The Pragmatic Competence of the Yemeni EFL Learners.
A Contrastive Study

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Abstract :

Due to the fact that English is learnt and practiced in a foreign context where the native language is Arabic, the Yemeni learners of English show some signs of inadequacy in their performance of the pragmatic aspects of the target language i.e. English. For this purpose, this study into the pragmatic competence of the Yemeni learners of English intends to shed light on this unfortunate phenomenon and its related causes and consequences. Sixty respondents participated in this study in three groups. Twenty Yemeni learners of English were asked to respond in English to six different situations in which they carry out the speech act of refusal. Their English performances were compared to those of twenty Yemeni Arabic native speakers and twenty American English native speakers in order to find out whether the refusal given by the group in question, i.e., Yemeni learners of English, correspond more closely to those of the Yemeni Arabic native speakers or with speakers of the target language, the American English native speakers. The data, collected and analyzed via a Discourse Completion Test indicated that although a similar range of refusal strategies was available to the two language groups, cross-cultural variation was evident in the frequency and content of semantic formulas used by each language group in relation to the contextual variables, which include the status of interlocutors (higher, equal, or lower status) and eliciting acts i.e., (requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions). Due to their high proficiency in English, the Yemeni learners of English showed evidence of pragmatic competence of the target language in constructing their refusal styles. However, they at times displayed some of their native speech community norms, falling back on their cultural background when formulating refusals.

Key words: Pragmatic competence; Pragmatic transfer; Speech act of refusal, Yemeni EFL learners.

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Introduction :

Numerous studies in interlanguage pragmatics have recognized that the learners' ability to use appropriate speech acts in a given speech act event and to use appropriate linguistic forms to realize this speech act is a main component of pragmatic competence. Fraser (1983) describes pragmatic competence as "the knowledge of how an addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognizes the intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle attitudes" (p.30). Rintell (1997, p.10) also pointed out that "pragmatics is the study of speech acts", arguing that L2 learner pragmatic ability is reflected in how learners produce utterances in the target language to communicate specific intentions and conversely, how they interpret the intentions which their utterances convey. One of the consistent findings in the empirical studies of speech act behavior is that, although the typology of speech acts appears to be universal, their conceptualization and verbalization can vary to a great extent across cultures and languages. In other words, L2 learners may have access to the same range of speech acts and realization strategies as do native speakers (NSs), but they may differ in the strategies that they choose. Therefore, it is clear that L2 learners must be aware of the L2 socio-cultural constraints on speech acts in order to be pragmatically competent.

When second language learners engage in conversations with native speakers, difficulties may arise due to their lack of mastery of the conversational norms involved in the production of speech acts. Such conversational difficulties may in turn cause breakdowns in interethnic communication (Gumperz, 1990). When the native speakers violate speech acts realization patterns typically used by native speakers of a target language, they often suffer the perennial risk of inadvertently violating conversational and politeness norms, thereby forfeiting their claims to being treated by their interactants as social equals (Kasper, 1990). Communication difficulties are resulted when conversationalists do not share the same knowledge of the subtle rules governing conversations. Scarcella (1990) ascribes high frequency of such difficulties to the fact that "nonnative speakers, when conversing, often transfer the conversational rules of their first language into the second" (p.338). The use of rules of speaking from

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one's speech act community when interacting or when speaking in a second or a foreign language is known as pragmatic transfer. Uriel Weinreich (1953) says "Those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech act of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language, i.e. as a result of language contact, will be referred to as interference phenomena". Similarly, the linguistics culture-specific rules in communicative behaviors may lead such kind of transfer or inference. In this regard, Mahadi and Jafari (2012), suggested that there is a very close relationship between language and culture in general, and a specific language and its culture in particular. That is, culture has a direct effect on language.

What L2 learners must know for successful speech act performance has been presented in a "top-down processing" manner (Kasper, 1984): "Learners first have to recognize the extra-linguistic, cultural constraints that operate in a NS's choice of a particular speech act appropriate to the context. They also have to know how to realize this speech act at the linguistic level and in accordance with L2 sociocultural norms" (p.3). Cohen (1996) terms this "Sociocultural knowledge" as " the speakers' ability to determine whether it is acceptable to perform the speech act at all in the given situation and, so far, to select one or more semantic formulas that would be appropriate in the realization of the given speech act" (p.254).

