

Pragmatic Failure in Refusal Strategies: British versus Omani Interlocutors

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Abstract

The article provides the detailed study of the similarities and differences between the British and the Omani ways of refusing requests. A refusal is a face-threatening act that tends to disrupt harmony in relationships. It causes damage to both the face of the speaker and the listener. A lot of strategies are used to mitigate the effect of a refusal and save the relationship. The choice of strategy used can be dictated by the socio-cultural factors generating an inappropriate reply. These may be labeled 'rude' by the native speakers. Transforming the rules and the cultural norms of the first language to the target language also results in pragmalinguistic failure. For this research a discourse completion test was modeled on Beebe et al. (1990). The situations were categorized into three requests, three invitations, three suggestions and three offers. One of each group required a refusal to an equal status person, a higher status person and a lower status person. The test was translated into Arabic and administered to ten Omanis and the English version was given to ten British people. Data was analyzed according to the strategies used by the British and the Omanis, the role of status in refusals and the pragmalinguistic errors surfacing in the study. The study found that the Omanis used more direct strategies than the British in refusing requests and offers. Both the British and the Omanis also used indirect strategies to refuse requests, especially when dealing with higher status people. The British used more direct

strategies when dealing with lower status people while the Omanis used care for interlocutor's feelings.

Key words

Pragmalinguistic failure, Refusing requests, politeness, pragmatic failure, discourse competence, pragmatic errors, face threatening acts.

Introduction

Cross-cultural communication is becoming an integral part of life, with globalization and rapid advances in new technology. A lot of opportunities have been created worldwide and demand an appropriate use of the English language. L2 speakers of English can master the lexical and the grammatical aspects of the language, but they lack in discourse competence. In real life people do not say what they mean. For a second language learner it is this intended meaning and the cultural norms of the target language that result in miscommunication and misunderstandings. Sometimes, first language rules and conventions are transferred to the second language resulting in pragmatic failure i.e. the failure of language to do and mean things in real world situations.

Words are used for communication. Certain words like refuse, apologize, promise, request etc. perform an action and are known as 'performatives' or speech acts (Austin 1962, p.139). Communications in a society generally take place on Grice's (1999) 'principles of cooperation'. In correspondence with Grice's conversational cooperativeness Brown and Levinson (1987, p.60) propose principles of 'politeness' to maintain general harmony and good social relations. They further explain that each and every person in a society claims a public self-image known as 'face'. An individual has two types of face, positive and negative. Positive face is the wish to be liked and approved by others (Wolfson, 1989, p.67) and negative face is the wish to do your everyday work without others imposing upon you (Cameron, 2001, p.79). Acts that cause damage to the positive or negative face of the speaker are known as face threatening acts (FTAs). Politeness strategy is used to mitigate threats to face in a verbal encounter. The strategy used may depend on the status of a person or the proximity in relationships. A refusal is a face-threatening act as it causes damage to the face of both the speaker and the hearer. A refusal

imposes on the hearer and threatens the negative face of the hearer and also causes a threat to the positive face of the person who refuses. In order to maintain face in this situation a lot of face-saving strategies are used to maintain harmony in relations.

The choice of strategy used can be influenced by socio-cultural factors resulting in an inappropriate reply. This may further cause problems as native speakers may interpret these errors as rudeness. Hall (1976, in Nelson 2002a, p. 40) when talking about Arab culture mentions that what is not said is sometimes more important than what is said. This is true of the Omanis. They generally don't explicitly tell what they mean. Formality often pervades social customs and daily routines. The central focus of the life of the Omanis is their family and friends. Greetings are mostly elaborate and formal and there is lavish display of hospitality. These people are consistently polite within their own culture. The organization of the society is hierarchical and there are strong tribal bonds. There is segregation of sexes and relations with men and women are regulated with restrictions. As against this the European culture is open and direct i.e. words represent truth (Hall, 1976; in Nelson 2002a, p. 40) and is believed to be more individualistic. People take pride in being unique; they are less elaborate and goal directed e.g. the Americans, the British etc. In these different value systems meanings are negotiated differently which may lead to pragmatic errors.

Pragmatic errors are the errors resulting from imposing the social rules of one culture on the communicative behaviour of the other, where the social rules of another culture would be more appropriate (Thomas 1983, p. 99, in Philip Riley, 1989). Thomas further categorizes pragmatic errors into two types, pragmalinguistic errors and sociopragmatic errors. Pragmalinguistic errors occur when the illocutionary force of the utterance is different from the force assigned to it by the native speakers of the target language, or when speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2. Sociopragmatic errors are the result of a failure to identify a situation correctly.

This study investigates the similarities and differences between the British and the Omani ways of refusal under the following headings:

1. Strategies used by British and Omanis in refusals
2. The role of status in refusals

3. Pragmalinguistic failure

A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was modelled on Beebe et al. (1990, p. 55). It consisted of three requests, three invitations, three suggestions, and three offers. Each situation type included refusal to a person of higher status, one to the person of equal status and one to the person of lower status. This test was translated into Arabic and administered to 10 Omanis. The English version was given to 10 British people. Each category resulted in 120 refusals. These refusals were divided into strategies, using a modified version of the coding category developed by Beebe et al. (1990, p. 55). Data was analysed according to the strategies used, relative status and the pragmalinguistic errors surfacing in the study.

