REFUSAL STRATEGY PERFORMED BY INDONESIAN EFL LEARNER

Nenden Sri Rahayu
Bale Bandung University, Indonesia
E-mail: nendensrirahayu1212@gmail.com

Abstract: The research investigates the speech act recognition of refusing as made by Indonesian learners of English as a foreign language, native Indonesian, and native English. It involves three groups: 13 Indonesian EFL Learners (IELs), 13 Indonesian Native Speakers (INSs), and 13 American Native Speakers (NSs) of English. They were asked to respond to ten different situations, in which they carry out the speech act of refusal. Their strategies in refusing were compared one another in order to find out whether the refusal performed by Indonesian EFL Learner (IELs) correspond more closely with those of the Indonesian Native Speakers (INSs) or with speakers of the target language, the American Native Speakers (NSs). The data, collected from a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) which was developed by Blum-Kulka, were analyzed and categorized based on Azis's categories (2000). Results indicated that although a similar range of refusal strategies were available to the two language groups, cross-cultural variation still exists. The data involved some contextual variables, which include the status of interlocutors (higher, equal, or lower status) and eliciting acts, i.e., requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions.
Keywords: *Indonesian EFL Learners; interlanguage pragmatics; refusal strategy; speech act.*

INTRODUCTION

To use language is to perform actions or utter what people intend to others in everyday conversation. McArthur states that the most basic and widespread linguistics means of conducting human affairs is through conversation. In conversation, we usually find out some of language function, such as stating, requesting, inviting, greeting, and promise (Finnegan 1993; Austin 1962). Those language functions are being performed corresponding to the type of attitude being expressed.

An utterance that needs an act is called speech act. Speech act is performed to receive a respond from the hearer, but sometimes speaker fails to gain the referred respond from the hearer. It happens when the hearer do not realize of what the speaker's intention. For example, when you asked someone to accompany you to the market and she refuses to go with you by saying, "Sorry, I can't go with you." That utterance is called refusal.

We usually realize that it is hard to refuse due to some consideration, i.e. power, familiarity, sex, and age. For example, when your neighbor, who is an old woman, asks you to do something and you are not able to do it. However, you try not to insult her by refusing her request. In this case, you need to make an appropriate refusal to reject her request. In this case, you need to make an appropriate refusal to reject her request in order to save hearer's face. It will be different when you have to refuse your close friend, you might say the truth or give her a simple excuse that you cannot fulfill his/her request.

Refusal and rejection can be defined as a disapproval of the speaker's intention. There are some ways that are usually applied in performing refusal actions in order to reassure the speaker that he/she has an appropriate reason, i.e. refusal strategy. As stated by Bardovi-Harlig (2001), refusers need to take their own status and the face threatening nature of refusal into

consideration and employ strategies to maintain the status balance.

Male and female speak in different way in community. Society tends to expect female to have better behavior than male. In certain situation, some forms of words are only used by woman and others use by male (Holmes, 2001). Since female is considered having secondary role in society, they are expected to use more standard form than male. Thus, standard forms claim to be associated with female values and femininity. Meanwhile, male prefer using vernacular form to standard language because male considers macho and vernacular forms can show masculinity and toughness.

Speech acts

Speech acts refers to an act that one performed when making an utterance, for example, giving order and making promises (Austin, 1969). In line with this, some philosophers as cited in Blum Kulka (1987) mention that linguistic expressions are not the minimal units of human communication, but the performances that contain kinds of acts, namely, making statements, advising, thanking, apologizing, and many more. The performance of several acts that happens at once is speech act. It is distinguished by different aspect of the speaker's intention. Those are the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, such as requesting, promising, refusing, and how one is trying to affect hearer.

Producing an utterance in performed actions will consist of three related acts. Austin (1969) and Yule (1996) explained the three kinds of actions related to utterance: 1) locutionary, simple act of saying something and producing a meaningful linguistic expressions of what you say; 2) illocutionary, producing a meaningful utterance, such as statement, offer, explanation, etc; and 3) perlocutionary, what is done in the act or doing something without intending it to have an effect.

