



# A Pragmatic Study of Refusal Speech Act: A Gender Perspective

**Dr. Mushtaq Abdulrazzaq Abdulzahra**

General Directorate of Education of Al-Qadisiyah, Ministry of Education  
Iraq

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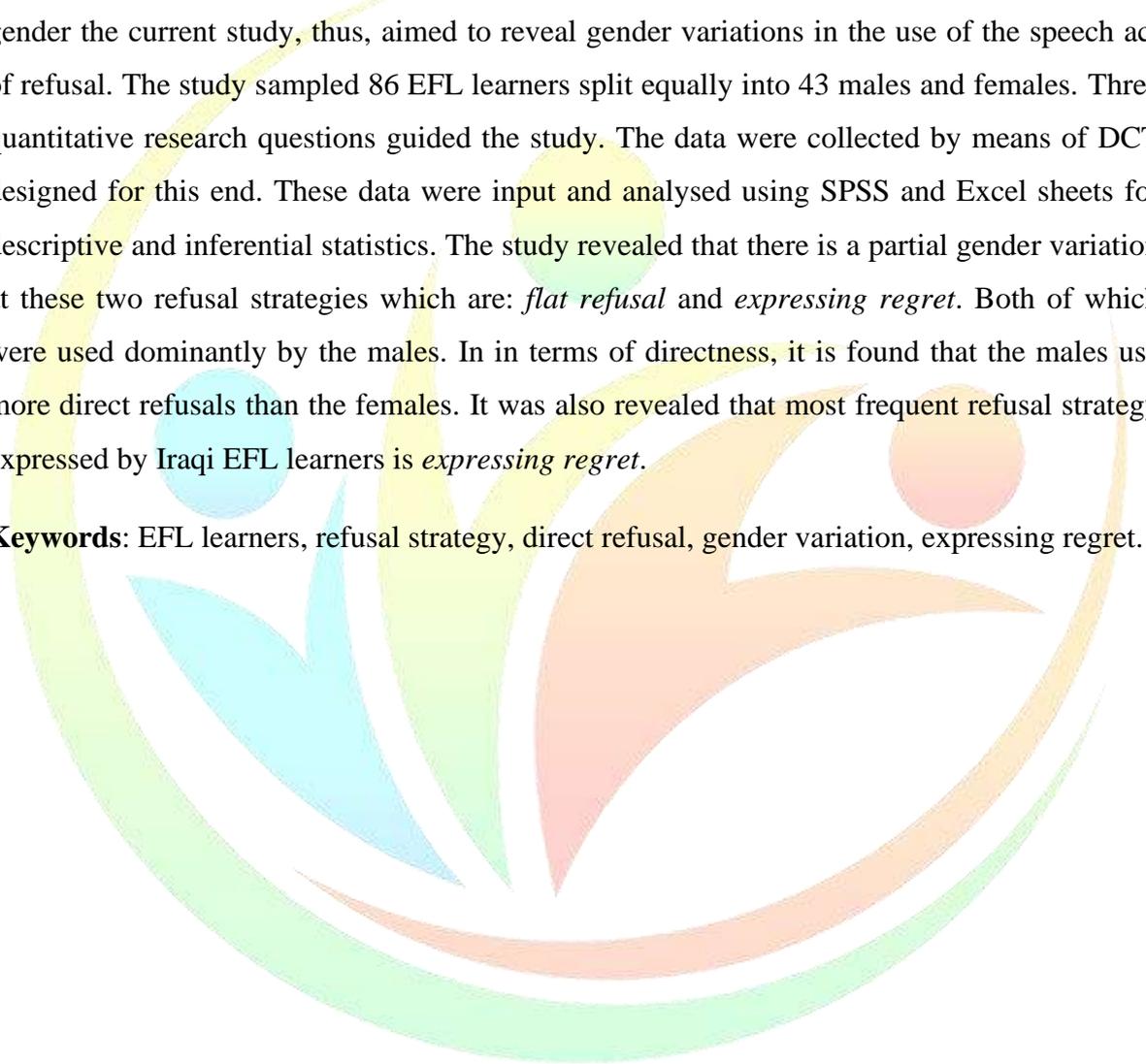
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**ABSTRACT**