Review of Literature

Several comparative studies have been conducted on refusals but there are hardly any in the Omani context. **Beebe et al. (1990)** compared refusals between native speakers of Japanese and native speakers of English using a DCT. She found that Americans employed an indirect form of refusals but Japanese employed indirect strategies when refusing a person of higher status and direct when refusing a person of lower status. **King and Silver (1993)** analyzed the refusal strategies of six intermediate level learners. They also tried to find out the potential for developing sociolinguistic competence through classroom instruction. A lecture was organized for the control group on how to make small talk with the Americans and the treatment group was tutored on variables important in refusing in American English. Results indicate that instructions on refusals did not have much effect. There was large disparity between written and spoken refusal strategies. **Stevens (1993)** studied Arabic and English refusals using a DCT and found that in both the cultures, same strategies were used. He did not study the effect of status. **Oliveria (1994)** studied 40 college students and investigated the pragmatic success and failure of requests by administering a DTC in English and Portuguese. The results were analyzed separately for Portuguese and English and took into consideration directness of request, use of internal modifiers and perspective taken. The results indicated that the Portuguese – speakers and English – speakers displayed differences on the proportion of strategies used in different situations. EFL learners took an intermediate position between native Portuguese speakers and native English speakers when using direct strategies and were closer to English speakers when

using conventional ones. **Chen (1995)** investigated the pragmatic appropriateness of refusal statements. 24 written statements were collected from both native and non native speakers and the native speakers rated the appropriateness of these statements. The statements made by the English speakers were more appropriate than statements made by the non native speakers. **Hussein (1995)** studied speech acts using naturalistic data and found that Arabs used indirect refusals with acquaintances of equal status and close friends of unequal status. **Liao and Bresnahan (1996)** compared American English and Mandarin Chinese representatives when refusing a request. They found that Americans used more strategies than the Chinese did and both varied their strategies according to the status of the requester. **Chen (1996)** also investigated the beliefs of the native English speakers and the Chinese ESL learners about how refusal should be expressed. The native speakers consider truthfulness, clarity, directness and effectiveness as the most important whereas ESL learners were more concerned about being direct, preserving face and avoiding embarrassment. **Lauper (1997)** studied 60 native speakers and 120 Spanish speakers, 60 responding in English and 60 in Spanish. A questionnaire was used to elicit refusals for 20 situations. Results indicated that in some cases, Spanish speakers refused similarly in Spanish (SS) and English (SE) but differently from English speakers (EE), suggesting pragmatic transfer in the Spanish English group. In some cases the refusal strategies of the SE's were nearly the same as the EE's and in other cases it were different from both other groups. **Al Shawali (1997)** studied the semantic formulas used by Saudi and American male undergraduate students in the speech act of refusal. The results indicated that Americans and Saudis used similar refusal formulas except in the case of direct refusal where they gave unspecified answers. **Al Issa (1998, in Nelson et al. 2002b)** found that Jordanians used indirect strategies more than Americans and both used reasons more than any other strategy. **Nelson et al (2002b)** investigated similarities and differences between Egyptian Arabic and American English refusals using a modified DTC. The results indicated that both groups used similar semantic formulas in making refusals. They also used a similar number of direct and indirect formulas. Egyptians used more direct formula in equal status position. They had similar reasons for refusing. **Al-Eryani (2007)** studied the responses of 20 Yemeni learners of English who responded to six situations of refusal in English. Their performances were compared to Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers. Results indicated that Yemeni Arabic native speakers tended to be less direct in their refusals by offering reasons or explanations. American

English native speakers, on the other hand used different semantic order by preceding regret and giving more direct refusals. Yemani learners of English depicted pragmatic competence but at times also showed their native speech community norms.

In continuation with these researches, this study discusses refusal patterns in British and Omani communication style, underlining pragmalinguistic failure.

Method

The subject, material and the procedure used for this study, is described below:

Subjects

Twenty subjects were requested to participate in this study and they gave their consent; ten were British and ten Omani nationals.

British subjects

The British were qualified and ranged in age from thirty-five to sixty. There were five females and five males. All of them were working in Oman in various capacities. The five females included four teachers and one nurse. In the male category, three were technicians from the Royal Army of Oman and two teachers taught in a college.

Omani subjects

There were nine Omani Arab males and one female between the ages of twenty-five to forty-five. All were graduates, working in schools and colleges in various capacities. Three were teachers in a school; one was the head of the center of teacher training. Three worked in the Royal Air Force in the technical field, one worked in a private company. Two Omanis (male and female) worked in a technical college as administrative staff.

Materials and procedure

A discourse completion test (DCT) (Appendix 1) was modeled on Beebe et al. (1990) for this study. It consisted of a written role-play questionnaire with twelve situations. The DCT situations were categorized into three requests, three invitations, three suggestions, and three

offers. One of each group required a refusal to an equal status person, a higher status person, and a lower status person.

The DTC was used to collect data from the British subjects. Three college teachers proficient in translation converted this DCT into Arabic. They were requested to comment on the appropriateness of the situations in the Omani context. After their assurance that these situations could take place in the Omani context, the DCT was used to collect information from the Omani subjects. Responses given by the British subjects were classified into strategies and then coded. Later on the responses given by the Omani subjects were translated back into English. They were coded and classified into strategies. The answers were categorized into rude, tactless, abrupt, gushing, obsequious and appropriate with the help of two native speakers (British) to find out instances of pragmalinguistic failure. The data was analyzed on the basis of the answers given in Arabic by the Omanis.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed by arriving at the strategies used by the native speakers. To get the correct strategy (a statement of reason or regret etc. that sums up the total act of refusal), the utterances were divided into idea units and then each idea unit was put into separate categories as shown below:

SN	Idea Unit	Code
1	I'm sorry	Regret
2	Bit short of cash myself	Reason

The refusals were classified into the following categories according to the type of refusal.