Refusal theory

Refusal can be used in response to requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions. Refusal is the act that shows one's inability or unwillingness to perform the request for some reasons whether it is expected sincerely or not (Azis 2000). Refusals, as all the other speech acts, occur in all languages. However, not all languages/cultures refuse in the same way nor do they feel comfortable refusing the same invitation or suggestion. The speech act of refusal occur when a speaker directly or indirectly says 'no' to request or invitation. Refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/requester/inviter, because it contradicts his or her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies. Thus, it requires a high level of pragmatic competence. Chen (1996) used semantic formula to analyze speech act sets of refusal (refusing requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions), and concluded that direct refusal as "NO" was not a common strategy for any of the subjects, regardless of their language background.

Speakers who may be considered fluent in a second language due to their mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of that language may still lack pragmatic competence; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate. In cross-cultural communication, refusals are known as 'striking points' for many non native speakers (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliz-Weltz, 1990). Refusals can be tricky speech acts to perform linguistically and psychologically since the possibility of offending the interlocutor is inherent in the act itself (Know, 2004). As a face-threatening act, a sensitive pragmatic task and high pragmatic competence concern constructing refusals. As a failure to refuse appropriately can risk the interpersonal relations of the speakers, refusals usually include various strategies to avoid offending one's interlocutors. However, the choice of these strategies may vary across languages and cultures.

Refusal is disapproval of the speaker's idea and thus may threat the speaker's face. When someone refuses to do something that the speaker expects. It means the speaker

does not have a successful interaction. While acceptance or agreement tends to use direct language without much delay, mitigation, or explanation, refusal tends to be indirect. Refusal contains mitigation, or delayed within the turn or across turns. In addition, refusal often begins with a token agreement or acceptance or with an expression of appreciation or apology and usually includes an explanation. Refusal strategies function to reassure the speaker that s/he will accept it but there are appropriate reasons to refuse it.

Based on Beebe *et al.* (1990), refusals can be classified into two categories, namely direct and indirect categories. Those two categories consist of several strategies. The refusal strategy is ways that are usually applied by the speaker in performing refusal actions in order to reassure the speaker that s/he has an appropriate reason.

Azis (2000) stated that there are 11 strategies of refusing, which considers social factors such as gender, age, setting, distance, power, ranking of imposition, and the seriousness of losing face. These strategies are adopted as the framework of this research. Those strategies are:

1. Direct No - The speaker will say 'No' directly and it is followed by short explanation this is commonly used by powerful person to person of a lower status.
2. Hesitation and lack enthusiasm - The speaker doesn't utter his/her willingness or inability directly, but she tries to manipulate words of courtesy to save his/her face.
3. Offer an alternative - Both the speaker and the hearer intend to save their face, so the speaker offers an alternative to the speaker who commit to his/her plan.
4. Postponement - The hearer will have uncertain feeling to make up their mind to accept or refuse the action, because the speaker needs more time to do it.
5. Put the blame to third party - The speaker will scapegoat a third party to prevent them from fulfilling the hearer's request by avoiding consequences like blames, curse, grumbles, etc.

6. General acceptance with excuse - Expressing the speaker's inability to accept the request. The speaker will express his/her feeling of sympathy or giving appreciation that shows.
7. Giving reason and explanation - This is indirect refusal and it shows vague of the speaker's refusal, so the interlocutor has to wait for the explanation
8. Complaining and criticizing - It is used to avoid using 'no' and the speaker complains the action.
9. Conditional yes - This strategy shows intention of the speaker to do the action after they completed the certain conditions.
10. Questioning the justification - This strategy is employed to ensure of what has been heard and it is also used to avoid of saying no directly. In other words, the speaker pretends not to hear the question clearly.
11. Threatening - It is considered as blunt refusal since it can be perceived more than refusal. It is likely the requesters would reconsider the request.

