

# A Comparative Study on Refusals in English by Indonesian Learners and Native Speakers of English

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## ABSTRACT

This article compares refusals in English by Indonesian learners and native speakers of English. The study was done within the framework of pragmatics and particularly under the scope of speech acts. The goal was to get to know the refusals made by the two groups of respondent in terms of the number of speech act, the forms of speech acts, and the politeness strategy used in the refusals. The research involved 30 respondents consisting of 15 Indonesian Learners and 15 native speakers of English, who were Australians. The Indonesian learners were the second year students of the English Department of Universitas Gadjah Mada, while the native speakers were the students of the Indonesian Language and Culture Learning Service (INCULS) of the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta. The result showed that both groups of respondent shared some similarities in terms of the form of speech act used in their refusals. However, compared to the Indonesian learners, some of the native speakers expressed refusals in single speech acts and a combination of two speech acts. Fewer refusals by the native speakers were expressed in a combination of three and four speech acts. Another finding was that the two groups applied different politeness strategy to their refusals. Some of the Indonesian learners showed deference on their refusals, while some of the native speakers gave offers on their refusals. This study hopefully gives more insights about pragmatics, especially about refusal, and is also useful and helpful for other similar studies in the future.

**Key words:** refusals - speech acts - pragmatics - politeness strategy

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a means of communication; people use it express what is on their mind. Finnegan et al. (1992, 3) stated that language has been viewed as a vehicle of

thought, a system of expression that mediates the transfer of thought from one person to another. They also claimed (p. 305) that “language is principally a tool for doing things”. For instance, people use requests to

ask for or offer something or to invite others or they use refusals to refuse something.

When people refuse a request or an offer, it means that they are unwilling to do what is expected by the speaker. In the other way around, if they accept or affirm the request, it means that they will do what are expected in the request or the offer. This is what so called *speech act*; when people say something, they actually do something (Austin 1999, 22). In other words, speech acts are “actions that are carried out through language” (Finnegan, et al. 1992, 307).

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (Hornby 1995, 981) *refusal* is the noun of verb *to refuse* which means “to say or show that one is unwilling to give, accept or do something“. When people are unwilling to accept requests, offers, or invitations, they will say or show something to refuse them. They will refuse through verbal utterances, such as “no”, “sorry” or other inability expression, such as “I can’t” or “I don’t think”. Sometimes they refuse by using body language, such as shaking head their head or waving their hands.

In making any utterances, however, people should consider many aspects such as effectiveness, politeness, harmony, etc. For example, they have to consider how the

hearer fulfill the requests effectively; or in making refusals we have to think how the hearer will not feel threatened or insulted when their requests are refused. They also have to consider politeness and appropriateness of their utterances. These aspects are built and somehow influenced by external and internal factor of the speakers, one of which is culture. Indonesian learners and native English speakers are born and living in different culture and way of life, which are likely to affect the way they communicate and interact with other people, such as how they refuse to someone’s request or offer. Because of that, it is interesting to find out how the Indonesian learners differ from the native speakers in producing refusals; in order to see in what way they are similar, and in what way they are different.

### **Objective of the Study**

This article attempts to find out how the Indonesian learners differ from the English native speakers in producing refusals in English. To be specified this article tries to compare refusals made by native speakers of English and Indonesian learners in terms of the number of speech acts, the forms of speech acts, and the politeness strategy.

### **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The discussion in this article is limited to the analysis of verbal refusals made

by the respondents. Therefore, any refusals by using body languages are excluded. The analysis was based on speech act aspects, which are in terms of the number and the form, as well as the application of politeness strategy. It does not discuss the grammatical or syntactic aspects of the refusals made by the respondents.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **Pragmatics**

Studies on refusals are usually done within the framework of pragmatics. Pragmatics is the study on how a language is used to communicate (Parker, 1986:11). Levinson (1983, 9) defines pragmatics as the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticallized, or encoded in the structure of language. A study on pragmatics is always related to study of *deixis*, *implicature*, *presupposition*, *speech acts*, and *discourse aspects* (Cruse 2004, 313). Interestingly, pragmatics was born from philosophers' ideas instead of from linguists (Mey 1993, 18). Generally pragmatics is *the study of meaning in contexts* (Searle, Kiefer and Blerwich 1980, ix). Leech (1983, 13) defines contexts as things which are related to physical and social environment of utterances or both background knowledge owned by both

speakers and hearers which supports the understanding of the utterances.

### **Speech Acts**

Refusal is one form of speech acts (Vanderveken 1990, 182). In order to understand it, it is good for us to know the theory of speech acts. It was John L. Austin, an English philosopher, who created the theory. In his speech, which was then published in 1962 entitled *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin (1962, 98-99) argues that when people say something they actually do something. Speech acts are "actions that are carried out through language" (Finnegan, et al. 1992, 307).