Type	No.	Strategy	Expressions
Direct Refusal	0	Direct	I refuse. No, I can't
Indirect Refusal	1	Reason	I'm busy
	2	Regret	I'm so sorry
	3	Consideration of Interlocutor's feelings	I appreciate the offer 'Thank you'
	4	Let Interlocutor off the hook	Don't worry about it, That's Ok, You don't have to
	5	Wish	I wish I had money
	6	Set conditions for future or past acceptance	If the work is complete you may go tomorrow
	7	Hedging	Oh, I'm not sure
	8	Statement of philosophy/principle	I never lend money
	9	Repetition of the part of the request	Malaysia?

The strategies described above are similar to those described by Beebe et al. (1990) and Nelson et al. (2002). The above categories are on the basis of strategies found in the data. The English data was coded with the help of a British native speaker and an Arabic native speaker coded the Arabic data using the Arabic transcripts. Discrepancies were resolved by consulting other native speakers of the specific language.

Findings

The data collected with the help of the DCT was categorized and compiled in a tabular form. It is given in Appendix 2 for British subjects and in Appendix 3 for Omani subjects. The findings of this study are discussed under the following headings:

- a) Type of strategies: Direct / Indirect
- b) Role of status on refusals: Higher/ Equal and Lower
- c) Pragmalinguistic failure: Length, Content and order of Semantic formulas

Type of Strategies used in refusals

Two types of strategies were used in refusals, Direct and Indirect.

Direct strategies

The Omanis used more direct strategies than the British (see figure 1). The Omanis used the highest number of direct strategies in refusing requests and offers on the other hand the British used them in refusing suggestions and offers (See Appendices 2 and 3). The British did not refuse invitations directly at all but the Omanis did in dealing with two cases of equal status and one case of lower status. The British used considerable number of direct strategies to refuse requests i.e. two cases of equal status, two cases of higher status and four cases of lower status.

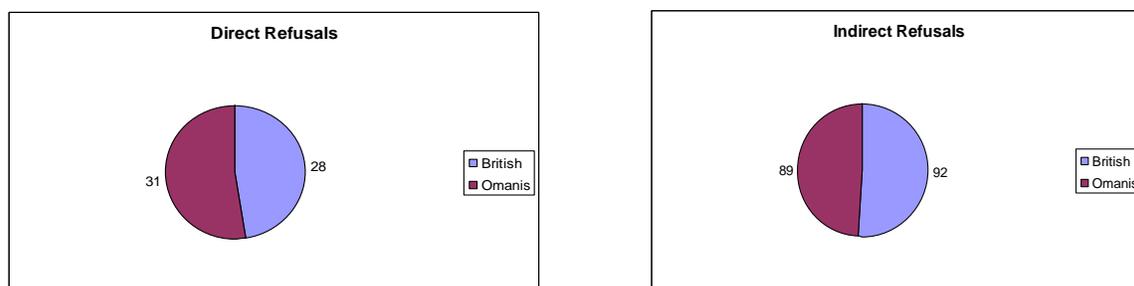


Figure 1: Direct/Indirect Strategies used by the British and the Omanis

Indirect strategies

Both British and Omanis used more indirect strategies to refuse requests than direct ones (Figure 1). Figure 2 also clearly indicates this fact.

The indirect strategy most frequently used by the British was expressing regret (Appendix 4, Ex 19) while the Omanis used the strategy 'care for the interlocutor's feelings' (Appendix 4, Ex 10). On the whole four indirect strategies were frequently used out of the nine as categorized in this study. These have been described below:

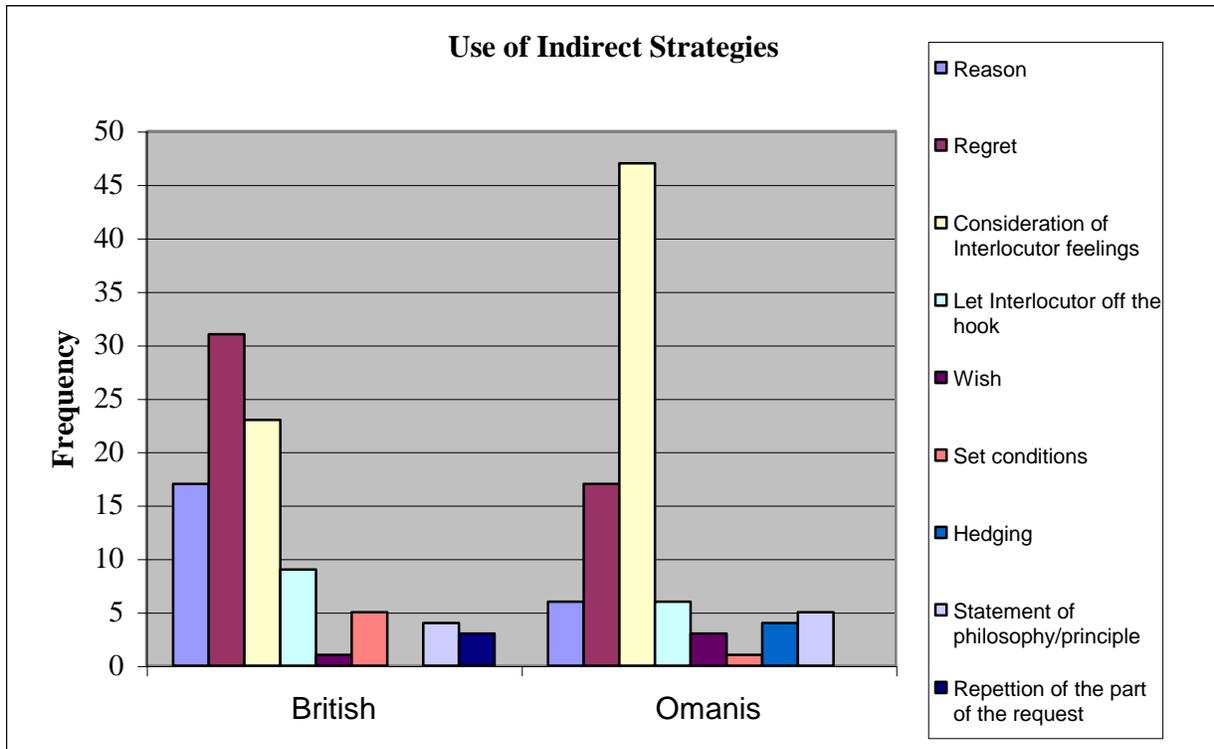


Figure2: Comparison of indirect refusal strategies

Reason

The Omanis and the British both used reason but less than expressing regret. The British used reason more than the Omanis. Both used reasons in refusing the suggestion regarding career choice. (See figure 2)

Regret

This strategy was mostly associated with reason. First regrets were expressed, then reasons given. The British used regret more often than the Omanis. Generally the British used a lot of reasons after expressing regret when refusing requests for money, to help the boss and refusing to attend the birthday party of an employee’s daughter (Appendix 4, Ex 21). On the other hand, Omanis expressed regret and gave elaborate reasons when requested for money. (See figure 2)

Consideration of interlocutor's feeling

Omanis used this strategy more than the British in refusing all types of requests (Appendix 4, Ex 8). The British used it in a generous manner at one instance, when refusing an offer by a friend to visit his son's school. The Omanis used this strategy liberally in refusing invitation for lunch at the boss's residence. (See figure 2)

Let interlocutor off the hook

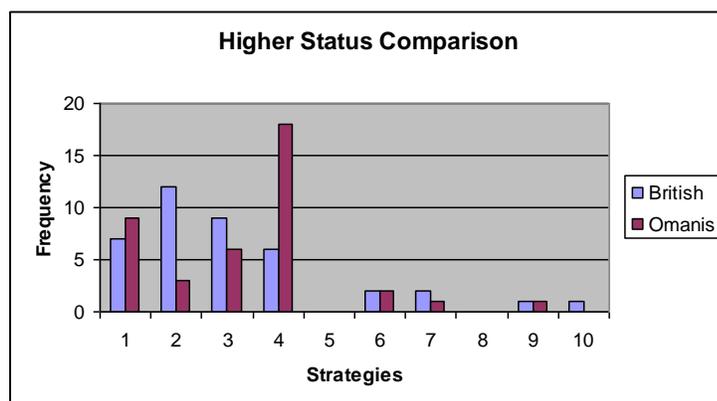
Both British and Omanis extensively used this strategy in the case of rejecting an offer for compensation by the servant. (See figure 2). It is unique in the sense that only for this purpose the Omanis used this strategy (Appendix 4, Ex 18, 34).

Role of status on refusals

The role of status on refusals was observed for both the subjects i.e. the British and the Omanis.

Higher status

The British and the Omanis used more indirect strategies when dealing with higher status people. Omanis used more caution and care in dealing with people of higher status. They used 'care for the interlocutor's feelings or showed positive politeness like using compliments etc. before giving reasons to refuse the requests. The British primarily gave reasons to refuse requests e.g. the manager of a company who offered them discounts. More often they also expressed regrets



and later gave explanations (See figure 3).

Figure 3: Indirect refusal strategies on higher status items

Equal status

Omanis used direct strategies when refusing requests to equal status people but when using the indirect strategy they used ‘care for interlocutor’s feelings’ e.g. their peers (Appendix 4, Ex 11), (Figure 4). The British expressed regret and then gave reasons for refusing requests for money, not attending the get-together and such day-to-day matters (Appendix 4, Ex 21). In the case of refusing suggestion for a holiday they used repetition, indicating surprise. In the case of an offer from a friend to meet the Principal in his son’s case, more care was shown for the interlocutor’s feelings.