Politeness, relative power and social distance

In explaining the use of refusal strategies, politeness plays an important role, as stated by Holmes (2001) that politeness involves taking account of the feelings of others. When it comes to refusing, the addressee is the main concern. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson (1987) stated that politeness involves us showing an awareness of other people's face wants. The way we refuse to our superior will be quite different with the way we refuse to our close relatives. Refusing "involves assessing social relationships along the dimension of social distance and relative power or status" (Holmes, 2001).

The two dimensions provide the basis for distinguishing two kinds of politeness, namely positive and negative politeness (Holmes, 2001). Holmes (2001) futher elaborates, "positive politeness is solidarity oriented. It emphasizes shared attitudes and values. By contrast, negative politeness pays

people respect and avoids intruding on them. Negative politeness involves expressing oneself appropriately in terms of social distance and respecting status differences."

Maintaining negative politenes means applying relative power differences. As Thomas (1995) pointed out that we tend to apply a greater degree of indirectness with people having some power or authority over us than those who do not. In applying it, the social distance is heightened and the relative power or power is recognized.

Meanwhile, maintaining positive politeness means preserving the positive face of other people (Peccei, 1999). She further explaines that when we use positive politeness, we use speech strategies that emphasize our solidarity with the addressee. In other words, relative power is less recognized and the social distance is minimized.

It is difficult to draw a clear distinction between relative power or power and social distance and in fact some studies conflate the two. Initially, power and social distance were identified as separate dimensions, but in pratice, the distinction was not maintained. Thomas (1995) further elaborates the reason why we are so often baffled is that power and social distance very frequently co-occur—we tend to be socially distant from those in power over us, yet this is not always the case.

In the context of this research, relative power or power is the main social dimension. This is due to the fact that the DCT items were all status-based. Social distance was the secondary basis for the DCT development.

Interlanguage pragmatics
Since one group of the participants is a group of Indonesian EFL Learners (IELs), thus, the refusal strategies they apply involve pragmatics transfer from L1 to L2. This calls for the review of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) in order to explain the refusal strategies of the IELs. Kasper (in Linde, 2009) defines ILP as "the study of nonnative speakers' comprehension, production, and acquisition of linguistic action in L2, or put

briefly, ILP investigates how to do things with words in a second language." Linde (2009) further stated that learners' interlanguage is resulting from three overlapping influences or sources: pragmatic transfer, pragmatic overgeneralization, and teaching induced errors. In the context of this research, it mainly concerns with pragmatic transfer which is refferred to as the use of L1 pragmatic knowledge to understand or carry out linguistic action in the L2. In other words, pragmatic transfer deals with the influence of the first language and the first culture to the production of refusal strategies in L2.

Kasper (in Franch, 1998) further explains that based on the interrelatedness of language and culture, she identifies two different types of pragmatic transfer, namely pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. Pragmalinguistic transfer refers to the process in which the learners choose particular strategies and forms from their L1 to convey to their interlanguage. Sociolinguistic transfer is rooted in culturally different perceptions of the importance of context-internal and context-external variables (Barron in Linde, 2009).

Distinctive manifestations of pragmatic transfer have been reviewed in the literature, i.e. interference or negative transfer and facilitative or positive transfer (Franch, 1998). Franch further elaborates that the influence of one language to another may resulting in excessive use of one form or function and under-use or avoidance of forms or functions.

Positive pragmatic transfer derives from the successful extrapolation of L1 sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge into L2 due to similarities shared by the two languages. Rose and Kasper (in Linde, 2009) suggest that learners may benefit from a corresponding form-function mapping between L1 and L2 if the forms used similar to L2 contexts and effects. Meanwhile, negative pragmatic transfer results from the inappropriate projection of first language based sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge onto second

language context, thus leading to sociopragmatic or pragmalinguistic failure (Linde, 2009).