The speech act of refusal :

Much of the work in interlanguage pragmatics has been conducted within the framework of speech acts. Speech acts can be thought of as 'functions' of language, such as complaining, thanking, apologizing, refusing, requesting, and inviting. Within this view, the minimal unit of communication is the performance of linguistic act. All languages have a means of performing speech acts and presumably speech acts themselves are universals, yet the 'form' used in specific speech acts varies from culture to culture. Thus, the study of second language speech acts is concerned with the linguistic possibilities available in languages for speech act realization and the effect of cross-cultural differences on second language performance and on the interpretation by native speakers of second language speech acts (Wolfson, 1989, p.183). Refusals, as all the other speech acts, occur in all languages.

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However, not all languages/ cultures refuse in the same way nor do they feel comfortable refusing the same invitation or suggestion. The speech act of refusal occur when a speaker directly or indirectly says 'no' to a request or an invitation. Refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/ requester/ inviter, because it contradicts his or her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies. Thus, it requires a high level of pragmatic competence of the language used for communication. Chen (1996) used a semantic formula to analyze speech act sets of refusal (refusing requests, invitations, offers and suggestions), and concluded that direct refusal as "NO" was not a common strategy for any of the subjects, regardless of their language background. For example, an expression of regret, common in Americans' refusals, was generally produced by the Chinese speakers of English, which might lead to unpleasant feelings between speakers in an American context.

Speakers who may be considered fluent in a second language due to their mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of that language may still lack pragmatic competence; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate. In cross-cultural communication, refusals are known as 'striking points' for many non native speakers (Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliz-Weltz 1990). Refusals can be tricky speech acts to perform linguistically and psychologically since the possibility of offending the interlocutor is inherent in the act itself (Know, 2004). As the failure to refuse appropriately can risk the interpersonal relations of the speakers, refusals usually include various strategies to avoid offending one's interlocutors. However, the choice of these strategies may vary across languages and cultures. For example, in refusing invitations, offers and suggestions, gratitude was regularly expressed by American English speakers, but rarely by Egyptian Arabic speakers (Nelson, Al-batal, and Echols, 1996). When Mandarian Chinese speakers wanted to refuse requests, they expressed positive opinion (e.g., 'I would like to….') much less frequently than American English since Chinese informants were concerned that if they ever expressed positive opinions, they would be forced to comply (Liao and Bressnahan, 1996).

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Pragmatic Competence :

Along the continuum of the interlanguage process, L2 learners are already equipped with general pragmatic knowledge, i.e., the communicative use of language in general as defined by Blum-Kulka (1991), and L2 pragmalinguistic knowledge (knowledge of particular linguistic forms conveying particular illocutions) as defined by Leech (1983). Communicative competence or pragmatic competence is described as the ability to use such utterances in an effective and efficient manner (Francis, 1997). In Bialystok's (1991) study, pragmatic competence refers to abilities required for discourse participants (both speakers and hearers) in successful conversations. That is, the speaker must possess an ability to perform the different speech acts of a given language; in the meanwhile, the hearer must possess an ability to interpret and understand the speakers' intention both directly and indirectly. In addition to discourse rules (e.g., turn-taking, interruption, cohesion and so forth), Gass and Selinker (1994) suggest another component, 'whose language is being used'; namely, learners must have enough knowledge of social and pragmatic rules to choose appropriate forms to use with each type of interlocutor (e.g. of different genders, ages, social distance, social status). Moreover, Rafieyan et al. (2013) recently concluded that familiarity with the cultural features of the target language society, on the one hand, and interest toward learning those cultural features, on the other hand, play a significant role in the development of pragmatic comprehension ability in English as a foreign language context.

To sum up, Kasper (2001 b) holds that pragmatic ability can be achieved with success under two circumstances. First, when there is some universal pragmatic knowledge, such as the ability to express pragmatic intent indirectly; the main categories of communicative acts or the politeness phenomenon, and second, when both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge can be positively transferred from the first language to the target language (TL). However, getting the chance to benefit from these two situations, learners may not know how to use what they already know (Kasper 2001 b). Through findings from research conducted on both production and perception of different pragmatic aspects, Bardovi-

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Harlig (2001) proves that learners differ considerably from NSs in terms of pragmatic competence.

