
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analysis of English Refusal and Request Strategies by Native Speakers and Bahrainis in the Workplace

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| ABSTRACT

This study compares the request and refusal strategies used by native English speakers and Bahraini employees. Politeness was examined with reference to Brown and Levinson (1987) and Matsumoto (1989), and formality was assessed following Li et al. (2015), Ernestus et al. (2015), and Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016). Data were collected through a modified Discourse Completion Test comprising request and refusal scenarios across four workplace status relations: equal, higher, lower and unfamiliar. Participants included 13 Bahraini and 11 native-speaker employees. Findings show that native speakers employed more directness and politeness in requests when holding a higher status, while Bahrainis were more direct and less formal with unfamiliar colleagues. In refusals, native speakers used higher levels of directness, politeness and formality across most status contexts. Overall, the results highlight significant cross-cultural differences, particularly in the role of hierarchy. The study recommends integrating explicit instruction on speech acts—especially requests and refusals—into English training for Bahraini employees.

| KEYWORDS

Speech acts, politeness, formality, directness, indirectness.

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Searle (1975) illustrates that speech acts can either be direct or indirect, depending on the context and the intended meaning by the speaker. This means that there is a difference between saying 'I want you to do this' and 'Would you be able to do this thing for me?'.

Clark (1979) says that there are two types of performing acts in general, and precisely with regard to request speech acts. The two types are direct and indirect speech acts.

Overall, speech acts are regarded important because they entail how direct or indirect someone's speech or conversation is. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the proficiency of Bahrainis in the workplace by comparing their use of the refusal and request speech acts with that of native English speakers.

This study was conducted to explore the usage of the English request and refusal speech acts by native English speakers and Bahrainis in the workplace. The major purpose behind researching the refusal and request speech acts is to denote and observe the use of the two types of speech acts by the two groups, and whether there are any similarities or differences between Bahrainis and native English speakers. This research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What refusal and request strategies are used by native speakers and Bahrainis in the workplace?

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2. What is the frequency of the use of each request and refusal strategy by the two groups?
3. How do Bahrainis and native English speakers differ in the use of refusals and requests in the workplace?

This study involved the use of one qualitative methodology, which is the discourse completion test (DCT). Both native English and Bahrainis in the workplace were provided scenarios to compare the use of the request and refusal speech acts. The Bahraini respondents were part of the experimental group, while the native English speakers were part of the control group. A total of 15 Bahraini employees and 11 native English respondents participated in the study, totalling 26 respondents. The qualitative content analysis was used in this research to systematically analyze the findings of the research. Hassan (2023) states that content analysis is a systematic analysis of content to identify patterns or themes from specific findings.

This study is considered significant because of its exploration of the request and refusal strategies among the two groups, as well as its comparison between the use of those speech acts in terms of Bahrainis in the workforce and native English speakers. There are hardly any studies concerning the use of request and refusal strategies by Bahrainis in the workforce, which is another reason why this research is significant. The research work can add more literature to the field of speech acts, precisely in relation to Bahrainis in the workforce.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speech Acts:

Hiani (2015) conducted a study to explore the use of fifteen speech acts by Moroccan EFL learners. The methodology of the research was asking the Moroccan university learners to respond to a discourse completion tasks (DCTs), and then having their responses compared to those of twelve American native speakers. The objective of the methodology was to assess the usage of speech acts by Moroccan EFL learners and identify their strengths and weaknesses. The results of the study indicate that the Moroccan respondents undergo different difficulties in the usage of speech acts with the different functions. Findings of the study showed that there was a lack of communicative competence in knowing how to use the different sets of speech acts, for instance complaints, refusals and requests.

Monika et al. (2021) conducted a study, in which a part of it is titled Speech Acts Addressed to Hadza Infants in Tanzania. The research dealt with speech acts being addressed to Hadza infants in Tanzania, who spent most of their lives hunting. The objectives of the research were to determine whether or not there are differences between children and adult speakers with regard to producing speech acts. According to Monika et al. (2021), speech acts are part of language socialization, which also comprises cultural values. The study is relevant to this research because it deals with showcasing how different the usage of speech acts can be from one societal group to another. The findings of the study indicate that there are many differences between children and adults in the production of speech acts, such as adults using requests for action and information with children, while infants use more assertive words in their speeches. This shows that there is a hierarchical difference between children and adults in the use of speech acts.