In EFL context, there comes many situations in which we need to refuse an offer, suggestion, invitation or request. And because the choice of the refusal strategy may vary in terms of gender the current study, thus, aimed to reveal gender variations in the use of the speech act of refusal. The study sampled 86 EFL learners split equally into 43 males and females. Three quantitative research questions guided the study. The data were collected by means of DCT designed for this end. These data were input and analysed using SPSS and Excel sheets for descriptive and inferential statistics. The study revealed that there is a partial gender variation at these two refusal strategies which are: *flat refusal* and *expressing regret*. Both of which were used dominantly by the males. In in terms of directness, it is found that the males use more direct refusals than the females. It was also revealed that most frequent refusal strategy expressed by Iraqi EFL learners is *expressing regret*.

**Keywords:** EFL learners, refusal strategy, direct refusal, gender variation, expressing regret.

The logo for the International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRSSH) is a large, stylized emblem. It features a central figure that resembles a person with arms raised, set against a background of colorful, flowing shapes in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The entire emblem is enclosed within a circular border. Below the emblem, the acronym 'IJRSSH' is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

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## INTRODUCTION

As the EFL learners attempt to communicate in the English language, EFL learners will have to express themselves using certain acts of language called speech acts. These acts constitute the core of communication since they represent functions like refusals, suggestions, requests, blames, offers, apologizes, agreements, disagreements, compliments, ...etc (Levinson, 2017). These acts, according to Leech (2016), usually operate on certain levels of directness and politeness depending on the nature of the speech act and the respective culture under study.

In any foreign communication, EFL learners usually try their best to express themselves despite the high possibility that they experience phonological, syntactic, psychological, and cultural challenges since English is not their mother tongue. Besides, non-naive speaker and EFL learners are not only challenged by these language deficiencies, but they are also obstructed by their insufficient pragmatic knowledge (Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari, 2016). In other words, they may fall short of, or at least vary in terms of gender, when using the language in its socio-cultural context bearing in mind that every speech act is governed by a number of conventions distinct from our mother tongue.

Because it is socially problematic to reject requests, suggestions, offers and invitations directly using overt 'no', native speakers resort to doing these refusals appropriately. But this appropriateness requires not only linguistic knowledge but pragmatic knowledge, too (Sattar, Lah and Suleiman, 2011). The best form of communication is when a speaker tries not to offend the listener. Therefore, to refuse appropriately, speaker needs a range of skills like good knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

Thus, in order to compensate for this lack of knowledge, the learners, most times, resort to translating certain utterances from their L1 and then apply its rules on the English language as an attempt to make the communication as flowing as possible (Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari, 2016). This pragmatic failure leads to either misunderstanding and or embarrassment and here lies the necessity to directly teach pragmatics in the EFL teaching pedagogy.

One way to avoid such communication failures among EFL learners is the necessity to find out the extent to which learners' culture and linguistic knowledge affect EFL utterances. Hence, according to Heidari, Heidari Tabrizi and Chalak, (2020), it is essential for EFL interested personnel to emphasize the direct instructions in teaching pragmatics in the EFL institutions.

According to the researcher's own experience, in our Eastern globalized communities where automations and technologies are taking place and taking over, it has been recently preferred that the employment chances in many fields require, to a high degree, fair English knowledge. This emphasizes the importance of teaching pragmatics of the foreign language to ensure better knowledge of speech acts needed in communication in social, academic, and market context.