The present study is aimed at investigating the refusal performed by Indonesian Native Speakers (INSs), Indonesian EFL Learners (IELs), and American Native Speakers (NSs). Thus, the problems raised in this study are formulated into the following questions; 1) What kinds of refusal strategies are employed by Native by Indonesian Native Speakers (INSs), Indonesian EFL Learners (IELs) and American Native Speakers (NSs) of English? and 2) When do Indonesian EFL Learners (IELs) perform the speech act of refusal? Are their refusal strategies similar to those used by American Native Speakers (NSs) of English?

METHOD

This study is a case study conducted based on descriptive qualitative method. Alwasilah (2002) explained that the objective of qualitative research is to obtain the descriptive data. The participants were 39 people who are divided into three groups; 13 Indonesian Native Speakers (INSs), 13 Indonesian EFL Learners (IELs), and 13 American Native Speakers (NSs). All of the subjects were asked to fill out a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The DCT is a form of questionnaire depicting some natural situations to which the respondents are expected to respond making refusals. This test was originally designed by Blum-Kulka in 1982 and has been widely used since then in collecting data on speech acts realization both within and across language groups. The written role-playing questionnaire consists of ten situations. The questionnaire on refusal was divided into four categories:

refusals to (1) requests, (2) invitations, (3) offers, and (4) suggestions. Each type included a status differential: higher, equal, or lower. The responses of the three groups will be compared to each other to find out to what extent the Indonesian learners of English manipulate their pragmatic competence of the target language to refuse in English. For the INSs, the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian with the necessary changes in the names of people and places to make them more familiar with the situations.

The data collected through the Discourse-Completion-Test were analyzed based on the categorization employed by Azis (2000). The data were then coded based on the order of semantic formulas used in each refusal. The total number of semantic formulas of each kind used for each situation was obtained for each of the three subject groups. Then, the writer counted the frequency of each formula for each situation and listed them. Finally, the similarities and differences between INSs, IELs and NSs responses were counted and analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Refusal strategies employed by American Native Speakers (NSs) of English
Based on the DCT, the following data was yielded. As it can be seen in Table 1, American NSs speak indirectly in refusing. There were some strategies used by them, they mostly conducted the refusal by giving reasons and explanations (26%), applying direct no (22%), applying general acceptance with excuse (17%), offering alternative (13%), applying conditional yes (7%), hesitating (6%), postponing (3%), and complaining and criticizing (2%).

Table 1. *American NSs of English refusal strategies in general*

No.	The Stategies	The occurences of the strategies	
		$\sum$	%
1.	Direct no	29	22%
2.	Hesitation	9	6%
3.	Offering alternative	17	13%
4.	Postponement	4	3%
5.	Put the blame to the third party	1	0.8%

6.	General acceptance with excuse	22	17%
7.	Giving reason and explanation	34	26%
8.	Complaining and criticizing	3	2%
9.	Conditional yes	10	7%
10.	Questioning the justification	0	0%
11.	Threatening	1	0.8%

Refusal strategies employed by Indonesian Native Speakers (INSs)

In general, Indonesian native speakers (INSs) applied indirect refusal strategies. Based on Table 2, the strategies they apply are, among others, giving reason and explanation (32%), direct no (18%), postponement (16%), offering alternative (12%), etc.

Table 2. *INSs refusal strategies in general*

No.	The Stategies	The occurrences of the strategies	
		$\sum$	**%**
1.	Direct no	24	18%
2.	Hesitation	4	3%
3.	Offering alternative	16	12%
4.	Postponement	22	16%
5.	Put the blame to the third party	4	3%
6.	General acceptance with excuse	3	2%
7.	Giving reason and explanation	42	32%
8.	Complaining and criticizing	2	1%
9.	Conditional yes	5	4%
10.	Questioning the justification	3	2%
11.	Threatening	5	4%

Refusal strategies employed by Indonesian EFL Learners (IELs)

Based on the DCT with ten situations, Table 3 shows the overall result. The data showed that most IELs speak indirectly in refusing. There were some strategies used by them, they mostly conducted the refusal by giving reasons and explanations (34%). They offered alternative (17%), applied the general ecceptance with excuse stategy (14%), applied 'direct no' (11%), applied postponement (10%), and put the blame to the third party (5%).