2.2 Speech Acts in the Workplace:

Pearson (1989) analysed the usage of speech acts at church meetings in the United States, and that is to denote how ministers, chairs and normal people at the church use directives and convey disagreements. Findings of the research show that the linguistic choices when using speech acts are dependent on the role of the speakers. The ministers, for example, use language differently from other individuals because they have more institutional status than other speakers in the church workplace. The findings of the research also showed that those ministers use assertive and non-assertive speech acts to show power and accommodation in their speech.

Pang (2018) conducted a study titled "Directives in Professional Kitchens.", which investigated interactions between co-workers in the setting of working-class professional kitchens. The methodology of the research was based on content analysis through studying the interactions between newcomer trainees and the cooks under whom those trainees worked, and how the two groups use directive speech acts in their interactions. Findings of the study revealed that trainees used the directive speech act for instructional purposes mainly, however the research recommends that more training needs to be given to those assigned to teach trainees in order for them to help those newcomer cooks in adjusting to their new environments.

2.3 Request Speech Acts:

An article by Gibbs (1986) investigated what makes some indirect request speech acts conventional. The research claimed that there are different varieties of sentences that could be used to perform request speech acts, such as "I would like, Can you, Would you be able to" and other forms. According to the research, despite the many forms of request speech acts, they are not relevant to every social context. The reason why this research by Gibbs (1986) is overall suitable for the study is that it stipulates that there are different request speech acts used by diverse groups of people according to specific social contexts.

Deveci and Abbas (2023) conducted a study to investigate the request behaviour of 96-Emirati students in the emails sent to their professors. The data of the study was collected using a DCT (discourse completion test) and an evaluation form filled by two judges. Findings of the research showed that the direct request speech act was the most common strategy used by the respondents, whereas another finding of the study implied that most respondents either did not greet their professors in the emails sent, or that they did not follow the correct format of the email. Additionally, it was also noted that some respondents had issues in their use of language while using the request speech act, and that is through the aspect of having grammatical errors throughout the created emails. The research recommended that the community needs to be aware of how to use the request speech act, and that is with regard to having diverse related activities.

2.4 Refusal Speech Acts:

Mohammad (2013) conducted a study to investigate the refusal speech act between Persian and English speakers with regard to linguistics. Gender differences and semantic formulas were taken into account when analysing the data of the study, which involved 50 Persian and 50 English movies used as instruments. Findings of the research showed that Persian speakers used more excuses in their production of the refusal speech act than the English respondents, and this was in respect of regret and lack of enthusiasm. Another finding of the study represented the existence of major differences between the Persian and the English language in the sense of refusal and gender utterances. This means that the purpose behind the difference in the performance of refusal speech acts between the two groups is due to the fact that the two languages and their cultures were contrastive to one another in the first place.

In a study that investigated the refusal responses to requests in Cameroon French, Farenkia (2023) conveys that there may be pragmatic distinctions across varieties of the same language. The data of the study was collected in Yaoundé and Douala in Cameroon. Findings of the study show that the respondents used many different direct and indirect refusal strategies when responding to requests, as there were different supportive acts and diverse address strategies in the refusal utterances of the respondents. It was also shown in the research that the refusal utterances to request speech acts are impacted by numeric factors, such as the formality level of the conversation, the social relationships of both the speaker and the hearer, as well as the sociocultural constraints that were present between the respondents of the study.

2.5 Impact of Culture on the Use of Language:

Karlık (2023) claims that, despite language and culture being related to each other in terms of shaping one's realization of the world, cultural contexts and beliefs can play a vital role in the use of a language. This implies that Arab native speakers may apply their cultural understanding of the world when using the English language.

