lower in status. See below examples of repetition (9) and hedge (10) by both monolingual and bilingual speakers, respectively:

(9) *Monday! I am not sure about participating in the party because I remember that I have a dentist's appointment.*

(10) *Oh, that sounds wonderful! However, I am not sure if I can come because I have another commitment on Monday.*

Additionally, as seen in Figure 3, the "set condition for future acceptance" strategy is exclusively utilized by English-Arabic bilingual participants, occurring six times in their data. See below the following example by a bilingual speaker:

(11) *Oh, if you had asked me earlier, maybe I could come to the party.*

4.1.3. Adjuncts to Refusal

English-Arabic bilinguals employ a greater number of adjuncts in their refusals compared to Arabic monolinguals. According to the data presented in Table 2, adjuncts to refusal constitute 13.8% and 11.6% of the overall strategy for English-Arabic bilinguals and Arabic monolinguals, respectively (see Figure 4).

Figure 4
Adjuncts to Refusal Used by Arabic Monolinguals and English-Arabic Bilinguals
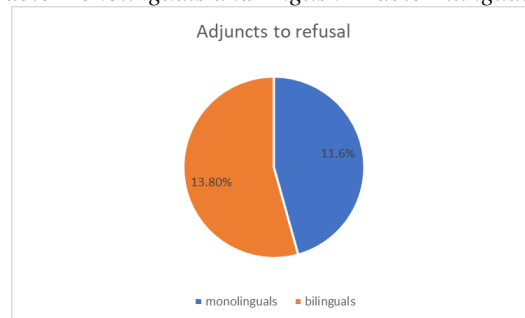
As shown in Figure 5, results reveal that among the three adjuncts employed by participants in this study, 'the positive opinion' strategy is the most recorded adjunct to refusals for both English-Arabic bilinguals and Ammani Arabic monolinguals. However, there is a notable distinction as English-Arabic bilingual participants employ this strategy more (6.2%) compared to their Ammani Arabic monolingual counterparts (4.4%). The gratitude adjunct ranks as the second most frequently used strategy by English-Arabic bilinguals, occurring 80 times (5.3%). For Ammani Arabic monolinguals, it also holds the second position but with a slightly lower frequency, occurring 79 times (5.2%). Pauses and fillers as adjuncts to refusal are more commonly employed by English-Arabic bilinguals (2.2%) and are rarely found in the data of Ammani Arabic monolingual participants, occurring only 29 times (1.9%) (see Figure 5).

Figure 5
Comparison of Adjuncts to Refusal
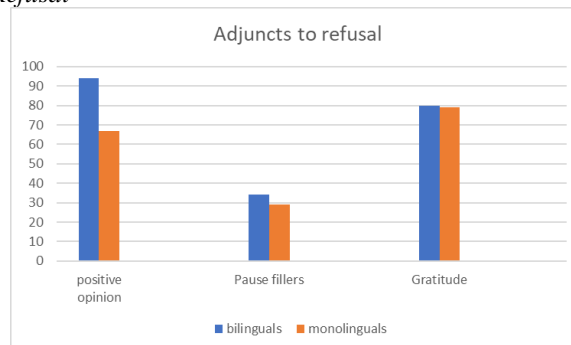
4.2. Role of Status on Refusals

This section explores the influence of social status on the production of refusals within the Ammani Arabic monolingual and English-Arabic bilingual communities. It provides a comparative analysis of the overall frequency of direct and indirect refusal strategies, as well as the use of adjuncts to refusal within each group, considering the impact of social status.

4.2.1. Equal Status

Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals are comparable in declining suggestions with fewer adjuncts in equal status interactions. Direct tactics are used more by Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals to refuse playground basketball suggestions than adjuncts. Ammani Arabic monolinguals reject the proposition more directly than English-Arabic bilinguals (Appendix 4). English-Arabic bilinguals, unlike Ammani Arabic monolinguals, use indirect methods when declining invites. Similar to Ammani Arabic monolinguals, English-Arabic bilinguals use fewer indirect methods when rejecting equal offers (see Table 1).

In the context of declining invitations, English-Arabic bilinguals, in contrast to Ammani Arabic monolinguals, display a preference for utilizing more adjuncts and fewer direct strategies. Furthermore, both Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals demonstrate a shared tendency to use fewer indirect strategies when refusing offers from individuals of equal status (see Table 1).