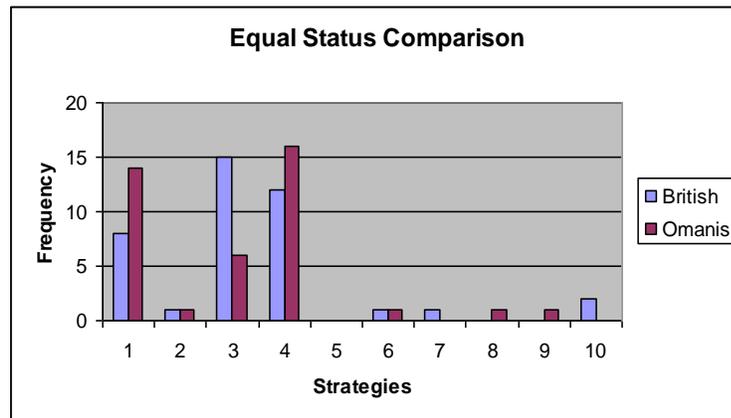


Figure 4: Indirect refusal strategies on equal status items

Lower status

The British used direct strategies when refusing requests to lower status people e.g. refusing the servant’s (Appendix 4, Ex 31). They expressed regrets when using indirect strategies. The Omanis used ‘care for interlocutor’s feeling’ and then gave reasons (figure 5).

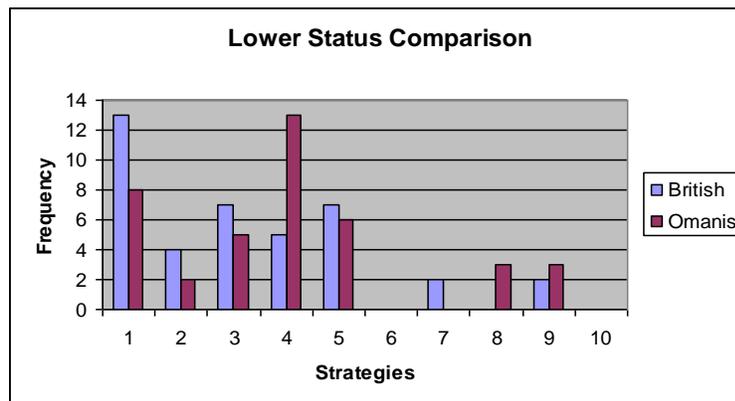


Figure 5: Indirect refusal strategies on lower status items

They used hedging and quoted principles e.g. of not visiting anybody's house before prior permission of the head of the house (Appendix 5, Ex 7, 8). For an offer of compensation by the charwoman both the British and the Omanis used 'let the interlocutor off the hook' strategy.

Pragmalinguistic failure

In the study it was noted that the Omani subjects transferred their L1 speech habits into L2. They are described under the following three categories:

Length of the semantic formulas

Omanis gave very long answers and this mitigated the force of a refusal, resulting in failure. This is in tune with Arabic culture where even simple greetings are an elaborate affair e.g.

'No, I don't agree with your suggestion because it is related with the future of my son, thank you and I'm sorry for not accepting your suggestion'.

Other examples are given in Appendix 5, Section A.

Content of the semantic formulas

The Omani respondents were obsequious in describing invitations e.g. 'the invitation is great', 'it's a great honour', 'I feel proud to accept your invitation', 'I honour your invitation with pleasure'. On the other hand very non-specific reasons were quoted in refusing them like, 'I've something to do tomorrow, I've to go to another place' etc. (Other examples are in appendix 5). The British in such cases would give specific reasons.

Order of the semantic formulas

The Omanis used the native language order of the semantic formulas in Arabic. First they used 'care for the interlocutor's feeling' strategy followed by reasons, then willingness followed by promise or an adjunct to enhance positive feelings making it inappropriate in the English context. The British at the most express regret and give reasons. Overgeneralization of the semantic formulas was also observed e.g.

'I am very glad with your invitation but I've got a lot of work. I apologize and I promise to join your coming invitation'.

(Other examples are given in appendix 5, Section C)

The refusals to the requests given by Omanis were judged by two native speakers (British) and classified under the following categories to note their appropriateness. In most cases it was found that the illocutionary force of an utterance was different than that of the native speaker leading to pragmalinguistic failure (Thomas 1983, in Nelson et al. 1996, Blum-Kulka, 1983). The native speakers classified them as rude, tactless, abrupt, gushing, and obsequious all denoting linguistic failure. See Table 1. The code used is given below:

Code		
1	E	Equal status
2	H	Higher status
3	L	Lower status

Type	Requests			Invitation			Suggestion			Offer			Total
	E	H	L	E	H	L	E	H	L	E	H	L	
Rude	2	1	2		1	2	1	1	2	1	1	0	14
Tactless	1			1	1							0	3
Abrupt	1	1				2	1	1	1			3	10
Gushing			1	2	1	2	1	1	1			1	10
Obsequious	2	2	1	1	4	1		1				2	14
Appropriate	4	6	6	6	3	3	7	6	6	9	9	4	69

Table 1: Pragmalinguistic failure

Discussion

The findings in the data are discussed under the following heads:

Direct refusal

Omanis used the highest number of direct strategies in refusing requests and offers whereas the British used direct strategies in refusing suggestions and offers.