The speech act of refusal, being one of these acts that is frequently employed in almost every EFL settings (Sattar, Lah and Suleiman, 2011), the current study aims at discovering how the Iraqi EFL learners produce refusals in terms of gender. Thus, the current study tries to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the gender variations of refusal expressed by Iraqi EFL learners?
2. To what extent do the two genders differ in terms of directness?
3. What is the most frequent refusal strategy expressed by Iraqi EFL learners?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The language we speak consist of sets of speech acts. The investigations of these acts by many scholars have been numerous in

the last decades. The two philosophers Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) were the first theorists to present the so-called speech act theory. Both proposed that speech acts constitute behavior meaningful forms and are controlled by conventions. For them, speech act reveals the behavior underlying the language functions, not only description. This means that any speech act is, in fact, an action (or behavior) expressed by an utterance (Belza, 2008; Bruti, 2006).

Though speech acts are universal to all languages, but they differ in their distribution, frequency, and functions as well as directness depending on the culture in which the language under study is spoken (Morsi, 2010).

According to Searle (2001), every sentence expresses, at least, one speech act and therefore, to know what speech acts are is to know the sentence meaning simply because the sentence must express one or more speech acts. This means that the meaning of speech acts constitutes the sentence meaning.

A speech act is stated either directly or indirectly depending on the social scenario. However, some speakers tend to be indirect just to look more interesting (Justovà, 2006). Others, as Franke, and Jäger (2016) claim that speakers resort to produce indirect acts to maintain a chance for deniability.

Moreover, within the same factors mentioned above, the speech act of refusal, the topic of this study, is expected to vary depending on age, setting, gender, topic, both speaker’s and listener’s social status and education.

The speech act of refusal is regarded as a face-threatening act because it tends to jeopardize social harmony (Allan, 2014), Speech act of refusal is inherently face-threatening and it often involves a long-negotiated sequence in natural conversations, therefore, it needs to be mitigated (Eslami, 2010). Refusals are negative responses to suggestions, offers, invitations or requests (Sattar, Lah, & Suleiman, 2011). In terms of politeness, it is usually uneasy to refuse a suggestion or a request in a direct way. So, refusing these acts in an appropriate way requires not only “linguistic knowledge, but also pragmatic knowledge” (Sattar, Lah, & Suleiman, 2011:70).

From a broader speech act perspective, according to pragmatics like Culpeper and Terkourafi (2017) and Levisen and Waters (2017) assert that a direct speech act underlies face-threatening to the listener while indirect speech act underlies face-saving potentials to the listener. Accordingly, this is applicable to the speech act of refusal since it carries the directness potentials.

Refusals, according to Nelson, Al-Batal & El Bakry (2002) and Umale (2011), fall into two broad strategies depending on the semantic formula: direct and indirect. The direct refusals include (1) flat and (2) negative ability. The indirect ones include: mitigated refusals, wish, excuse/reason, regret, alternative, promise of acceptance in the future, statement of philosophy, statement of principle, and repetition. The table below depicts these strategies with examples.

Table 1: Taxonomy of refusal strategies

	Sematic formula	Example
Direct	Flat refusal	No!
	Negative ability	I cannot... / I don't think I can ....
Indirect	Mitigated refusal	I am afraid I cannot. / I wouldn't be possible to ... ./ I don't think there is a chance to ....
	Expressing wish	I wish I could but ... / I wish I were free to...
	Giving excuse/reason	I have to leave now. I am (so) busy.
	Expressing regret	I am (so)(very) sorry (that) ...../ I apologize...

Offering an alternative	I may (or can) find someone else who ...
Promise of acceptance in the future	Maybe later/ I cannot now/Another time.
Statement of philosophy	Never expect help from others. / Tell yourself you can do it.
Statement of principle	I don't lend money to anyone. / I like these who do their best.
Repetition of question	

The current study employs the above classification as a model of analysis to analyze the Iraqi EFL learners' responses in terms of gender where both directness and politeness principles are going to be investigated.

**PREVIOUS STUDIES**

To identify the gap in the related literature, the researcher went through the scholarly works in the peer-reviewed journals. A web search encompassed recent studies dealing with the topic of refusal speech act from a pragmatic level. The web search was further filtered to include studies applied to participants only. After an in-depth search, the studies were grouped and then arranged chronologically from older to newer. The studies were categorized for features like strategies, participants, method and gender.