Related Literature :

Several major investigations into the speech ac of refusing have been conducted by (Beebe, 1985; Beebe. et al., 1985; Beebe and Takahashi, 1987) cited in Wolfson (1989). The finding of their study (Beebe et al., 1985) demonstrated that Japanese learners of English manifest sociolinguistic transfer in refusals by the sequencing of formulas for refusing the actual frequency in use of formulas, and their specific content. One significant finding was that the status of the addressee is a much stronger conditioning factor in the speech of Japanese speaking both in English and in their native language. An example of the related social status differences in the behavior of the Japanese is that, unlike English speaking Americans, they did not apologize or express regret in responses to those of lower position. Additional evidence of status-related differences is manifested in the Japanese responses to invitations from higher-as opposed to lower-status interlocutors. In contrast, Americans in these situations made a distinction along the lines of social distance by responding in a brief and unelaborated fashion to both higher- and lower-status unequal while offering much longer and more detailed responses to peers. In their analysis of strategies for refusing, (Beebe et al., 1985) classified refusals into direct and indirect refusals. Direct refusals such as "I refuse" or "no" were found to be used by Americans mainly in response to intimates and unequal status or strangers. Indirect refusals, used by Americans primarily to acquaintances of equal status, included three major strategies which were usually found to be used in sequence at the beginning of a refusal. These were (1) an expression of positive opinion such as "I'd like to," (2) an expression of regret such as "I'm sorry," and excuse, reason, or explanation such as "My children will be home that night" or "I have a headache". Other strategies included a statement expressing a wish to be able to comply with the request, the statement of an alternative, a condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier…."), a promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time"), a statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends") , a statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful"), an attempt to dissuade

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the interlocutor, a criticism of the request, a request for empathy, a statement letting the interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it"), self-defense (e.g., "I'm doing my best"), an unspecific or indefinite reply, a display of lack enthusiasm, and verbal or nonverbal avoidance such as silence or a topic switch, a hedge, or a joke. In another study of refusals as made by Japanese ESL learners at two levels of proficiency, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) found that low and high proficiency learners differed in the order and frequency of semantic formulas they use.

The lower proficiency learners were also more direct in their refusals than higher-level ESL learners. To investigate the evidence of pragmatic transfer in Japanese ESL learners' refusals, Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) compared refusal strategies used by Japanese ESL learners to those used by Americans. They also tested the differences in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas used by Japanese and Americans. They found evidence of transfer in all three areas (Beebe et al., 1990). Chen (1996) used semantic formula to analyze speech act sets of refusal(refusing requests, invitations, offers and suggestions) produced by American and Chinese speakers of English. She found that direct refusal was not a common strategy for any of the subjects, regardless of their language background.

There are few empirical studies on speech act behavior involving the Arabic language or even native speakers of Arabic. Umar (2004), for example, studied the request strategies as used by Advanced Arab learners of English as a foreign language as compared to those strategies used by British native speakers of English. He found that the two groups adopted similar strategies when addressing their request to equals or people in higher positions. In this case, the subjects rely heavily on conventionally indirect strategies. However, when requests are addressed to people in lower positions the Arabic sample shows a marked tendency towards using more direct request strategies in performing their request than the British sample. El-Shazly (1993) studied the request strategies in American English, Egyptian Arabic, and English as spoken by Egyptian second language learners. The results of this study indicated that there were differences in the requesting strategies used by these groups. The Arab speakers of English demonstrated a high tendency towards using conventional

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indirectness which depended on the use of interrogatives. Modifiers were also examined among the groups. No differences were found with respect to use of "Upgraders'. "Downgraders", however, were found to be more frequently used by native Arabic speakers. They displayed a noticeable tendency to use more than one downgrader in a single utterance. This group was also found to be unique in using religious expressions as downgraders. In another study, Al-Shawali (1997) studied the semantic formulas used by Saudi and American male undergraduate students in the speech act of refusal. The finding of his study showed that Americans and Saudis used similar refusal formulas except in the use of direct refusal. Saudi and American students also differed in the use of semantic formulas in the content of their refusals; Saudis used avoidance strategies (e.g., postponement and hedge) or they gave unspecified answers.

Objectives of the study :

This study aims to achieve the following objectives :

1. To shed light on the pragmatic competence of the Yemeni learners of English when encountered in social contexts in English.
2. To compare the Yemeni learners of English responses with their American counterparts so as to figure out the degree of adherence or violation to the target language norms from a pragmatic concern.
3. To understand the causes that might lead these learners to be insufficient in their pragmatic performances.

Questions of the Study :

As the intention of the study is to elicit the pragmatic performance of the YELs as compared to those of YANSs and AENSs by tackling the used semantic formulas with their orders and contents in constructing the refusals styles, this study is intended to address and answer the following questions:

1- When YELs perform the speech act of refusal, are their refusal strategies similar to those used by native speakers of English, AENSs?
2- To what extent do the YELs show pragmatic competence when they make refusals in English?