The following discussion is based on a small sample size, as it was difficult to get native British people in Oman. Secondly the method used was a DCT, and answers were collected in a written form, as it is very difficult to collect real samples. It should be considered that the respondents might respond differently when they are facing real situations, which might affect the results to some extent. Under these constraints the results were as follows:

There are a lot of differences between the British and the Omani people in the way they refuse requests. It was found that the Omanis used more direct refusals than the British. They used it to refuse friends of equal status. Two instances have been noted, an offer by a friend to manage things on his behalf for his son and refusing a suggestion to go to Malaysia. Second situation was refusing the offer made by the manager of a car company. This is a unique case as Arabs generally use indirect replies, but in this case no threat to face was implied as it was a business deal and refusing it was easy. Similarly the ties of relationships are so strong among friends that they are no threat to face, and hence the Omanis used direct refusal strategies. The British used direct replies in the case of lower status people e.g. a suggestion from a woman to take a taxi and come home. This was done because she posed no threat to face and the situation demanded that they made a decision. Similarly status did not matter when they negotiated for a car. The person was distant. The British used considerable number of direct strategies to refuse requests. It seems they refused requests to a clerk who wanted to leave office early on a matter of principle, not because he was of lower status.

This discrepancy in results highlights the importance of examining other factors like the low key and the high key content of the message as suggested by Hall (1976 cited in Nelson 2002a) and

factors like nearness and distance in relationships. The subjects used in this study were of higher status in the society according to Omani standards and may be used to refusing directly.

Indirect refusal

The indirect strategy most frequently used by the British was expressing regret and giving reasons. The British are direct and very formal people, therefore this strategy seems to have been used extensively. They used a lot of reasons after expressing regret when refusing requests for money, and helping the boss at weekends. This was done to mitigate the damage caused to the positive face of the speaker and to keep the relationship going

The Omanis used the strategy 'care of the interlocutor's feelings'; the most when dealing with people from higher, medium status or lower status. This is contrary to the belief that Arabs use indirect strategies more with higher status people. Omani culture is indirect and hence it is not a surprise that this strategy was used the most. In the case of a servant who offered to compensate for the burnt shirt, 'putting interlocutor off the hook' strategy was used both by the British and the Omanis to enhance the positive face of the servant.

Pragmalinguistic failure

The examples quoted in the discussion and appendix 5 highlight pragmatic transfer resulting in pragmalinguistic failure. It has to be noted that deep-rooted customs like a male not going to his friends house without prior appointment when a lady is present in the house (Appendix 5, Ex 7,8) is impossible to understand by a native speaker and would consider it rude. The second case of refusing a birthday invitation with an adjunct 'present would be sent' shows the subject matter the local people attach importance to but the natives would sense this as abrupt or tactless. The long answers given and the string of reasons attached make it abrupt. Overindulgence in polite words makes the utterance obsequious. Sometimes it is difficult to know the reason of pragmatic failure as it may also develop from developmental and proficiency factors.

7.0 Conclusion

The study shows that the Omanis used more direct strategies than the British in refusing requests and offers. They used it to refuse people of equal status or friends and acquaintances from whom

there is no threat to face. The British refused directly to a lower status person, sometimes as a matter of principle. Both the British and the Omanis also used indirect strategies to refuse requests, especially when dealing with higher status people. The indirect strategy most commonly used was expressing regret and giving reasons to mitigate the damage caused to the positive face. The Omanis used care for interlocutor's feelings with higher, equal and lower status people because of culture. Omanis used long answers giving a string of reasons and indulged in too many polite words causing pragmalinguistic failure.

Culture influences the type of strategies used for communication. It may also result in transfer of L2 features to L1 resulting in pragmatic failure causing embarrassment, misunderstanding or communication failure. It also shows that pragmatic principles are universal and people try to maintain harmony by mitigating the threat caused to face by enhancing the positive face of the speaker and using a string of reasons. People are more polite when dealing with people from higher status and more direct when dealing with lower status. Moreover content and distance also play an important role. When there is no threat to face direct strategy is used. It also highlights the fact that the DCT has its own limitations (Hinkel, 1997; Rose, 1994; Cohen, 1996) as a research tool and extensive research in naturalistic settings need to be done in order to generalize the results. Other variables like the content of the request, mood, gender, age, availability etc. also need to be taken into consideration when subjects refuse requests.

The types of politeness errors the Omanis make can be avoided if the politeness aspects are introduced to them at the school level and the behavioural component taught systematically. Pragmatic competence does not develop naturally and needs to be taught. They should also be instructed that politeness markers in English are distinct from learner's native system as it is a part of culture.

This interview data needs further investigation and research could be done on the effect of the tone, mood, personal nature, age, availability etc. on refusals. It would also be interesting to see the effect of refusals on low and high content messages from near and distant people in various settings. The change in relationship on account of refusals can also be studied.

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Appendix 1
Discourse Completion Test
Refusal Conditions

Given below are twelve different situations in which a person asks a question (request, invitation, suggestion or offer) to another person (who may be of equal, lower or higher status). Please consider yourself in the **respondent's position** and write down exactly the way you would **refuse** the following requests in the space provided. Please note that the request is **not to be accepted** but refused in all situations.

1. You are working in a college. You are unmarried and one of your married colleagues who has a big family comes to your house to borrow money.

Colleague: I have a big family and I just don't know where the money goes. The children always need something or the other. Could you lend me \$100 for a month?

You: _____

Colleague: It's O.K. I'll borrow from someone else.

2. You are working in a college. Your boss who is the head of your department requests you to come at the weekend to help him.

Boss: If you do not mind, I would like you to come during the weekend to help me with the library work?

You: _____

Boss: Well, then maybe next weekend.

3. You are a clerk in the Insurance office. You have some important personal work. You request your boss to let you go in the afternoon when the boss is having a lot of pending work for you.

Clerk: I have some important work. Could I leave my office early today?