Tada (2005) described Japanese EFL learners' pragmatic production and perception of the speech acts of refusals, requests, and apologies employing data from video prompt. The sample of the quantitative study included forty-eight Japanese EFL learners. Results revealed

that pragmatic productions of the three speech acts develop hand in hand with overall English proficiency to some extent, while the pragmatic perception is relatively independent of proficiency. Tada (2005) concluded that EFL learners need sufficient opportunities to practice perceiving and producing the three speech acts by practicing inputs consisting of English speech acts.

Al-Abaadi (2005) examined the realizations of refusal strategies used by Iraqis and Americans. The purpose of the mixed-mode method research was to examine whether there is evidence of pragmatic transfer from Arabic to English and the reasons behind this transfer if any. The data were collected by using a written discourse completion tasks (DCT) supported by interviews. The findings yielded that the Iraqi members tend to refuse in lengthy elaborate way and use less direct strategies, especially when the speaker was of a higher social rank.

Al-Eryani (2007) examines refusals in Yemeni Arabic and American English employing twenty English speakers; twenty

Yemeni Arabic speakers, and twenty Yemeni advanced EFL learners all of whom are males. The DCT consisted of six situations in which participants produce refusals to offers, requests, invitations, and suggestions. The study showed that natives tend to be more direct in their refusals as compared to the native speakers of Yemeni Arabic. One more difference is that the two groups vary in the order of the semantic formulas. However, the EFL learners revealed similarities with native speakers of English in these areas: the frequency of semantic formulas, their order, and content.

Lee (2013) quantitatively examined the perception and production levels of the refusals made by Chinese EFL learners at high and low skill levels. The DCT data from the two levels were compared with two groups of native speakers, Chinese and American. The conclusion revealed that the participants of two cultures show a major concern to face when refusing. However, some cross-cultural differences were that the native speakers of Chinese fall under the effect of collectivistic culture when refusing in contrast to native speakers of English who fall under the influence of individualistic culture.

Sattar, Lah and Suleiman, (2011) attempted to outline the preferred semantic formulas used in refusing suggestions by Malaysian students. They found that the students employed some preferred types of

refusal indirect patterns when refusing a suggestion. They tended to use "No" followed by explanation. This might indicate that they tend to be rude and risk of losing other's face when using negative ability and willingness. The researchers stated that their refusals were always mitigated and justified by giving reasons, explanations and other indirect strategies like using openers (or semantic adjuncts) to define the relationships, apologies, etc.

Al-Shboul, Maros and Yasin (2012) quantitatively studied the similarities and differences of refusal speech act between Jordanian EFL learners and the Malay ESL postgraduates. Data were collected with a restricted version of the DCT produced by Beebe et al. (1990). To obtain as natural as real-life communication responses, an interviewer audiotaped and read the situations aloud to the two groups in English in order to allow the participants to respond verbally to situations. Conclusions proposed that both groups utilized almost similar strategies with almost similar frequencies in expressing refusals. For instance, the most frequently used strategies were excuse, explanation, reason, and expressing statements of regret.

Aiming at revealing how the speakers of Egyptian Arabic and speakers of American English recognize refusals in equal and unequal status situations, Morkus (2014) conducted a quantitative study on

refusal in which he sampled twenty native speakers of both languages. The data were obtained using context-enhanced role plays which consist of six refusal situations for offers and requests. Results showed the Egyptians used more expressions and longer turns than the Americans. Regarding the individual refusal strategies, the Americans prefer expressions of regret and gratitude while the Egyptians prefer to use religious expressions.