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Hypothesis :

In spite of their grammatical and linguistic competence, and due to the circumstances and unfortunate context where English is learnt and practiced as an FL, i.e. in Yemen, it is hypothesized that the Yemeni learners of English will show some kind of incompetency in the pragmatic aspects of the target language, English in this context.

Methodology :

Subjects :

The participants were 60 respondents divided into three groups as follows:

- -Twenty Yemeni native speakers of Arabic (YANSs) giving their responses in Arabic,
- -Twenty Yemeni learners of English (YELs) giving their responses in English, and
- -Twenty Americans native speakers of English (AENSs) giving their responses in English.

The first group was a number of twenty undergraduates studying in different majors other than English at Thamar University. They were given an Arabic version of the questionnaire and their responses were compared to the other two groups. The second group included twenty students from the English department, level four, at Thamar University. These students were expected to have a reasonable mastery of the linguistic aspects of English as well as some para-linguistic competency. The third group included a number of twenty American scholars doing their master programs in India in different fields such as social sciences, computer sciences and politics.

Data Collection :

All the subjects were asked to fill out a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) (Appendix A). The DCT is a form of questionnaire depicting some natural situations to which the respondents are expected to respond making refusals. This test was originally designed by Blum-Kulka in 1982 and has been widely used since then in collecting data on speech acts realization both within and across language groups. The questionnaire used in this investigation involves six written situations. They were divided into four groups: two requests, two

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invitations, one offer and one suggestion. Each type included a status differential: higher, equal, or lower (Appendix B). Each situation could only be answered by a refusal. For the YANSs, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic with the necessary changes in the names of people and places to make them more familiar with the situations.

The written role-playing questionnaire (DCT) consists of six situations. The questionnaire on refusal was divided into four categories: refusals to (1) requests, (2) invitations, (3) offers, and (4) suggestions. In each case, the questionnaire was designed so that one refusal will be made to someone of higher status, lower status, or an equal status. The responses of the three groups were compared to each other to find out to what extent the YELs manipulate their pragmatic competence of the target language to refuse in English.

Data Analysis :

The data collected through the Discourse-Completion-Test were analyzed based on an independent examination of each response. The same semantic formulas as employed by Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) (Appendix C) were used. For example, if a respondent refused an invitation to a friend's house for dinner, saying "I'm sorry, I already have plans. Maybe next time,", this was coded as: [expression of regret] [excuse] [offer of alternative] (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990, p.57). Then order of the semantic formulas used in each refusal were coded in tables for the purpose of analysis. In the above example, [expression of regret] was first, [excuse] second, and [offer of an alternative] third (ibid). The total number of semantic formulas of any kind used for each situation was obtained for each of the three subject groups. Then, the frequency of each formula for each situation were counted and listed. Finally, the similarities between YANSs and YELs responses and the similarities between YELs and AENSs on the other hand were counted and analyzed.

Discussion of the Results :

Table (1) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Request (Situation 1)

Refuser status=Higher

Group	Order of Semantic Formulas			
	1	2	3	4
YA	excuse (6) can't (6) positive opinion (2)	future acceptance (2) excuse (3) alternative (2)		
YE	excuse (2) positive opinion (2) regret (4) pause filler(12)	can't (8) positive opinion (2) future acceptance (2) regret(2) excuse (6)	regret (2) excuse (8) future acceptance (2)	excuse(2)
AE	positive opinion (6) regret (14)	positive opinion (2) can't (4)	excuse (8)	can't (4)

All the three groups used excuses in their refusals of requests. The order in which excuse was used is not the same. It varied according to the social status of the requester as in the analysis in tables (1 & 2).

According to the data in table (1) the responses of all groups YANSs, YELs, and AENSs slightly differ in the order of the semantic formulas. YANSs used excuses in the first and the second positions of the semantic formulas; the YELs used excuses in all positions, whereas AENSs used excuses only in the third position. In higher status, the YANSs refusals tended to be more direct than the other two groups. Three responses by the YANSs included direct refusal "can't" in the first position. The other two groups preferred to use the direct form of refusal "can't" in the second positions by YELs and in fourth position by AENSs. On the other hand, YELs and mostly AENSs used regret "sorry" to start their refusal styles. YANSs tended to be briefer than the other two groups who extended their strategies to three and sometimes four parts.