3. Methodology

One method was applied in this study. A discourse completion test (DCT) that included refusal and request scenarios was given to native English speakers (11) and Bahrainis (15) in the workforce.

The first DCT contained four types of request situations where the respondents were asked to request, using the scenarios, from people they encountered with equal, lower, higher and strange statuses with regard to their work environments. The second DCT was similar to the first in terms of the social status, however the respondents were asked to refuse workplace request scenarios. The data of the two groups were then compared to view the similarities and differences between their usage of the two types of speech acts.

Concerning the linguistic level of the experimental group (Bahrainis in the workplace), the general expectation is that they use the English language on a daily basis, and that is as per the citation of Almutairi (2019) to Kachru's model, as already detailed. Not only this, all the Bahraini respondents attended university and were exposed to academic English, meaning that they were at least expected to make effective request and refusal expressions.

4. Findings

The data of the findings and discussion part comprised two research instruments, which are the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and interviews.

Table 1 below presents the frequency and percentage of directness, formal and polite request strategies used by the Bahrainis and native speakers in their formulated requests to the situations provided.

Table (1): Request Strategies (Bahrainis = 15 & Natives = 11)

Equal Work Status	Frequency of Bahrainis		Percentage (%)	Frequency of Native English		Percentage (%)
	Direct (14) 13 formal 10 polite		93.3% direct 86.6% formal 66.6% polite	11 direct 10 formal 10 polite		100% direct 90.9% formal 90.9% polite
Lower Work Status	12 direct 13 formal 11 polite		80% direct 86.6% formal 73.3% polite	7 direct 10 formal 8 polite	4 indirect	63.6% direct 90.9% formal 72.7% polite
Higher Work Status	12 direct 13 formal 12 polite		80% direct 86.6% formal 80% polite	11 direct 10 formal 10 polite		100% direct 90.9% formal 90.9% polite
Strangers	13 direct 8 formal 6 polite		86.6% direct 53.3% formal 40% polite	9 direct 9 formal 8 polite	2 indirect	81.8% direct 81.8% formal 72.7% polite

The table below shows the frequency and percentage of the refusal direct, formal and polite strategies used by the Bahrainis and native speakers in their refusal expressions.

Table (2): Refusal Strategies (Bahrainis = 15 & Natives = 11)

Equal Work Status	Bahrainis		Rate (%)	Native English		Rate (%)
	12 direct 9 formal 12 polite		80% direct 60% formal 80% polite	11 direct 9 formal 10 polite		100% direct 81.8% formal 90.9% polite
Higher Work Status	8 Direct 12 Formal 11 Polite	4 Indirect	53.3% direct 80% formal 73.3% polite	9 direct 10 formal 10 polite	(1 did not answer accurately) 1 indirect	81.8% direct 90.9% formal 90.9% polite
Lower Work Status	4 Direct 9 Formal 9 Polite	7 Indirect	26.6% direct 60% formal 60% polite	7 direct 9 formal 7 polite	4 Indirect	63.6% direct 81.8% formal 63.6% polite
Strangers	12 Direct 3 Formal 5 polite		80% direct 20% formal 33.3% polite	7 direct 5 formal 5 polite	4 Indirect	63.6% direct 45.4% formal 45.4% polite

4.1 Discourse Completion Test (DCT):

Table 1 and 2 illustrate an evident difference in the use of requests and refusals between Bahrainis in the workplace and native English speakers.

4.2: Discussion:

4.2.1: Request Speech Act:

a) Equal Work Status:

As Table 1 shows the use of request strategies with workers of an equal work status, most Bahrainis (93.3%) and all native speakers used the direct strategy. i.e. 86.6% and 66.6% of the Bahrainis used the formal and polite strategies in their requests, while 90.9% of the native speakers used the formal and polite strategies. This indicates that the Bahrainis applied less formality in their requests than the native speakers (86.6%), and the native speakers used more politeness (90.9%) than the Bahrainis (66.6%). One example of the direct and formal strategies used by Bahrainis is "Could you bring me a cup of coffee", which is noted as a direct and formal request when asking for coffee directly with the application of the modal "Could". A similar request was even formulated by another Bahraini respondent, who said: "Could you bring me a cup of coffee please?". Another request by a respondent from the same group was: "May you bring me a cup of coffee?". This shows that most of the Bahraini respondents tend to use the direct, formal and polite request strategies, in addition to the same syntactic structure in the requests with people of the same work status. This is realized through the respondents starting their requests with a modal verb, subject pronoun, verb and the direct or indirect object.