Table 1
Refusals in Equal Status Interactions

Type of refusals	Direct		Indirect		Adjunct	
	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals
Requests	15	13	57	51	7	11
Invitations	14	12	46	45	18	21
Suggestions	33	20	25	33	10	10
Offers	16	20	23	27	33	20
Total	78	65	151	156	68	62

4.2.2. Higher Status

In higher-status interacts, Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals use more indirect strategies when dealing with higher-status people (the refuser is in a lower status relative to the interlocutor). Also, both of them use adjuncts more than direct strategies. In the case of refusing an invitation from someone higher in status, Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals show positive politeness and gratitude (adjuncts) before giving reasons to refuse the invitation (see Appendix 4). On the other hand, in the case of refusing a request from a teacher asking for help to clean his office, Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals use direct strategies (negative ability) and then it follows with reasons [indirect strategies] (see table 2).

Table 2
Refusals in Higher Status Interactions

Type of refusals	Direct		Indirect		Adjuncts	
	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals
Requests	8	12	56	47	8	11
Invitations	9	8	54	55	20	27
Suggestions	18	20	42	33	11	18
Offers	23	24	32	31	21	27
Total	58	64	184	166	60	83

4.2.3. Lower Status

In cases where the refuser holds a higher status than the interlocutor (who has a lower status), both linguistic groups share a preference for employing indirect strategies over direct ones in such scenarios. Additionally, when refusing requests and suggestions from someone of lower status, both groups use fewer adjuncts to refusal and lean more towards indirect strategies. However, variations arise in the context of invitations, where both Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals opt to use adjuncts more than direct strategies. Interestingly, when confronted with an offer of compensation from a subordinate, both groups employ the "let the interlocutor off the hook" strategy more frequently than direct and adjunct strategies (see Table 3).

Table 3
Refusals in Lower Status Interactions

Type of refusals	Direct		Indirect		Adjuncts	
	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals	Ammani Arabic monolinguals	English-Arabic bilinguals
Requests	25	12	32	46	5	6
Invitations	19	13	55	37	20	30
Suggestions	39	37	41	13	18	12
Offers	2	4	61	44	2	11
Total	85	66	189	140	45	59

4.3. Pragma-Linguistic Failure

In this study, it is observed that Ammani Arabic monolingual participants exhibit a transfer of their native language (L1) speech habits into their L2.

4.3.1. Length of the Semantic Formulas

The findings indicate that Ammani Arabic monolinguals tend to provide lengthy responses, a practice that serves to soften the impact of a refusal. While this approach aligns well with cultural norms in Arabic communication, it may pose challenges in English-speaking contexts and could potentially impede effective communication, particularly with English-Arabic bilinguals who are native speakers of English. See the following example:

(12) *I am sorry because my dad has a trip this Saturday, and I should see him before he leaves; kindly say happy birthday to your son, and I hope you accept my apology.*

4.3.2. Content of the Semantic Formulas

Results show that Ammani Arabic monolinguals are obsequious, especially when refusing invitations. It means that they use many introductory statements before they state their refusal, e.g., "Thank you for inviting me", "it's my pleasure to be with you at the party", or "it's a great honor". On the other hand, very non-specific reasons have been quoted in refusing them, such as "unfortunately, I am really busy at that time", "I am really busy, I have to go to another place", etc. On the other hand, English-Arabic bilingual participants, when refusing requests, invitations, suggestions, and offers, express specific reasons and clear responses.

4.3.3. Order of the Semantic Formulas

The findings indicate that Ammani Arabic monolingual participants adhere to the native language order of semantic formulas in Arabic. In numerous instances, they employ a combination of two or three strategies consecutively, such as expressing regret followed by stating a reason, considering the interlocutor's feelings followed by providing a reason, expressing regret followed by expressing negative ability, and subsequently presenting a reason, or expressing positive willingness followed by providing a reason. This practice underscores a consistent approach in their communication, reflecting

the influence of the native language order on their use of refusal strategies, as shown in the examples below:

Results show that Ammani Arabic monolingual participants use the native language order of the semantic formulas in Arabic. In many cases, they use two or three strategies together (i.e., regret followed by reason, consideration of the interlocutor's feelings followed by reason, regret followed by negative ability and then followed by reason, and positive willingness followed by reason). See the examples below:

(13) *I am sorry, I cannot go since I should visit my grandma.*

(14) *I want to go, but I have a lot of work today. I am really sorry.*

English-Arabic bilingual participants express regret and give reasons the most. They rarely show consideration for the interlocutor's feelings or express a wish. For example:

(15) *I can't. I have to go to the hospital.*

(16) *I am sorry. I have a doctor's appointment tomorrow.*

5. Discussion

Despite some similarities, the present study has shown substantial differences in refusal strategies between Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals, reflecting a cross-cultural difference. It also shows a significant influence of social status in the use of refusal strategies among Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals.