Table (2) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Request (Situation 2)

Refuser status=lower

Group	Order of Semantic Formulas			
	1	2	3	4
YA	excuse (12) positive opinion (6) regret (2)	Future acceptance (2) can't (8) regret (2)	excuse (2)	
YE	regret (16) excuse (2) empathy (2)	can't (8) excuse (10) future acceptance (2)	excuse (2)	excuse (4)
AE	regret (14) positive opinion (2) excuse (2) empathy (2)	excuse (8) alternative (4)	excuse (8)	alternative (4)

In table (2) where the refuser has a lower status, the YELs showed a mixture of pragmatic transfer and pragmatic competence. Pragmatic transfer occurred by the use of the direct refusal "can't" in the second position by four respondents in each group i.e., YANSs and YELs. On the other hand, none of the AENSs responses included direct refusal in any position of the semantic formula. But in the first position there was something different. From the results in table 2, it was found that regret "I'm sorry" was used by most of the YELs and AENSs respondents. This means that the YELs used the same refusal strategies of the AENSs in refusal. Again with excuse expression, while the YANSs used this expression in the first position, it was found that both of YELs and AENSs postponed their excuses to the second position which gives another hint of pragmatic competence of the YELs.

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Table (3) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations (Situation 3)

Refuser status=Higher

Group	Order of Semantic Formulas			
	1	2	3	4
YA	excuse (14) positive opinion (6)	excuse (6) alternative (6)		
YE	regret (14) positive opinion (4) pause filler(2)	excuse (10) can't (4) positive opinion (2) future acceptance (2)	future acceptance (2) excuse (4) regret (2)	
AE	positive opinion (4) regret (6) Gratitude (4) "no" (4) empathy (2)	excuse (10) regret (4)	excuse (4) regret (2)	alternative (2)

According to the results in table (3) YELs and AENSs tended to be more similar by using the expression of regret "I'm sorry" in the first position, excuse in the second position and extended their excuse expressions to the third position of their refusal styles. The YANSs did not use any form of regret in their refusal at all. They tried to show politeness through excuse in the first and second positions which is indirect refusal. In comparison of the YELs responses among those of YANSs and AENSs, it was found that they tried to follow the strategies used by AENSs rather than their native counterparts. It is assumed here that the use of "excuse" and not "regret" by the YANSs respondents in refusing and invitation is yielded to the sociocultural norms of the community. Again the YELs give more inclinations of L2 pragmatic competence.

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Table (4) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations (Situation 4)

Refuser status=Equal

Group	Order of Semantic Formulas			
	1	2	3	4
YA	excuse (4) regret (10) no (2)	excuse (8) gratitude (4)	excuse (4)	
YE	gratitude (4) excuse (4) pause filler (4) regret (4) positive opinion (4)	gratitude (2) regret (4) excuse (8) positive opinion (2)	excuse (8)	
AE	regret (12) gratitude (8)	excuse (14)	gratitude (6) alternative (4)	

When they are in equal status, YELs tended to use their native speech community norms of refusal. Table (4) shows that YANSs and YELs usually use the same content and order of the semantic formula when refusing invitations by peers. However; YANSs' responses in this situation were somehow unique. For example, the over use of excuse by some respondents such as "I'm busy, I have to visit my parents" or "Oh, I'm tied up. I have an appointment with my doctor". Sometimes YANSs were vague with their interlocutors of the same status. For example, "Tomorrow I have something to do" or "Sorry, next Sunday I'll be busy". Generally speaking, in equal status all the three groups have more similarities than in the other status. They might share some of the sociocultural norms. This similarity might be attributed to the fact that when people are encountered in any interaction without such social boundaries i.e., high or low, they show similar kinds of responses regardless their culture or language.

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Table (5) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Suggestions (Situation 5)

Refuser status=Equal

Group	Order of Semantic Formulas			
	1	2	3	4
YA	positive opinion (4) future acceptance (2) excuse (4) no (6) regret (4)	excuse (8) regret (4) gratitude (4)	excuse (6) gratitude (2)	
YE	no (6) regret (4) excuse (4) negative willingness (4) gratitude (1)	excuse (12) can't (4)	negative willingness (2)	
AE	excuse (12) no (8)	excuse (10) gratitude (4)	Gratitude (2)	

Again in equal status, all the three groups YANSs, YELs and AENSs tended to use the same strategies for refusal. They used 'excuse' expressions in the first and second positions without differences, neither in the content nor in the order of the semantic formula. "No" the direct refusal expression was also used by all the groups in the first positions and almost by the same number of respondents. Four YELs used their native norms to express 'regret' as YANSs did so. Expression of 'gratitude' for example, "thank you" appeared in all positions but in different order.