The same strategies of directness and formality are seen in the requests "Can you get me a coffee?" and "Can you please grab me a coffee" by the native respondents. These examples, similar to the ones associated with the Bahraini respondents, follow a specific syntactic pattern of a modal verb and a subject pronoun, yet the difference lies in the inclusion of politeness in those formulated requests.

b) Lower Work Status:

Regarding the use of requests from a lower status perspective, it is apprehended that Bahrainis were more prevalent in the use of the direct (80%) and polite (73.3%) strategies than the native speakers. 63.6% of the native respondents applied directness and 72.7% used politeness. On the other hand, native speakers were dominant in the use of formality, as the Bahraini respondents used less formality (86.6%) than their counterparts (90.9%).

The difference in the use of direct and indirect strategies by Bahrainis and native speakers shows that there is a difference between the two groups in dealing with work superiors.

An instance of an indirect request used by a Bahraini respondent is "I have an important matter to attend to today, could I please leave work a bit earlier?". Two Bahraini respondents formulated requests using the indirect strategy, in which the speaker here provided the justification before asking the question, leading to the analysis that the interlocutor might have been misled with the given information.

The use of indirectness when asking to leave work early is used four times, as already mentioned, by the native respondents. One of the respondents said: "Good day Ms., I need to request to leave early for (mention reason)". As mentioned in the findings of this study, the major purpose behind considering this request as indirect goes back to the respondent needing to request an early leave. A direct request here would have been 'Good day. I need to leave early today', or even 'Good day. I am requesting an early leave', since the speaker here would be asking for an early leave directly and without any sort of indirectness. It is worth noting that both requests included the strategies of formality and politeness.

To further explain, the use of the indirect requests by the four native speakers was more in the lower status than the two Bahrainis. This was anticipated through the research by Coulson and Lovett (2010) and Boux et al. (2022), who stated that the indirectness in a request can be anticipated and known by recognizing the context. This can be apprehended through the hierarchal concept at work. Since the respondent was expected to formulate a request to a work superior, 4 native speakers and 2 Bahrainis believed they should have used the indirect request to show who the superior in the workplace belongs to.

c) Higher Work Status:

The findings of the requests from a higher work status perspective are different from the lower work status, as the native speakers here used more directness (100%) and politeness (90.9%) than the Bahrainis. As well as that, the Bahrainis used less formality (86.6%) in their requests than the natives (90.9%).

The major difference between the Lower Work Status and the Higher Work Status sections is that regardless of the similarity in the frequency and percentage of indirectness used by Bahrainis for both the higher and lower status, all native speakers used the direct strategy. In other words, 11 native speakers prefer using the direct request strategy when in a higher status than the interlocutor, which is different from the Bahraini respondents.

Such a finding shows that the hierarchy at the workplace is highly recognized by the native speakers, and this is with both the Lower Work and Higher Work Status sections (See Lower Work Status). Since the hierarchy at work belongs to the speaker when having a higher work status than the hearer, all native speakers built on this hierarchy and assumed that it is not necessary to apply the indirect request strategy when wanting to request from someone with a lower work status. This finding does not correlate with the requests made by the Bahrainis from a higher work status perspective, as numeric Bahraini respondents used the indirect request strategy when wanting to ask an employee with a lower work status for a napkin.

One of the indirect requests made by the Bahrainis is: "Will you give me a napkin, please?", in which the respondent asked if there is a possibility to have a napkin instead of saying: 'Can you give me a napkin?'. On the contrary, a direct request made by one of the native speakers to ask for a napkin from one of the employees was: "Could you bring me a napkin please?"

d) Strangers:

The findings of the final situation show the use of more directness by Bahrainis (86.6%) than the native speakers (81.8%), with formality more in the requests of native speakers (81.8%) than Bahrainis (53.3%). For the polite strategy in the request speech act, it was employed by 72.7% of native speakers, whereas 40% of the Bahraini respondents used it in their requests.