One of the interesting findings is that Ammani Arabic monolinguals use more direct strategies than English-Arabic bilinguals in refusing requests and suggestions, especially when they are dealing with people of lower status. They use it as a matter of principle and because they do not want to refuse directly. However, this result contradicts previous studies in Arabic refusals (Al-Shawali, 1997; Eryani, 2007; Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2016). In addition, both Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals use indirect strategies to refuse the four situations (requests, invitations, suggestions, and offers). The most frequently used indirect strategy is expressing regret and giving reasons. They use it to mitigate the damage caused to the positive face, especially when both of them are dealing with higher-status people. This result deals with Al-issa's study (2003). However, there are some differences in using these indirect strategies. English-Arabic bilinguals give specific and clear reasons after expressing regret when they are dealing with people of different social statuses. They do that to keep the relationship going and to minimize the illocutionary force of refusal. This result is consistent with Al-Shalawi's (1997) and Johnson's (2014) studies. While Ammani Arabic monolinguals give unspecific and vague reasons that seem to be white lies when they deal with people of different social statuses. Moreover, they tend to use "care of the interlocutor feelings strategy" because of their native language culture. The tendency to use general and vague reasons has also been found by Al-Eryani (2007) and Al-Shawali (1997). The results also show another difference in the selection of indirect strategies; for example, the strategy "set condition for future acceptance" is used only by English-Arabic bilingual participants, especially when they are dealing with equal and higher status. They use this strategy to express solidarity with their interlocutor.

Another noteworthy finding in this study is the utilization of adjuncts to accompany refusals by both Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilingual participants, although the latter group employs this strategy more frequently. Specifically, English-Arabic bilingual participants pre-dominantly employ the positive opinion and gratitude strategy across all social status situations. This approach serves to mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusal and express respect towards their interlocutors. This finding agrees with similar findings reported by Nelson et al. (2002) and Al-Kahtani (2005). One of the objectives of this study is to investigate the influence of cultural background on Ammani Arabic monolinguals and English-Arabic bilinguals. The results reveal a significant impact of cultural background on the content and order of semantic formulas among Ammani Arabic monolingual participants. Findings show that Ammani Arabic monolinguals are influenced by the culture of their

native language, transferring their L1 speech habits into L2. They tend to provide lengthy answers, which may not align with English communication norms. A number of previous studies have emphasized that without a pragmatic knowledge of L2, a speaker cannot perform communication properly (Beebe et al., 1990; Byon, 2004; Hassall, 2003; Huth, 2006).

The issue that Ammani Arabic monolinguals encounter when performing speech acts is a lack of communicative as well as grammatical competence. It is not easy to get them to comprehend each type of speech act and how to use them effectively in everyday situations. They must master grammatical as well as communicative abilities. The goal is for them to be able to employ the appropriate speech acts in the appropriate context of speaking. This finding goes with the findings of Alshraah et al. (2023), who observed a positive correlation between language proficiency and the selection of suitable politeness strategies. Olshtain and Cohen (1991) discuss one occurrence in this issue that reminds us of the value of mastering speech acts and using them at the appropriate time and place. They share someone's perspective on the subject. It is critical to find a teaching method that can help improve their grammatical and conversational skills. They should be able to understand not only the theory behind particular language functions but also how to apply them in a situation-appropriate manner.

Several limitations in this study must be acknowledged. Firstly, a limited number of participants might not be representative of the whole population. Furthermore, the results would be more robust if they included situations representing a greater number of social settings (e.g., the street, home, workplace, or market). In addition, it should address learners at different proficiency levels to ascertain whether pragmatic features undergo development or persist with learners even at advanced stages. Therefore, the findings of the present study would be valuable for designers of Arabic and English language curricula, as well as for those involved in teaching and learning Arabic and English as second/foreign languages. Given the revealed cultural differences in the production of the speech act of refusing, teachers and practitioners in all languages should engage students in real-life situations that demonstrate how to employ refusal strategies appropriately. Furthermore, future research could explore the impact of gender on the speech act of refusing, as highlighted by Malki (2022), Abbas and Berowa (2022), and Niyazova (2022).