Table 3. *IELs refusal strategies in general*

No.	The Stategies	The occurrences of the strategies	
		$\sum$	**%**
1.	Direct no	15	11%
2.	Hesitation	4	0.3%
3.	Offering alternative	23	17%
4.	Postponement	14	10%
5.	Put the blame to the third party	7	5%
6.	General acceptance with excuse	19	14%
7.	Giving reason and explanation	44	34%
8.	Complaining and criticizing	1	0.8%
9.	Conditional yes	2	1%
10.	Questioning the justification	0	0%
11.	Threatening	1	0.8%

Relative power dimension

Related to status, NSs can easily say no directly when their position is lower, equal or higher than the requester, e.g. among friends, from the boss to the servant, etc. It can be seen from all four stimuli, direct no strategy was consistently used. Table 4 depicts such use of direct no, as in the

invitation, all three status, i.e. lower, equal, and higher, applied direct no with the percentage of 15%, 8%, and 31%, subsequently. In the request stimulus, direct no was also used in equal and higher status

with the percentage of 31%. Furthermore, in the offer stimulus, direct no was also used in the equal and higher status with the percentage of 38% and 62%.

Table 4. *Relative power dimension of NSs refusal strategies*

Stimulus Type	Refuser status (relative to interlocultor)	Situation	Refusal Strategies
Invitation	Lower	9	Giving reason and explanation (62%); general acceptance with excuse (23%); Direct no (15%)
	Equal	6	Offering altenative (31%); General acceptance with excuse (31%); Giving reason and explanation (23%); Direct no (8%); Postponement (8%)
	Higher	5	Direct no (31%); General acceptance with excuse (23%); Giving reason and explanation (15%)
Request	Lower	2	Giving reason and explanation (31%); Conditional yes (23%); General acceptance with excuse (15%); Offering alternative (15%)
	Equal	4	Direct no (31%); Offer alternative (31%); Giving reason and explanation (23%); Conditional yes (15%)
	Higher	10	Direct no (31%); Offer alternative (31%): Giving reason and explanation (23%); Conditional yes (15%)
Offer	Lower	7	General acceptance with excuse (31%); Giving reason and explanation (15%)
	Equal	3	Direct no (38%); General acceptance with excuse (23%); Giving reason and explanation (15%); complaining and criticizing (15%)
	Higher	1	Direct no (62%); Giving reason and explanation (23%)
Suggestion	Equal	8	Hesitation and lack of enthusiasm (46%); Giving reason and explanation (31%); Conditional yes (15%)

Such use of direct no also promotes solidarity and less distant social distance. With minimized social distance, the NSs are trying to maintain the positive face of the addressee. This is in line with the previous research on NSs refusal strategies which was conducted by Honglin (2007). He stated that NSs value equality, therefore they are not sensitive to social rank. NSs may use similar type of refusal speech acts to refuse anyone, regardless of his social status. The more distant the social distance, the more indirect the refusal speech acts.

Indonesian native speakers (INSs) mostly applied indirect refusal strategies in their responses. As depicted in Table 5, giving reason and explanation and postponement dominated the strategies applied either in the lower, equal and higher status in all three stimuli. However, in the higher status of the offer stimulus, direct no dominated the strategy with 62%. In the higher status of invitation stimulus, direct no was the second strategy mostly used by the INSs with 23%.

