



In The name of God most gracious most merciful

**The Art of Saying No: A Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Comparison
of Saudi and Australian Refusal Appropriateness Applied in
Academic settings**

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DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

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“He who does not thank God does not thank people”

Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him

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Abstract

The purpose of this present study is to investigate the cross-cultural pragmatics of refusal speech acts generated by Saudi native Arabic speakers and Australian native English speakers in academic settings. The Instrumentation of data collection developed by the study utilised a combination of discourse completion tests and role play. The participants in this study were composed of four groups: Saudi teachers, Australian teachers, Saudi students, and Australian students. Twenty Saudi teachers and students were interviewed in Um Al-Qura University in Makkah city, and resulted in 180 refusals. Similarly, twenty Australian teachers and students were interviewed in Adelaide University in Adelaide city, and resulted in 180 refusals as well. Each given refusal was analysed into speech acts and strategies, and formed semantic formulas for the given refusals. The generated data was analysed to identify the contrasting strategies adopted by both language speakers while formulating their refusal utterances and its frequencies. After determining the unshared refusal strategies among the counter participants of the study, further investigations were carried on, and collected from other participants to shed some light on the understandings and interpretations formed by the different language speakers. It was found that while all groups applied indirect refusal strategies adopting many similar strategies, they differed in many aspects, such as: length, strategies, frequencies, and content of the semantic formulas. The findings of this study also suggest that people from both countries when

using unshared refusal strategies, risk threatening the face of both interlocutors by sending negative messages and conveying negative personal images while interacting with each other. Another conclusion of the study suggests the inappropriateness of using written discourse completion tests, which have been conducted by most of the previous studies, as they fail to convey the Arabic language used in real life activities rather than formal written forms.