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Appendices

Appendix 1
Discourse Completion Test

Dear respondent, this instrument has been designed to investigate "Refusal strategies by monolingual and bilingual speakers". Please respond to the instances listed below with the most appropriate refuse response. The answers should be written in the provided spaces and in English. Rest assured that the information obtained in the course of this study will be kept confidential and used only for the purpose of academic research. Thanks for your participation. Instructions: Read each of the situations on the following pages and write after each situation what you would normally say in the given situation. Please write the actual words you would say rather than "I would …"

1- Requests

Scenario (1) Your close friend asks you to help decorate his house.
Friend: Would you like to come in tomorrow to help me in decorating my house?
You:
Friend: It's OK. That's much more important.

Scenario (2) Your teacher asks you to stay after school to help clean up his office.
Teacher: Would you please help me clean my office after school?
You:
Teacher: Alright. I'll find another student.

Scenario (3) Your young brother wants to take your bicycle to go to the library.
Your young brother: I want to borrow some books from the library. Can I borrow your bicycle?
You:
Your young brother: Alright. I will take a taxi.

2- Invitations:

Scenario (4) Your friend invites you for dinner at a fancy restaurant.
Friend: How about meeting this Saturday and having dinner together?
You:
Friend: OK, I hope we can meet at another time.

Scenario (5) One day, your instructor invites you to his son's graduation party.
Teacher: This Saturday, I am throwing a graduation party for my son. I would be glad if you can come.
You:
Teacher: Oh, I see.

Scenario (6) Your young cousin asks you to come to his birthday party.
Your cousin: My birthday party will be this Monday, and I will be happy if you attend.
You:
Your cousin: Alright. No worries!

3- Suggestions:

Scenario (7) A friend of yours suggests that you play basketball.
Friend: Hey, would you like to play basketball with me?
You:
Friend: OK. It's up to you.

Scenario (8) Your teacher suggests your name to be on the school football team.
Teacher: You play football very well, and I see that you should join the school football team.
You:
Teacher: You still have time to think about it.

Scenario (9) You are so tired and sick after spending hours helping your dad in cleaning up the garage.

Your young sister thinks that you are tired and sick, and she suggests that you have some broccoli soup.
Your young sister: To get better, I suggest that you have broccoli soup.
You:
Your young sister: As you see.

4- Offers:

Scenario (10) You are at a friend's house for lunch. Your friend offers to give you a piece of cake.
Friend: How about another piece of cake?
You:
Friend: well, it's up to you.

Scenario (11) Every year in the second semester, the school holds a competition for the best writer. Your head minister offers you to join this competition.
Head minister: Hi, I heard from your teacher that you have good writing so how about joining this competition?
You:
Head minister: it's OK. It was just an offer.

Scenario (12) You have a domestic helper at home. While ironing your clothes, he spoils one of your favorite's t-shirts.
Helper: I am so sorry. While ironing your clothes, I burnt your favorite's t-shirts. Please tell me from where you have purchased? I will replace it with a new one.
You:
Helper: But the mistake was mine.

Appendix 2
A Classification of the Refusal Responses Based on Beebe et al. (1990)

I. Direct
1. Using performative verbs (I refuse)
2. Non-performative statement
- "No"
o-Negative willingness/ability (I can't/I won't/I don't think so)

II. Indirect
1. Statement of regret (I'm sorry .../I feel terrible ...)
2. Wish (I wish I could help you ...)
3. Excuse, reason, explanation (My children will be home that night./I have a headache)
4. Statement of alternative

- I can do X instead of Y (I'd rather .../I'd prefer ...)
- Why don't you do X instead of Y (Why don't you ask someone else?)