You: _____

Clerk: Then, could I leave tomorrow?

4. Your friend invites you on telephone, for dinner and a magic show at a hotel.

Friend: We have arranged a get-together at Radissons. There would be dinner and magic show for children. You are invited to join us.

You: _____

Friend: Well, I can understand your position.

5. You have joined a company recently and your boss invites you for lunch at his place.

Boss: How about your coming over to lunch tomorrow at my residence?

You: _____

Boss: Oh, I understand. That is more important.

6. You are the boss of a company. Your employee wants to invite you for his daughter's birthday.

Employee: I've arranged a small party for my daughter's birthday at home on Monday and I would be delighted if you could come along.

You: _____

Employee: It's O.K. I can understand.

7. You work as a lecturer in a college. The workload is very high and you are getting stressed over your job. Your friend suggests that you take a break and go to Malaysia.

Friend: You are overstressed due to work. Why don't you take a break and go to Malaysia?

You: _____

Friend: You could still think about it, later on.

8. You are a student and an excellent football player. You want to become a scientist but your counsellor suggests you to take up football as your career.

Counsellor: John, you are so good at football, why don't you make it your career?

You: _____

Counsellor: Well, it is your choice mine was just a suggestion.

9. You are in a new place waiting for your friend, James to pick you up. You have to meet an important person to discuss business prospects. You are hard pressed for time and your friend is going to help you with the transport. It's been an hour and he hasn't shown up. You telephone him and he is not at home and his housekeeper suggests that you take a cab and come home.

Housekeeper: Normally James is very punctual. It seems he has got stuck somewhere. You could take a cab and come home.

You: _____

House Keeper: Well, if you do not want to, just let me have your name and address.

10. You are a businessman and have no time as you have just started your business. Your son has been a nuisance in the school. The principal wants to meet you in this connection. You generally do all your work yourself and do not take the help of others. Your friend offers to meet the Principal on your behalf and sort out matters.

Friend: If you do not have time, I can go and sort out matters with the Principal.

You: _____

Friend: Well, it is up to you.

11. You are a manager of a car company. A schoolteacher shows interest in one of your expensive models. You are eager to sell it to him but he is asking for a huge discount. You offer to help him sell his old car at a good price.

Manager: If you are really interested in purchasing this model, I can help you in selling your old car at a good price.

You: _____

Manager: Well, I was just offering alternatives.

12. You have a domestic helper at home. While ironing your clothes he spoils one of your expensive shirts.

Helper: Sir, I am so sorry, I didn't mean to but while ironing your clothes, I have burnt your shirt. Please tell me from where you have purchased it? I will replace it with a new one.

You: _____

Helper: But, the mistake was mine.

Appendix 2
Response of British Subjects

		British																					
Strategies	Stra. No.	Request			Invitation			Suggestion			Offer			Total Status-wise				Total of Type of request					
		E	H	L	E	H	L	E	H	L	E	H	L	E = Equal	H = Higher	L = Lower	Total of E+H+L	Request	Invitation	Suggestion	Offer		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12										
Direct	I refuse, No, I can't	1	2	2	4				3			7	3	5	2	8	7	13	28	8	0	10	10
Indirect	Reason	2		1			5	1	1	5	3		1		1	12	4	17	1	6	9	1	
	Regret	3	7	5	3	6	4	4	1				1		15	9	7	31	15	14	1	1	
	Consideration of Interlocutor's feelings	4	1	1	1	4		4	1	2			6	3	12	6	5	23	3	8	3	9	
	Let Interlocutor off the hook- Don't worry about it, that's Ok, You don't have to	5												7	0	0	7	7	0	0	0	7	
	Wish	6							1	2					1	2	0	3	0	0	3	0	
	Set conditions for future or past acceptance	7		1	1		1	1	1						1	2	2	5	2	2	1	0	
	Hedging - I don't know, I'm not sure	8													0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Statement of philosophy/principle	9			1								1	1	0	1	2	3	1	0	0	2	
	Repetition of the part of the request	10		0					2	1					2	1	0	3	0	0	3	0	

Appendix 3
Response of Omani Subjects

Refusal Type	Strategies	Strategy Number	Request			Invitation			Suggestion			Offer			Total Status-wise				Total of Type of request			
			E	H	L	E	H	L	E	H	L	E	H	L	E=Equal	H=Higher	L=Lower	Total of E+H+L	Request	Invitation	Suggestion	Offer
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12								
Direct	I refuse, No, I can't	1	3	3	4	2		1	4	2	2	5	4	1	14	9	8	31	10	3	8	10
Indirect	Reason	2			1					3	1	1			1	3	2	6	1	0	4	1
	Regret	3	4	3	2	1	3	3	1						6	6	5	17	9	7	1	0
	Consideration of Interlocutor's feelings	4	2	3	2	6	7	6	4	5	3	4	3	2	16	18	13	47	7	19	12	9
	Let Interlocutor off the hook - Don't worry about it, that's Ok, You don't have to	5												6	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	6
	Wish	6		1		1							1		1	2	0	3	1	1	0	1
	Set conditions for future or past acceptance	7											1		0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Hedging - I don't know, I'm not sure	8			1				1		2				1	0	3	4	1	0	3	0
	Statement of philosophy/principle	9	1								2		1	1	1	1	3	5	1	0	2	2
	Repetition of the part of the request	10													0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Appendix 4**Sample of translated Omani refusals from Arabic****Direct**

1. No, I don't want to sell or exchange my car. Thank you for the offer.

Requests

2. I'm sorry. I wish I could have money but I'm sorry.
3. I'll lend you the money but at this time I need this money and you know we are at the end of the month.
4. I don't mind, but I'm extremely sorry because I have very important work to do, so I'm sorry again.
5. I will allow you to leave but we are under stress of work, you leave after you finish.