Searle (1975) claims that all utterances contain meaning of actions and the smallest parts of communication is speech act such as to request, refuse, apologize, command, gratitude, etc. Finegan et al. (pp. 307-308) define each type of speech acts as follows:

1. *Representatives* are speech acts that represent a state of affairs, e.g. assertions, claims, hypotheses, descriptions and suggestions. Representatives can generally be characterized as being true or false.
2. *Commissives* are speech acts that commit a speaker to a course of actions, e.g. promises, pledges, threats and vows.

3. *Directives* are speech acts intended to get the addressee to carry out an action, e.g. commands, requests, challenges, invitations, entreaties and dares.
4. *Declarations* are speech acts that bring about the state of affairs, e.g. blessings, firings, baptism, arrests, marrying, dismissing a case.
5. *Expressives* are speech acts that indicate the speaker's psychological state or attitude, e.g. greetings, apologies, congratulations, condolences and thanksgiving.
6. *Verdictives* are speech acts that make assessments or judgments, e.g. ranking, assessing, appraising and condoning.

Based on the list above, refusals belong to *expressives* as they indicate the speaker's psychological state or attitude. Through refusals people express their unwillingness to do what are expected in the request or the offer.

### **Refusals**

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby 1995, 981), *refusal* is the noun of verb *to refuse* which means "to say or show that one is unwilling to give, accept or do something". When people are unwilling to accept requests, offers, or invitations, they will say or show something to refuse. They say refusals

through verbal utterances such as "no" or other inability expression such as "I can't" or "I don't think", and they show refusals through body language, for instance by shaking their head or waving their hands.

There have been several studies on refusals, one of which was conducted by Turnbull and Saxton (1996). Turnbull and Saxton (1996, 156) found that refusals in English commonly have form as follow: "Sorry, I'd love to, but I'm working then so I don't think I can make it. I could do it next week." In other words, in a refusal utterance, there are a series of speech acts such as apology (*Sorry*), showing sympathy (*I'd love to*), giving reasons (*but I'm working then*), telling inability (*so I don't think I can make it*), and giving an offer (*I could do it next week*). Using such a long sentence is purposed to maintain the listeners or hearer's feeling towards the refusal.

### **The Principles of Cooperation**

The principles of cooperation are required in a communication so that both the speaker and the hearer will be able to understand the intention and the goal they expect (Finegan 1992, 310). Grice (1975, 45) says that every participant of an utterance should give contribution in particular levels needed and which is suitable with the goal

expected. Grice suggests four maxims as the follows.

1. *The Maxim of quantity:*

(i) Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.

(ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

2. *The maxim of quality:*

(i) Do not say what you believe to be false.

(ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

3. *The maxim of relation/relevance:* Be relevant.

4. *The maxim of manner:*

(i) Avoid obscurity of expression

(ii) Avoid ambiguity

(iii) Be brief

(iv) Be orderly

Besides these maxims, in pragmatics there are five scales representing degree of wisdom which is suitable with certain situations (Leech 1990, 194).

1. *The scale of cost-benefit*

It refers to the participants of utterances' cost and benefit. The bigger speaker's cost the more polite an utterance will be. In other words, the bigger hearer's benefit the more polite an utterance will be.

2. *The scale of preferences*

It refers to the number of choices provided by the speaker towards the hearer. The more vary choices given, the more polite an utterance will be.

3. *The scale of indirectness*

It refers to directness and indirectness of an utterance. The more indirect an utterance the more polite it will be.

4. *The scale of authority*

It refers the authority differences of the speaker and the hearer. One who has authority may use intimate utterances toward his hearer, but the hearer will use respectful utterances.

5. *The scale of social status gap*

It refers to the social relationship between the speaker and the hearer. According to this scale, degree of respectful depends on some permanent factors such as age, degree of familiarity, and social status.

### **Politeness Strategy**

Politeness strategy relates to face of self image possessed by everybody includes *negative face* and *positive face*. Face, the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspect: (a) *negative face*: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non distraction –i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. (b) *positive face*: the positive consistent self image or

personality (crucially including the desire that this self image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants (Brown and Levinson 1987, 61)

Brown and Levinson (1987, 103) make a compilation of politeness strategy. Several speech acts are supposed to be effective to maintain the hearer's negative and positive face. The followings are the politeness strategy to maintain the hearer's negative face.

**Strategy 1:** *Be conventionally indirect*

By using other forms of speech acts instead of direct form of refusal. For example: "I don't smoke."

**Strategy 2:** *Be pessimistic*

For example: "Is it okay for tomorrow?"

**Strategy 3:** *Minimize the imposition*

For example: "Don't take it personally."

**Strategy 4:** *Give deference*

For example: "Thank you for the offer, Sir."

**Strategy 5:** *Apologize*

For example: "Oh, I'm sorry I have things to do right now."

**Strategy 6:** *Impersonalize speaker and hearer*

For example: "It would be inappropriate..."

**Strategy 7:** *State the FTA as a general rule*

For example: "Smoking is not good for our health".