Regarding the higher work status point of view, the native respondents used more directness (100%) and politeness (90.9%) than the Bahraini respondents (80%), leaving the latter with less formality as well (86.6%). The last situation showed that the native speakers used more formality (81.8%) and politeness (72.7%) in their requests, as the Bahrainis used more directness (92.3%). The difference between the two groups in the use of the request speech act with strangers at work lies in the fact that two native respondents employed the indirect strategy to ask about the time. This can be explained in that the two native speakers use the indirect request strategy with those they do not know. The direct strategy was used by 9 native respondents (81.8%). This is quite distinct from the Bahraini respondents, as 13 respondents (86.6%) applied the direct request strategy when asking strangers about the time.

One example of the indirect request strategy used by a native respondent is: "How late is it?", instead of asking 'What time is it?'. A likely response to the question "How late is it" would be 'Very late', rather than the interlocutor informing the speaker about the time.

Overall, the results in this section correspond with the findings of Vine (2009) regarding the impact of work status on the use of direct and indirect speech acts.

4.2.2 Refusal Speech Act:

In comparison to the discussion of the request speech act, the use of the refusal speech act between the two groups (Bahrainis and natives) shows major differences. 12 out of 15 Bahraini respondents formulated refusal expressions to the situations they were provided.

a) Equal Work Status:

As noted in Table 2, there is a major difference in the use of refusals to employees with an equal work status. While native speakers used directness (100%), formality (81.8%) and politeness (90.9%), Bahrainis applied the three strategies with a lesser percentage than the natives (Directness and politeness 80%, formality 60%).

The findings of the refusal strategies used by Bahrainis and native speakers are different from the request strategies used with the employees with an equal work status. Twelve Bahrainis (80%) used the direct strategy. In these refusals, a lesser percentage used the formal (60%) and polite (80%) strategies than those applied by the native speakers (81.8% formality & 90.9% politeness), as already noted. In addition to that, all the native speakers used the direct refusal strategy. One example of the use of the direct strategy by the Bahraini respondents is: "No I'm sorry", which expresses politeness as well.

Similar to the discussion of the Request Speech Act in section 4.2.1.2, one explanation to the use of the direct strategy by all native speakers can be that the work status and hierarchy are better understood and applied by them than the Bahraini respondents. To elaborate, through the informal discussions conducted with the respondents, one reason why all the native speakers used the direct strategy in their refusals with employees of equal work status is the belief that there is no work superiority in the equal work status relationship between the interlocutor and the speaker, however 81.8% and 90.9% of those refusals were formal and polite.

One instance for the use of the direct, formal and polite strategies by a native respondent is: "I'm sorry, but I don't have any I can spare", in which a justification was provided. One reason to why native speakers provided more reasons and used more polite expressions in their refusals with those of an equal work status can go back to not wanting to display any sort of superiority through the face-threatening acts (FTAs), as per the research by Matsumoto (1989), who stated that the social context is a major factor in using formality and politeness.

This leads to the point that most native English speakers prefer to apply formality and politeness in their refusals to employees of an equal work status, even though the use of the direct strategy is common with those employees.

b) Higher Work Status:

Moving on to the refusals formulated from a higher work status perspective, 81.8% of the native speakers used directness and 90.9% used formality and politeness. However, 53.3% of the Bahrainis used directness, 80% formality and 73.3% politeness.

Regardless of the high use of the direct, formal and polite refusal strategies by both groups, it is understood that 4 Bahrainis and 1 native expressed their refusal when in a higher work status than the speaker using the indirect strategy.