Table (6) typical order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Offer (Situation 6)

Refuser status=Lower

Group	Order of Semantic Formulas			
	1	2	3	4
YA	excuse (6) regret (6) title (6) can't (2)	excuse (12) can't (4)	excuse (4) can't (2)	
YE	regret (10) appreciation (4)	Negative willingness (2)	negative willingness (2)	

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	pause filler (4) excuse (2)	regret (2) excuse (10) statement of alternative (4) appreciation (2)	excuse (6)	
AE	regret (12) positive opinion (4) excuse (4)	excuse (10) alternative (6)	alternative (4)	

In table (6) where the refuser is of lower status rejected an offer by his boss, higher status., the content, order, and frequency of the semantic formula varied from one group to another. The main finding here is that the responses of the YANSs contain the direct refusal "can't" in different orders. On the other side, some of the YANSs used the title "Sir", with their interlocutors as a reference to the latter's superiority as a politeness illusion. Sometimes the YANSs, extended their excuses in two positions as explained in table (4). From the results in table (6) it was found that YELs and AENSs tended to use the same styles of refusal by avoiding directness. However; there are similarities among the three groups. Most of the respondents started their refusals using 'regret' expression "I'm sorry", in the first position and then they gave their explanations or reasons in the second and sometimes third position.

Conclusion :

Different cultures have different perceptions and realizations of appropriateness and politeness. Besides its being an interlanguage study into the pragmatic competence, this study is, also, a contribution to cross-cultural understanding in that it identifies cross-cultural and linguistic differences between Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers in the speech act of refuse. Learners of a second language and in an advanced level of their performance of the target language are highly assumed to share some of the two languages', i.e., native language and target language, norms of appropriateness and politeness. From this study, it appeared that both of pragmatic transfer and pragmatic competence occurred in the responses given by the YELs. These processes occurred in their refusal strategies according to their social status in the situation, higher, equal, or lower and according to the situation itself, a request,

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an offer, an invitation or a suggestion. Generally speaking, all the three groups participated in this study used similar strategies of politeness in rejecting offers, invitations, requests, and suggestions except in the higher status of refuser. It was found that YANSs used 'excuse' in the first position of the semantic formula in rejecting an invitation of lower status. On the other hand, neither YELs nor AENSs used the same expression in the first position which gives inclinations of the L2 pragmatic competence of the YELs. YELs and AENSs tended to use similar contents and orders of the semantic formula. They used 'regret' expressions "I'm sorry" or 'positive opinion' "It's nice of you to invite us" in the first position, and 'excuse' or 'regret' in the second and third positions.

The less use of direct refusal "no" or "can't" in the first position by all the three groups refers to the same perception of adopting politeness strategies. They tended to be more direct with peers in rejecting their suggestions. However; YANSs used direct refusal style in the first position when they are in higher status. Hints of pragmatic transfer appeared in the lower status situation of the refuser. There was noticeable use of direct refusal expressions in the first position followed by statements of excuse in the second and third positions of the refusal semantic formula.

The main finding of the study is that the subject in question, YELs, afforded enough

indications of pragmatic competence of the target language. English Grammatical accuracy of the YELs was not examined as the main concern of the present study was the pragmatic performance of these subjects.

To sum up, by recalling the study questions and hypothesis, it was found that the respondents in question i.e., YELs showed good inclinations of pragmatic competence in English. In spite of the lack of the TL authentic situations, they were able, to a noticeable extent, to follow the strategies of politeness in their refusals in English.

Pedagogic and instructional implications :

In terms of communicative competence, pragmatics is as important as any other aspect of the TL. However, it has not been given enough interest and consideration in the context of teaching and learning English an FL.

It is worth mentioning here that the techniques of instruction in pragmatics or teaching any pragmatic device to learners of an SL or FL are not the same as any other aspect of that TL. Here, it is not enough for the teacher to stand in front of the students and explain the necessary communicative or pragmatic devices of making such speech act, refusals for example, or using the appropriate politeness norms and strategies of that speech act while students are only listening. Put it differently, teacher-fronted approach is not effective in teaching pragmatics. Learners, genuinely, should be the center of this kind of instruction and should be involved in the whole process of instruction in pragmatics. For this purpose and reconsidering the main findings and results elicited from this current study, some of the pedagogic and instructional implications will be suggested below.