Huwari and Al-Shboul (2015) quantitatively investigated the Jordanian EFL learners' perception of pragmatic transfer of refusal strategies regarding contextual and cultural factors. The data, obtained using a DCT and a questionnaire for extracting perception data which were analyzed according to the speaker's power to refuse the initiated act. The results were compared with similar works conducted on native speakers of English (Americans). Regarding commonness, the findings showed that there is a common perception knowledge shared by the members of different cultures. Regarding differences, the perception of the speaker's right was relatively higher than that of the Jordanian EFL Learners. As it was proven by Lee (2008), the native speakers assess their right of refusal based on their self-perception while the Jordanians go after the common perception.

Based on the above literature several notes can be taken to refer to literature gap. Regarding strategies, Tada (2005), Al-Eryani (2007), Sattar, Lah and Suleiman, (2011), Al-Shboul, Maros and Yasin (2012) and Morkus (2014) all investigated refusal strategies in terms of the sematic formula as end in themselves whereas Al- Abaadi (2005) and Huwari and Al-Shboul (2015) the sematic formula as a means to measure politeness. This gives the clue that only the latter two studies have dealt with the refusal strategies as face-threatening acts. In relation to type of participants, seven out of eight studies employed EFL learners as participants. Only Sattar, Lah and Suleiman (2011) employed ESL learners since English in Malaysia is considered a second language. With reference to method, Tada (2005), Al-Eryani (2007), Sattar, Lah and Suleilman (2011), Al-Shboul, Maros and Yasin (2012), Morkus (2014) and Lee (2008) adopted quantitative method and this, assumingly, due to the use of DCT as instrument. Bearing in mind that DCT elicits numerical concrete data which requires quantitative analysis. On the other hand, Al- Abaadi (2005) is the only Iraqi-context study and it adopted mixed-method approach. In terms of gender, none of the reviewed studies investigated the variable of gender under EFL context.

Thus, to bridge the gap, the researcher intends to investigate the social variable of gender in Iraqi EFL learners' context. The study will sample EFL learners as participants and will adopt quantitative approach to analyse numerical data. More details on how the data will be analysed is given in the next *Methodology* section.

## METHODOLOGY

### Philosophy of ontology

Regarding the origin of science, the researcher, being a positivist believing in the concrete single reality of knowledge. This knowledge can be epistemologically measured using a reliable instrument to glean concrete numerical countable data. Thus, the researcher adopted quantitative method to analyse the extracted data. In other words, the researcher intended to tests the speech act theory quantitatively under the influence of gender.

### Sample

The researcher drew a sample of 86 EFL learners from the English Language Department at the state College of Al-imam Al-kadhumi located in Diwaniya city centre. They are fourth-year undergraduates in their last semester. The sample included 43 learners of each gender to ensure equal participation of the two genders.

### Instrument

Being a basically quantitative study, the researcher employed a written DCT to

collect data from the two genders. The situations of DCT were adapted from Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari (2016) and were revised by two linguistics professors majoring in speech acts. Eight DCT situations were employed in which the students have been asked to refuse requests, invitations, suggestions and offers; three of each act respectively. Refer to the DCT in the Appendix.

### Variables

Two types of quantitative variables tested in the study are (1) dependent variables which are the refusal strategies and (2) the independent variables which are the two genders, i.e., male and female EFL learners. The study aims to test how the dependent variables, i.e., refusals are manipulated by the independent variables, i.e., gender. The way the variables are tested is achieved through tools which are discussed in the next sub-section.

### Research tool

The raw data were first sorted in Excel sheet and then SPSS version 22 have been utilized to test the above variables. Having two groups of gender, descriptive statistics and statistical tests were used. descriptive statistics were useful to show students tendencies and the T-tests were used to compare the means for significance difference. No manual calculations were need in this study.

**Data analysis**

The refusal strategies were analysed based on the taxonomy of Nelson, Al-Batal & El Bakry (2002) and Umale (2011) in which refusals are divided into direct and indirect ones depending on their semantic formula. Details of the model were already stated in the 'Introduction' section. Refer back to Table 2.

**RESULTS**

After the conduction of research, the researcher organized the data into male data and female data using Excel sheets. Then, the data were input into SPSS software to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. The following table reveals the mean values and standard deviation values are presented below.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of refusal strategies in terms gender.