As part of the discussion in this section, the high usage of the direct refusal strategy by native speakers can be because of understanding that the status they have is higher than the speaker, similar to what was discussed in the Request Speech Act

section. In other words, since the use of indirectness is mostly for work superiors in this context, 9 native speakers (81.8%) applied directness due to them being the work superiors in this case. An instance for the use of the direct, polite and formal refusal strategies by a native respondent is: "I'm sorry, but I don't have the time right now". In order to change this refusal to the indirect, the respondent could say: 'Could you come again after a while', and that is to show the incapability of performing the request from the speaker instantly.

Nonetheless, one reason behind the usage of the indirect refusal by four Bahraini respondents may be due to not wanting to express superiority to the employees despite being in a higher work position. One example of the use of indirect, formal and polite strategies with employees of a lower work status is: "Please go through the topic and research about it. If you don't understand it, then come by my office and I'll try to explain it better".

This aspect of indirectness between people with a higher work status and a lower work status is further noticed in the researcher's workplace, where a teacher would refuse a request from a student, saying: 'Could you come to me some other time? I am a little busy now'.

c) Lower Work Status:

As for the refusals from a lower work status, 26.6% of the Bahrainis used directness in their responses, and 60% used both formality and politeness. On the other hand, 63.6% of the native respondents used directness and politeness in their refusals, while 81.8% of the refusals included formality.

The findings of the lower work status section show the usage of the indirect refusal strategy by the 40% Bahraini respondents, while 36.3% of native speakers applied it.

Out of the 11 Bahrainis, seven used the formal and polite strategy, whereas out of 11 native speakers, 9 used the formal and 7 used the polite refusal strategy. 3 Bahraini respondents did not respond accurately to the refusal speech act in the third situation. Therefore, the frequency and percentage of formality and politeness between Bahrainis and native English speakers are slightly the same.

One example of the use of the indirect, formal and polite strategies by a Bahraini respondent is: "I recognize how crucial it is to assist you, yet I could lack the knowledge or the right context to effectively express the concept. It might be more beneficial if someone with a deeper understanding of the topic could provide an explanation".

In addition to this, one example of the use of the direct, formal and polite refusal strategies by a native respondent is: "Sorry, I can't commit to this without being given the time and resources".

d) Strangers:

Regarding the final situation (Section D), the native speakers used more formality and politeness (45.4%) than Bahrainis (20% for formality & 33.3% for politeness). The Bahraini respondents applied more directness (80%) in their refusals to strangers than native speakers (63.6%).

The findings show that all the Bahraini respondents who responded to the situation used the direct request strategy (80%), with 20% formality and 33.3% politeness. This indicates that Bahrainis generally tend to use the direct refusal strategy when conversing with strangers in the English language. The table below illustrates some examples from the refusal expressions formulated by Bahrainis.

Table (3)

Example	Strategies of Refusal
"Mind your business"	Direct strategy
"No sorry"	Direct & polite strategies
"I'm sorry but this is a bit of a personal question"	Direct, polite and formal strategies

Moving on to the refusals used by the native English speakers, 63.6% used the direct refusal strategy, with four respondents using the indirect refusal when communicating with strangers at work. This rate of use of the direct refusal strategy is lower in the native English respondents than in the Bahrainis. In addition, 45.4% of the native speakers used the formal and polite refusal strategies, which is more than the formality (20%) and politeness (33.3%) used by the Bahraini respondents. It is overall noted

that some native respondents decide to use the indirect refusal strategy in order to not ruin the relationship with the work stranger.

The table below demonstrates some examples of the strategies used by native English speakers when communicating with a work stranger.

Table (4)

Example	Strategies of Refusal
"I don't think this information is relevant"	Indirect strategy
"Sorry, that's a bit too personal"	Direct & polite strategies
"I am sorry – I do not give out personal information"	Direct, polite and formal strategies

It is understood from the discussion above that native speakers use both direct and indirect strategies when refusing a request from a stranger.

On the other hand, Bahrainis used the direct strategy with less formality and politeness than the native speakers in their refusals. This shows that there is a difference in the use of the refusal speech act when communicating with a work stranger by Bahrainis and native speakers.