Generally speaking, the acquisition of pragmatic aspects requires three conditions as any other type of knowledge in the TL, namely; those of appropriate input, opportunities for output, and provision of feedback. In this concern, the following activities and techniques are suggested to teach the pragmatic aspects via speech acts, and the necessary related politeness norms required to realize this speech act in the TL.

1- Warm up activity: This activity aims at helping the learners to awaken their pragmatic knowledge of the speech act under study in their native language. Role-plays in the native language can be effective in this sense. In this activity students can be asked to act as different interlocutors in different social encounters such as student/teacher, father/son, friend/friend, and manager/employee. This simple kind of tasks can help students to realize in their native language how contextual factors (e.g. familiarity, power relations, and age) can affect their language use.

2- The modal speech act: This activity aims at acknowledging the students of the way such particular speech act is used in the target community, to let them become equitant with some of the devices

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used to mitigate them, and to explore their own attitudes to the use of these devices.

3- Discussion: This technique aims at reinforcing the students' awareness of the different factors that might affect the choice of an appropriate speech act strategy according to the situation and the context in which the speech act is taking place.

4- Audio-visual samples: This activity would help in providing ample opportunities to address the various aspects of language use in a variety of contexts through authentic situations. Besides, it offers the possibility of choosing the richest and most suitable systems, analyzing them in full and designing them in software to allow learners to access such pragmatic aspects as needed.

5- Role-play activity: Now it is the proper time for learners to be involved in such role-plays in the TL that are suitable for practicing the use of speech acts in accordance with what they have seen and learnt in the previous stages. This stage is the most functional in making students creating and imagining themselves in real social situations where the teacher should guide the students and discuss with them the different social variables that could affect their interactions in different social contexts.

6- Feedback: Learners, at the end of the lesson, should be provided with feedback to make them realize whether any possible inappropriate expression has been used during the role-plays. They should also be given the opportunity to express their perception and any similarities or differences they noticed between their native language and the TL according to the various contextual and social variables. The teacher can discuss with students where did they had violated the appropriateness norms of the TL and the factors behind that violation like negative pragmatic transfer from their native language.

Recommendations for further studies :

1. Further studies in pragmatic competence are recommended to examine the effectiveness of pragmatics teaching and exploring the best strategies to do so.

2. Similarly, raising pragmatics awareness of the EFL learners deserves enough attention in any forthcoming researches in pragmatics.

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3. Differences between the native culture and the target culture need to be investigated for their significant role in enhancing pragmatic competence of the target language.

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Appendix A

Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

Instruction: Please read the following six situations. After each
situation you will be asked to write a response (in refusal) in the blank
after "you." Respond as you would be in actual conversation.

1. You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to
speak to you in
private.

Worker: as you know. I've been here just over a year now, and I know
you've been
pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be honest, I
really need an
increase in pay.

You: _____

Worker: then I guess I'll have to look for another job.

2. You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It is getting close
to the end of
the day and you want to leave work.

Boss: If you don't mind, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two
tonight so that we
can finish up this work.

You: _____

3. You are the president of a printing company. A salesman from a
printing machine
company invites you to one of the most expensive restaurants in New
York.

Salesman: we have met several times to discuss your purchase of my
company's product. I was wondering if you would like to be my guest
at Lutece in order to firm up a contract.

You:
_____

Salesman: Perhaps another time.

4. A friend invites you to dinner, but you really can't stand this
friend's husband/wife.

Friend: how about coming over for dinner Sunday night? We're having
a small dinner

party.
You:

_____

Friend: O.K., maybe another time.

5. You're at a friend's house watching TV. He/ She offers you a snack.

You: Thanks, but no thanks. I've been eating like a pig and I feel just terrible. My

clothes don't even fit me.

Friend: Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about.

You:

_____

Friend: You should try it anyway.

6. You've been working in an advertising agency now for some time. The boss offers

you a raise and promotion, but it involves moving. You don't want to go. Today, the boss calls you into his office.

Boss: I'd like to offer you an excusive position in our new office in Hicktown. It's a

great town-only 3 hours from here by plane. And, a nice raise comes with the position.

You:

_____

Boss: Well, maybe you should give it more thought before turning it down.

You:

_____

Boss: That's too bad. I was hoping you could stay.

Appendix B

Classification of Discourse Completion Test (DTC)
Stimulus According to Status of Refuser

Stimulus type	Refuser Status (relative to interlocutor)	DCT item	Situation
Request	Lower Higher	#2 #1	Stay late at night Request raise
Invitation	Equal Higher	#4 #3	Dinner at friend's house Fancy restaurant (bribe)
Offer	Lower	#6	Promotion with move to small town
Suggestion	Equal	#5	Try a new diet

Appendix C

Classification of Refusals

I- Direct

A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")

B. Nonperformative statement

1. "No"

2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")

II- Indirect

A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry…", "I feel terrible…")

B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you….")