	Refusal Strategy	Gender	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Flat refusal	Male	1.96	1.587
		Female	1.21	1.379
2	Negative ability	Male	1.15	1.120
		Female	1.16	1.151
3	Mitigated refusal	Male	0.35	0.629
		Female	0.68	0.989
4	Expressing wish	Male	1.45	1.347
		Female	2.00	1.594
5	Giving excuse/reason	Male	0.35	0.892
		Female	0.50	0.980
6	Expressing regret	Male	3.23	1.210
		Female	2.42	1.703
7	Offering an alternative	Male	0.35	0.629
		Female	0.29	0.565
8	Promise of acceptance in the future	Male	0.08	0.272
		Female	0.11	0.311
9	Statement of philosophy	Male	0.00	.000 <sup>a</sup>
		Female	0.00	.000 <sup>a</sup>
10	Statement of principle	Male	0.04	0.196
		Female	0.05	0.226
11	Repetition of question	Male	0.00	0.000 <sup>a</sup>
		Female	0.00	0.000 <sup>a</sup>

By looking at the means in Table 2, the first strategy (i.e., flat refusal) seems to exhibit gender variation since the two means are distinct where males have 1.96 (which can be approximated to 2) versus females mean

1.21. The standard deviation values in terms of gender (1.587 and 1.379) seem to be distinct, too.

Both fourth and sixth strategies (i.e., expressing wish and expressing regret) are

expected to exhibit gender variations since the difference in their respective means are unequal. The variation possibility increases when looking at the difference in their respective standard deviation values.

The rest of the refusal strategies do not seem to have any clues for gender variations as their mean values are almost

similar. But this is only assumption because we cannot rely on the descriptive statistics which are meant to show the tendency of data. Thus, the final call is given to the statistical test to reveal if these differences are significant or not. To this end, the following grouped t-tests are generated.

Table 3: Testing refusal strategies for gender variations

	Refusal strategy	Gender variation	t	df	Sig.	Mean difference
1	Flat refusal	Equal variances assumed	2.013	62	0.04	0.751
		Equal variances not assumed	1.960	48.707	0.05	0.751
2	Negative ability	Equal variances assumed	-0.013	62	0.98	-0.004
		Equal variances not assumed	-0.014	54.836	0.98	-0.004
3	Mitigated refusal	Equal variances assumed	-1.540	62	0.12	-0.338
		Equal variances not assumed	-1.670	61.738	0.10	-0.338
4	Expressing wish	Equal variances assumed	-0.403	62	0.68	-0.154
		Equal variances not assumed	-0.416	59.153	0.67	-0.154
5	Giving excuse/reason	Equal variances assumed	-0.640	62	0.52	-0.154
		Equal variances not assumed	-0.651	57.043	0.51	-0.154
6	Expressing regret	Equal variances assumed	2.088	62	0.04	0.810
		Equal variances not assumed	2.223	61.881	0.03	0.810
7	Offering an alternative	Equal variances assumed	0.376	62	0.70	0.057
		Equal variances not assumed	0.369	49.958	0.71	0.057
8	Promise of acceptance in the future	Equal variances assumed	-0.376	62	0.70	-0.028
		Equal variances not assumed	-0.386	58.268	0.70	-0.028
9	Statement of philosophy	Equal variances assumed	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>
		Equal variances not assumed	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>
10	Statement of principle	Equal variances assumed	-.259	62	0.79	-0.014
		Equal variances not assumed	-.267	58.496	0.79	-0.014
11	Repetition of question	Equal variances assumed	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>
		Equal variances not assumed	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>a</b>

To know if a difference of any two means are statistically significant or not, there is a need to look at the ‘Sig.’ value in the table which represents the significance level or p-value.

The p-value of the first strategy (flat refusal) is 0.04 and it is lower than the

alpha level 0.05. This indicates a statistical significant difference between the two genders' means. So, the primary possible difference that was expected in this strategy (concluded in Table 2) is now statistically confirmed. The t-value 2.013 is positive (+) so, this means that the males use more flat refusal than the females.