Table 5. *Relative power dimension of INSs refusal strategies*

Stimulus Type	Refuser status (relative to interlocultor)	Situation	Refusal Strategies
Invitation	Lower	9	Giving reason and explanation (69%); Direct no (23%)
	Equal	6	Giving reason and explanation (31%); Postponement (31%):

	Refuser status	Situation	Refusal Strategies
			Offering alternative (23%); Put the blame to the third party (8%)
	Higher	5	Postponement (38%):Direct no (23%): Giving reason and explanation (15%)
Request	Lower	2	Giving reason and explanation (54%); Put the blame to the third party (15%); Hesitation (15%)
	Equal	4	Giving reason and explanation (62%); Conditional yes (15%)
	Higher	10	Postponement (46%); Offer alternative (46%)
Offer	Lower	7	General acceptance with excuse (23%); Direct no (23%): Giving reason and explanation (15%): Conditional yes (15%): Put the blame to the third party (8%);
	Equal	3	Giving reason and explanation (46%); Direct no (15%); Postponement (15%): Conditional yes (15%).
	Higher	1	Direct no (62%); Giving reason and explanation (15%)
Suggestion	Equal	8	Offer alternative (31%); Postponement (15%): Direct no (15%); Giving reason and explanation (15%);Threatening (15%)

NSs can easily said no directly when their position is equal than the requester. On the other hand, INSs tend to use reason and explanation in refusing when their positions are lower than the requester, e.g. the worker to the boss, the student to the professor, etc. Furthermore, Indonesian mostly offer another alternative or give reason and explanation when their position are equal or higher than the requester, e.g. from the professor to the students, among friends, etc.

IELs can easily said no directly when their position is higher than the requester, e.g. the boss to the servant. As depicted on Table 6, direct no is highly used in the offer stimuli only in higher status with the percentage of 62%. Furthermore, they tend to use giving reason and explanation and general acceptance with excuse in refusing when their positions are lower than the requester or equal with them, e.g. the worker to the boss, the student to the professor, among friends etc.

Table 6. *Relative power dimension of IELs refusal strategies*

Stimulus Type	Refuser status (relative to interlocultor)	Situation	Refusal Strategies
Invitation	Lower	9	Giving reason and explanation (69%); general acceptance with excuse (15%); Offer alternative (15%)
	Equal	6	Offering altenative (31%); Giving reason and explanation (31%); Postponement (23%)
	Higher	5	General acceptance with excuse (31%); Postponement (31%):Giving reason and explanation (23%)
Request	Lower	2	Giving reason and explanation (38%); Put the blame to the third party (23%); Hesitation (15%)
	Equal	4	Giving reason and explanation (46%); General acceptance (23%);Offer alternative (15%)
	Higher	10	Offer alternative (69%): Postponement (15%)
Offer	Lower	7	General acceptance with excuse (46%); Put the blame to the third party (31%); Postponement (15%)
	Equal	3	Giving reason and explanation (46%); Direct no (23%); General acceptance with excuse (15%)
	Higher	1	Direct no (62%); Giving reason and explanation (38%)
suggestion	Equal	8	Hesitation and lack of enthusiasm (46%); Giving reason and explanation (31%); Conditional yes (15%)

IELs also apply a distinctive refusal strategy of their L1, which is put the blame to the third party, when they are in the lower position. Table 6 depicts this use in the request stimuli in the lower status with the percentage of 23% an also in the offer

stimuli in the lower status with the percentage of 31%.

Thus, based on the strategies IELs applied, i.e. the direct no when they are in the higher status, giving reason and explanation and general acceptance when they are in lower or equal status, and the distinctive put the blame to the third party strategy when they are in lower status, conform to the notion of negative pragmatic transfer. In terms of the refusal strategies that can be referred to as pragmalinguistic aspect, they do not apply the strategies of the L2. Furthermore, in terms of sociopragmatic aspect, the strategies they applied correspond more closely to the L1 culture.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data, Indonesian EFL learners (IELs) tend to use their native culture in refusing request, offer, invitation, and suggestion. The most different strategy used among the three groups are 'directly say no' and 'put the blame on the third party'. Most NSs easily say 'no' directly when they want to refuse compared to INSs and IEs. Furthermore, Most INSs and IEs used the strategy of 'putting the blame on the third party' which is rarely used by NSs. It means that IELs are still influenced more by their native language and culture rather than their target language. In Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP), these IELs are undergoing negative pragmatic transfer as the refusal strategies they apply conform to their L1 culture.

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