Invitation

6. I hate to loose this opportunity especially when I can meet the friends but I have an appointment with somebody and its shameful to ignore him.
7. I wish I could come but I'm sorry because we have some family affairs.
8. I appreciate your great invitation. It's a great honour to me but I have some things to do.
9. My dear thank you for the invitation to attend your daughter's birthday because I'll leave for the capital city to do some work for the company.

Suggestions

10. That sounds good but I can't escape from my duties. I will find another time to travel with you.
11. This is a good idea and thanks for taking care but the problem is that I don't think of vacation this time.
12. Thanks for your suggestion but there are something more important.
13. I can't take a car. I'll wait instead, he may come now. I know his circumstances and I'll wait.

Offers

14. No, thanks. I like to perform my duties towards my children. I feel comfortable.
15. I'll do this work later on but today I'll ask about my son and I'll like to know the reason.
16. It's a good deal but I must make my calculations before buying.
17. Don't worry; our relation is much stronger than buying a new shirt. Don't worry again I'll buy a new shirt.

Sample of British refusals**Requests**

18. I'm sorry I don't have \$100 to spare.
19. No, I couldn't I'm sorry.
20. I'm sorry but I have plans of my own this weekend.
21. No, not today as there is too much work to be done.

Invitation

22. I'm sorry I'm financially embarrassed at the moment.
23. I'm Sorry but it is too late for the children.
24. Sorry I have a previous family engagement.
25. Sorry, I have to go to my daughter's school on Monday.

Suggestions

26. I wish I could but I can't afford it.
27. I'm in the middle of a course right now but I'd love to go sometime.
28. I find science a more fulfilling career.
29. It would be great but I need an academic career to fall back on.

Offers

30. No thanks. I'll give my friend another half an hour.
31. I can't do that as I have to go to a meeting.

32. Thanks, but he is my son and I have to sort this out.
 33. No, don't worry, it does not matter.

Appendix 5

Pragmalinguistic Failure

A. Length of the semantic formulas

1. I can't lend you money for one reason that you can't return my money because you are facing financial problems and you depend on one source, which is your salary, your income could hardly cover your ordinary needs.

La asstati ikrad mablugnagdi lisabbab wahid liannaka latastatiya radd almablugh alladi iktaratahu minni lisaubat jharufak liannak tyatamid masdhar wahid lidakhal wa hunna alwazifa wadakhhalalwazifa bilkad litizamatian.

2. No, you are not allowed to leave to do any work out of the office before finishing your work in the office. You should finish your work before you leave.

La asma laka bilmukadara li injaz amal bilkharid kabla antanjiz amal almakhtab ma alilum anta ladaina amal yajib injazuha kabl almukadaran.

3. My dear thank you for the invitation to attend your daughter's birthday because I'll leave to the capital city to do some work for the company.

Azizi ashkurak lidawadi lihaflad eid milad bintakum yomalitnain la astatiya alhudur lilhafla bisabab safari ila alasima fiamal assharika yom al itnain sabha.

3. No I don't agree with your suggestion because it is related with the future of my son, thank you and I'm sorry for not accepting your suggestion.

La wafik ala hazihi almusaida liannaha tatallak bi mustakbal ibni addirasi liza ashkurak ayyoha assadik ala almusaida wa atadhir ann kabuliha.

B. Content of the semantic formulas

5. I honour your invitation with pleasure, but after I finish my work I'll go directly to Wadi Kabeer to repair my car.

Dawataak aala alain waraas lakin baad addawaam saadhab mubashara illa alwadi alkabeer liislah sayyarti

6. I appreciate your great invitation. It's a great honour to me but I have some things to do.

Ukkaddar laka hadihi aldawa al karima liannaha sharaf li wa lakinnani murtabat gadhan.

7. How do you want me to come to the house while James is not available?

Kaifa ahadur ilbait wa James laisa mawjuud?

8. No, I can't come to Jame's place without an appointment, so I'll leave him a message with my name and address.

La asatiya alhudur ilamanzil James bidun alittifak ma James alihudur ila manzilihi fi waqt muhaddad wa liana mukabalati shakshiya al mohimma murtabta bi sayyad James shakshiyen matark risala biJames bilism wal anwan.

C. Order of the semantic formulas

9. Don't worry; our relation is much stronger than buying a new shirt. Don't worry again I'll buy a new shirt.

La alaik famabainana agaha minhadal alkamis walata ba lahu fanna saakum bishara khamis gairhazzal khamis la aleik

10. Thank you for the invitation but I'm sorry I can't come. I have got a lot of work to accomplish and thank you again.

Shukran ala dawatak wa lakin atassaf alhudur bisabab iltizamati fa ladai amal kathira yajib ann akumbiha wa shukran marra ukhra.

11. I'm sorry. I wish I could have money but I'm sorry.

Assif jiddan tamannait lau kunt amluk almabhluk wa lakin yusifani zalik.