Regarding the earlier assumption about the possible gender difference in the fourth strategy (expressing wish), Table 3 shows that the p-value is 0.68 and it is higher than the alpha level 0.05. so, there is no statistical significant difference between the males and the females in the use of this type of refusal. This indicates that the gender difference of means discussed in Table 1 is due to a mere chance.

Table 3 also shows that the p-value of the sixth strategy (expressing wish) is 0.04 which less than the alpha level 0.05. This indicates a statistical significant difference between the two genders' means. Thus, the primary assumption concluded already in Table 1 is now confirmed. The t-value 2.088 has a positive sign and this means that the males use more 'expressing regret' refusals than the females.

It is worthy to mention that all other strategies do not exhibit any significant gender variation because their respective p-values are higher than the alpha level 0.05. This ultimately means that gender variations are there but they are partial. In other words, only two refusal strategies (flat refusal and expressing regret) are significantly different.

Thus, the answer of the first research question “*What are the gender variations of refusal expressed by Iraqi EFL learners?*” is that there is a partial gender variation at these two refusal

strategies which are: (1) flat refusal and (2) expressing regret. Both of which were used dominantly by the males.

To answer the second research question about the directness of refusals, there is a need to statistically test the gender difference using t-test. In here, the strategies are grouped into direct and indirect as shown already in Table 1. Before doing this test, the direct refusal strategies (i.e., ‘flat refusal’ and ‘negative ability’) must be added for total to get the overall direct refusals. On the other hand, the indirect refusal strategies (i.e., ‘mitigated refusal, expressing wish, giving excuse/reason, expressing regret, offering an alternative, promise of acceptance in the future, statement of philosophy, statement of principle and repetition of question’) must be added for total to get the overall indirect refusals. In this respect, the following table shows the grouped totals of the mean values in terms of directness.

Table 4: Means of direct and indirect refusal strategies

Strategy	Gender	Mean	Totals
Direct	Males	1.555	1.371
	Females	1.185	
Indirect	Males	0.651	0.763
	Females	0.877	

Based on the tabulation above and in terms of direct refusals, the males appear to use a

few more direct refusals than the females with a difference of  $1.555 - 1.185 = 0.371$ . A few more is the gender difference of the indirect refusals where  $0.877 - 0.651 = 0.226$ . So, the females hold a difference of only 0.226 indirect refusal which is also

marginal. These numbers, although low, but they don't indicate that there is no significant difference unless the statistical test are performed. Thus, a t-test was generated and the results are given in the following table.

Table 5: Testing gender variations in terms of directness.

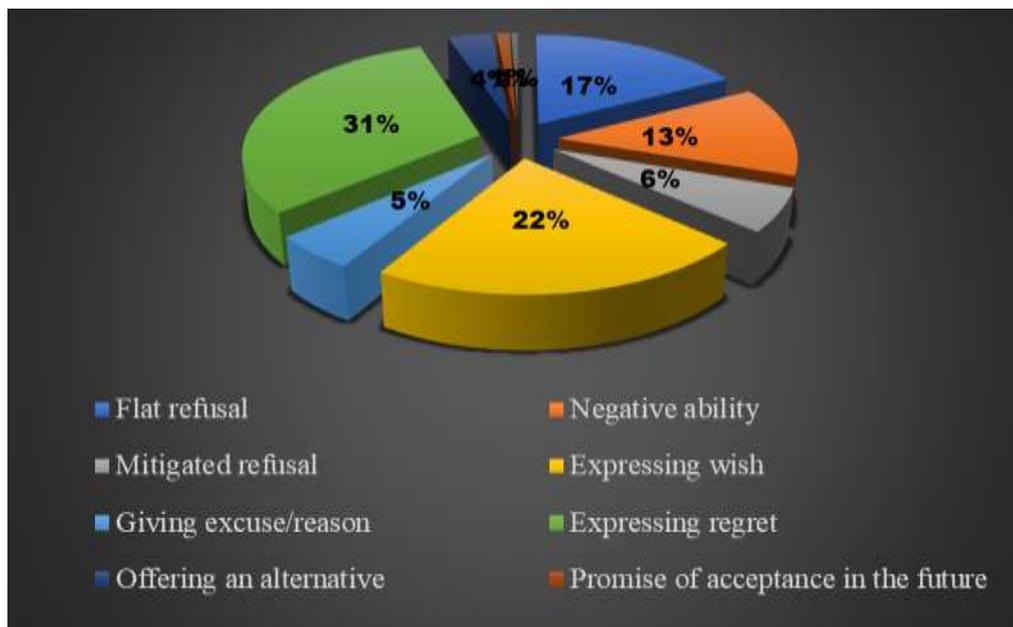
Refusal strategy	Gender variation	t	df	Sig.	Mean difference
Direct	Equal variances assumed	2.272	62	0.02	0.747
	Equal variances not assumed	2.182	46.095	0.03	0.747
Indirect	Equal variances assumed	0.385	62	0.71	0.178
	Equal variances not assumed	0.403	60.637	0.68	0.178