C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; "I have a headache.")

D. Statement of alternative

1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather do…""I'd prefer")

2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")

E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me

earlier, I would have…")

F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time";" I promise I'll…" or "Next time I'll…"- using "will" of promise or "promise")

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G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")

H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")

I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)

2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: "I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")

3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "That's a terrible idea!")

4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.

5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay." "You don't have to.")

6. Self-defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can."

J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal

1. Unspecific or indefinite reply

2. Lack of enthusiasm

K. Avoidance

1. Nonverbal

a. Silence

b. Hesitation

c. Do nothing

d. Physical departure

2. Verbal

a. Topic switch

b. Joke

c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")

d. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")

e. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

Adjuncts to refusals

1. Statement of positive opinions/feeling or agreement ("That's a good idea…"; "I'd love to…")

2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")

3. Pause filler (e.g., "uhh"; "well"; "uhm")

4. Gratitude/appreciation

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اختبار تكملة الحوارات :

إرشادات: من فضلك اقرأ المواقف التالية بعناية. بعد كل موقف سيطلب منك كتابة ردك (رفضا) في الفراغات الموجودة بعد كلمة "أنت". أكتب ردك كما لو كنت في حوار حقيقي.

١. أنت مالك مكتبة ، وأحد أفضل العاملين لديك طلب أن يتحدث إليك ع انفراد :

العامل : كما تعلم فأنه قد صار لي هنا ما يزيد على السنة ، وأعرف أنك مسرور بأدائي. أنا سعيد جدا بالعمل هنا ، ولكن كي أكون صادقا معك فأني في الحقيقة أريد زيادة في الأجر.

أنت : ....

العامل: ادا ، أظن أنه ينبغي علي أن أبحث لي عن عمل آخر.

٢. أنت في المكتب في مقابلة مع رئيسك في العمل. يشرف وقت العمل على الانتهاء وترغب في المغادرة.

رئيسك: إن لم تمانع ، أريد منك أن تعمل لساعة أو ساعتين بشكل إضافي في الليلة حتى نتمكن من انجاز هدا العمل.

أنت : ....

٣. أنت رئيس إحدى شركات الطباعة. أحد الموزعين لأحدى شركات آلات الطباعة يدعوك للغداء في أحد أغلى المطاعم في نيويورك.

الموزع: لقد التقينا عدة مرات لمناقشة مشترياتكم لمنتج شركتنا ، فهل تمانع أن تقبل دعوتي إلى مطعم لوتيسي لكي نبرم عقدا.

أنت : ....

الموزع: ربما في وقت آخر.

٤. أحد أصدقائك دعاك لتناول العشاء قي بيته ، لكنك حقيقة لا تستطيع تحمل أحد أفراد عائلته.

صديقك: ما رأيك أن تأتي لتناول العشاء معا ليلة الأحد فلدينا حفلة عشاء صغيرة.

أنت: ....

صديقك: حسنا ، ربما في مناسبة أخرى.

٥. أنت في بيت أحد الأصدقاء تشاهدون التلفزيون. قدم إليك وجبة خفيفة.

أنت: لا ، شكرا. لقد أكلت كثيرا جدا لدرجة أني أشعر أن ملابسي صارت ضيقة جدا.

صديقك: هيا ، لمادا لا تجرب هده الوجبة الخفيفة التي كنت أحدثك عنها؟

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أنت: ....

٦. صارت لك فترة تعمل لدى إحدى وكالات الإعلانات، وعرض عليك رئيسك زيادة في الأجر مع ترقية ولكن بشرط أن يتم نقل مكان عملك. أنت لا تريد ذلك، واليوم قام رئيسك باستدعائك إلى مكتبه.

رئيسك: أود أن أعرض عليك منصب تنفيذي في مكتبنا الجديد في مدينة هيك تاون. إنها مدينة رائعة وتبعد فقط ثلاث ساعات بالطائرة. وستحصل على زيادة جيدة في مرتبك مع هذا العمل.

أنت: ....

رئيسك: حسنا، أعتقد أنه ينبغي عليك أن تفكر بالأمر جيدا قبل أن ترفضه.

أنت: ....

رئيسك: ذلك أمر مخيب! كنت أتمنى لو أنك قبلت العمل هناك.