Generally, it is seen that native speakers use more formality and politeness in all their refusals than the Bahrainis. This is even the same with directness as well, since Bahrainis applied more directness in their requests with strangers than Bahrainis, as already stated.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the use of English refusal and request strategies by native speakers and Bahraini workforce. For the politeness in the request and refusal expressions formulated by the respondents, they were investigated and identified regarding different research works (Brown and Levinson, 1978; Matsumoto, 1989). Formality was identified in the expressions by the respondents with the help of different studies as well (Li et al, 2015; Ernestus et al, 2015; Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016). These research works were referenced to investigate the use of refusal and request strategies by the two groups. All of the respondents were either current or retired employees when collecting the data. That is why the respondents were expected to formulate proper refusals and requests to denote the differences between the two groups (native speakers & Bahrainis).

The findings of the study showed major differences between native speakers and Bahrainis concerning the requests and refusals. One of the differences is that, with regard to the request speech act, the native speakers used lesser directness when in a lower work status and with strangers than the Bahraini respondents. The second difference is that Bahrainis used lesser directness when in a higher work status (i.e. when in a higher status than the interlocutor). This shows that, as already stated, Bahrainis do not follow a specific pattern concerning the work status when formulating requests, and that is evidential when looking at the directness percent in Table 1. The third difference is that native speakers are more direct when refusing a request from an employee with an equal, higher and lower work status, but with less direct refusals than the Bahraini respondents when addressing strangers. As for the fourth difference, it is the fact that the native respondents used more politeness and formality in the refusal situations than the Bahrainis. The fifth difference is that the Bahraini respondents used more formality in situations of equal, lower and higher work status, as the native speakers employed more formality with strangers when formulating a request. The sixth difference is that the native respondents used more politeness in the equal, higher and strange situations, leaving the Bahraini respondents with more politeness when requesting something from an employee with a higher work status.

For both the request and refusal speech acts, it is seen that most native speakers tend to emphasize work hierarchy and use language in relation to that hierarchy (i.e. use an indirect refusal strategy with people of higher work status but a direct strategy with speakers of lower work status).

This study is considered significant for several reasons. First, there were hardly any studies conducted on the use of refusal and request speech acts by Bahrainis and native speakers, and this conveys that this research work adds a lot to the field of pragmatics. Second, the results of the study can be used to try and prepare a university course where speech acts and how they are different are addressed.

5.1 Research Recommendations:

Through this research work, the use of the refusal and request speech acts by Bahrainis is realized, and this can help with trying to anticipate the differences in the refusals and requests through making them in coordination with the speech acts produced by native speakers. This would lead to the understanding of the English language in terms of speech acts and how native speakers tend to produce those acts. In simple terms, the results of the study may help Bahraini learners in general and those in the workplace with the usage of refusal and request speech acts in the workplace, especially with regard to work status and hierarchy.

The primary plan to further improve the production of speech acts for Bahrainis is to raise their awareness regarding using the English language. As already stated by Yates (2010), learning the production of speech acts can lead second language learners to apprehend the English cultural values when communicating in workplace settings. To explain, it should be clarified to Bahrainis – in their university courses – that the English speech acts are dissimilar to the Arabic acts. They need to be further informed about when to include formality and politeness, and when not to do so. This is expected to help them use the English language competently in the same way as native speakers.

5.2 Further Research:

Since this study only addressed the use of request and refusal strategies by native speakers and Bahrainis in the workplace, further research can be conducted on a comparison of the use of English requests by Bahraini males and females in the workplace and native English speakers. The idea in this topic would be to consider the potential native English respondents as the baseline of the research, while also referring to gender concerning the Bahraini respondents in the workplace. Researchers can even use the implemented methodology in the study, where the objective would be to investigate and examine the use of request strategies by Bahrainis in the workplace and native English speakers. This will lead to having more studies conducted on the Bahraini workplace setting.

The reason behind suggesting this topic for further research goes back to the need to address the inaccurate request and refusal production by Bahrainis in the workplace regarding the work hierarchy. In other words, the potential future research would further investigate and examine how Bahrainis in the workplace can level their speech acts to meet the work hierarchy.

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