The 'sig.' (p-value) of the direct refusal section is 0.02 and it is less than the alpha level 0.05. This means that there is a significant gender difference between the males and the females in the use of direct refusal. The p-value has a positive sign and this indicates that the males used more direct refusals than the females. Regarding the indirect refusals section, the 'sig.' 0.71 is greater than the alpha level 0.05. So, no significant gender difference is found in terms of indirect refusals. So, the answer of

the second research question "*To what extent do the two genders differ in terms of directness?*" is that the males use more direct refusals than the females.

Now it is the turn to answer the third research question which is about the most frequent refusal strategy used by Iraqi EFL learners. To do this, a look at the percentages shall give enough information for judgement and thus Figure 1 is presented for this purpose.

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Thus, based on the above percentages, it was found that the most frequent refusal strategy used by the Iraqi EFL learners is 'expressing regret' forming 31%. So, the answer of the third research question "What is the most frequent refusal strategy expressed by Iraqi EFL learners?" is 'expressing regret' refusal.

## DISCUSSION

The results that gender variation is partial (i.e., limited to some strategies) is, in fact, expected by the researcher since the participants are EFL learners and thus, they are not expected to be familiar with all the native refusal strategies. Bearing in mind that the speech act of refusal is not there in the Iraqi English textbooks; neither at the secondary school level nor at the university level. That is the reason gender variation became limited to two strategies: 1) flat

refusal and (2) expressing regret. In effect, although not there in the textbooks, both *flat refusal* and *expressing regret* are basic and common to the EFL learners' knowledge and that is why they were employed with high frequency.

In term of direct refusals, the study revealed that the use of direct refusal (i.e., flat refusal) 'No' was very frequent by the males more than these by the females. This result agrees with a study by Arani and Tehrani (2013) who found that "the female tends to use more indirect refusals than the male" (Sharqawi, 2021: 46). On the other hand, a gender study by Abed (2011) showed that the use of direct or indirect refusals was not governed by the gender of the participants. In other words, gender effect over the type of refusal strategies.

However, in term of indirect refusals, the current study revealed that the males used more 'expressing regret'

refusals than the females who also overused such refusals but not as much as the males. Ultimately, regardless of numbers, because the 'expressing regret' strategy was both used by both genders, it was considered the most common strategy used by the Iraqi EFL learners in general.

## CONCLUSION

This is a gender-based study where both descriptive and inferential statistics were to

obtain powerful judgement of the results. The study was guided by three research questions; two are gender-related and one is non-gender. The results of the study can be summed up as follows: (1) The males significantly use more 'flat refusal' and 'expressing regret' strategies than the females. (2) The males significantly use more direct refusals than the females. (3) The most common refusal strategy used by Iraqi EFL learners is 'expressing regret'.

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