5. Set conditions for future or past acceptance (If you had asked me earlier, I would have ...)
6. Promise of future acceptance (I'll do it next time./I promise I'll .../Next time I'll ...)
7. Statement of principle (I never do business with friends.)
8. Statement of philosophy (One can't be too careful.)
9. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

- Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (I won't be any fun tonight to refuse an invitation)
- Guilt trip (waitress to customers who want to sit a while: I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.)
- Criticize the request/requester (statement of negative feeling or opinion; insult/attack (Who do you think you are?/That's a terrible idea!)
- Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request

- Let interlocutor off the hook (Do''t worry about it./Tha''s OK./You don't have to.)
- Self-defense (I'm trying my best./I'm doing all I can do.)

10. Acceptance that functions as a refusal IIx

- Unspecific or indefinite reply
- Lack of enthusiasm

11. Avoidance IIxi

- Nonverbal

☐ Silence
☐ Hesitation
☐ Doing nothing
☐ Physical departure

- Verbal

☐ Topic switch
☐ Joke
☐ Repetition of part of request (Monday?)
☐ Postponement (I'll think about it.)
☐ Hedge (Gee, I don't know./I'm not sure).

Adjuncts to refusals
1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (Tha''s a good idea .../I'd love to ...)
2. Statement of empathy (I realize you are in a difficult situation.)
3. Pause fillers (uhh/well/oh/uhm)
4. Gratitude/appreciation

Appendix 3
Response of English-Arabic Bilinguals

Situations	Situation No	Refuser status	Direct strategies		Indirect strategies									Adjunct			
			Ii	Iii	IIi	IIii	IIiii	IIiv	IIv	IIvi	IIvii	IIix	IIxi	Ai	Aii	Aiii	Aiv
Request	#1	equal	--	7	17	2	28	--	1	1	--	2	--	6	--	4	1
	#2	high	--	12	22	--	24	--	--	1	--	--	--	10	--	1	--
	#3	low	--	12	8	2	24	11	--	--	--	1	--	3	--	3	--
Invitation	#4	equal	--	12	11	2	23	--	2	6	--	3	2	11	--	1	9
	#5	high	--	8	17	1	28	--	1	1	--	1	6	19	--	1	7
	#6	low	--	13	--	1	22	--	2	3	--	3	6	23	--	7	--
Suggestion	#7	equal	--	20	9	--	11	2	--	4	--	2	5	--	--	5	5
	#8	high	--	20	2	7	20	4	--	--	--	--	--	2	--	3	13
	#9	low	--	37	--	--	6	7	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	1	10
Offer	#10	equal	--	20	--	1	22	--	--	1	--	2	2	4	--	1	19
	#11	high	--	24	8	--	20	1	--	1	--	--	--	7	--	4	16
	#12	low	--	4	--	--	6	9	--	--	--	29	--	8	--	3	--
Total			--	189	94	16	234	34	6	18	--	43	21	94	--	34	80
			--	13%	31%									13.8%			

Appendix 4

Responses of Ammani Arabic Monolinguals

Situations	Situations No	Refuser status	Direct strategies		Indirect strategies									Adjunct			
			Ii	Iii	IIi	IIii	IIiii	IIiv	IIv	IIvi	IIvii	IIix	IIxi	Ai	Aii	Aiii	Aiv
Request	#1	equal	--	15	24	--	30	--	--	2	--	--	4	7	--	--	--
	#2	high	--	8	18	4	30	4	--	--	--	--	--	8	--	--	--
	#3	low	--	25	5	--	21	6	--	--	--	--	--	3	--	2	--
Invitation	#4	equal	--	14	6	3	29	--	--	--	--	--	8	10	--	3	5
	#5	high	--	9	17	--	30	--	--	--	--	--	7	5	--	5	10
	#6	low	--	19	17	--	22	--	--	6	--	--	10	16	--	2	2
Suggestion	#7	equal	--	33	4	--	11	4	--	4	--	2	--	--	--	6	4
	#8	high	--	18	10	--	23	4	--	--	--	--	5	4	--	5	2
	#9	low	--	39	--	--	4	12	--	--	--	--	25	1	--	2	15
Offer	#10	equal	--	16	--	--	22	1	--	--	--	--	--	8	--	1	24
	#11	high	--	23	7	3	18	4	--	--	--	--	--	5	--	2	16
	#12	low	--	2	--	--	15	13	--	--	--	18	--	--	--	1	1
Total			--	221	108	10	255	48	--	11	--	33	59	67	--	29	79
			--	14.7%	34.9%									11.6%			