The followings are the politeness strategy to maintain the hearer's positive face.

**Strategy 1:** *Notice; attended to H (his interests, wants, deeds, goods)*

For example: "You have very good products actually, but..."

**Strategy 2:** *Intensify interest to H*

Using certain expression to make the hearer be more involved in an utterance. For example: "You know, ..."

**Strategy 3:** *Use in-group identity markers*

Using signifier of the similarity of group to which the speaker and the hearer belong to. Thus, the hearer will be more intimate to the speaker.

For example: "I'm sorry, son, I think it will be better if ..."

**Strategy 4:** *Joke*

For example if your skin is dark and somebody offers you to smoke, you may say "I don't want to be like a steam train: black and smoking,"

**Strategy 5:** *Offer, promise*

For example: "Can I organize another person to accompany you?"

**Strategy 6:** *Include both S and H in the activity*

For example: "We have an examination tomorrow, it will be better if we stay at home instead of go to the cinema."

**Strategy 7:** *Give sympathy to H*

For example: “Please let me know if there is anything I can do for you.”

### **Some Important Characteristics of Indonesian Culture**

Harding and Riley (1986, 42) claim that culture influences the habits, customs, way to dress and eat, beliefs and values, ideas and feelings, notions of politeness and beauty. As a consequence of cultural variability, people from different culture often fail to understand, or misinterpret each other’s signal (Finnegan 1992, 328). Hofstede (1986, 309-310) claims that in Indonesian culture social status plays a very important role on how communication should be held. Members of the lower classes realize their position within the social structure and consider it normal to use high language level to people of higher social status and to let high social status people use lower language leveling interactions with them in order to maintain harmony and togetherness.

Some prominent characteristics of Indonesian culture include concealing one’s feeling towards others, indirectness, avoiding responsibility and attention, and preference for togetherness. These are relevant to an understanding of the way Indonesian realize speech acts including refusals in English differently from the way native speakers of

English do (Nadar 1999, 2). In his study, Nadar (1999, 4) found that Indonesian speakers find it difficult to say “No” or to express refusals to commands, offers, or requests particularly when the requesters are of higher or equal social status. The underlying reluctance is they do not want to hurt their hearers by turning down their requests. Their culture is to maintain solidarity and friendship and would do anything in order for them not to lose friendship. Therefore, Indonesians try to make longer and more than one speech act to be considered polite (Nadar 2005, 170).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Method of Collecting Data**

This article investigates refusals produced by two groups of respondents: Indonesian learners and native English speakers. The data were collected through questionnaires and several informal interviews. The data analysis involved analyzing the data and library research. The questionnaire involved 30 participants consisting of 15 Indonesian second year students of the English Department Universitas Gadjah Mada and 15 Australian students of the Indonesian Language and Culture Learning Service (INCULS), Faculty

of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta.

The questionnaire was in the form of Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The use of DCT was very effective to obtain data in large numbers and also to know cultural and psychological condition of certain society, which may influence the production of their utterances such as making refusals, apology, leave-taking, etc. (Kasper and Dahl, 1991:37) The questionnaires provided some background situation in which respondents were required to give responses to certain questions related to the situation. They were expected to produce responses as naturally as possible. The collected data were then coded, classified, counted and analyzed. The analysis used a quantitative method with simple statistics to see the similarities and the differences. The results were then discussed to draw qualitative conclusions.

### **Research Procedure**

Sudaryanto (2003, 8) classifies methods of analysis into qualitative and quantitative method. Qualitative research includes case study, content analysis, documentary research, and action research; while quantitative research includes development study, rate growth analysis, and inclination. This study basically used qualitative methods since the final output of

the study was descriptive. Qualitative method is a research procedure producing descriptive data such as written or oral words from some to someone's behavior that can be observed (Moleong, 31). However, it used some simple statistics in order to get to see the pattern of the refusals made by the respondents. In this "quantitative" phase, the data were coded, classified, and counted. The results were then extracted into conclusions representing the quality of the refusals.

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

The data of this research were obtained through questionnaires. The questionnaires involved 30 respondents consisting of 15 Indonesian learners and 15 native speakers of English. Each questionnaire consisted of six questions, so that there were 90 questions in total. Each questionnaire provided six different situations with different types of *age*, *familiarity*, and *social status*. In order to make the analysis effective, the questionnaires were designed in certain ways so that each situation contains three variables at the same time.

Here are the questions used in the questionnaire:

**Situation 1 (Same Age, Familiar, Same Social Status):**

You are a student who lives in a boarding house. You have been living there with some other students for two years. One day, one of them wants to borrow your motorbike to buy something. How would you refuse the request?

**Situation 2 (Same Age, Not Familiar, Same Social Status):**

You are a student who always brings a notebook/laptop to campus. One day you meet a student, whom you don't know him/her at all, who wants to borrow your notebook/laptop to do one of his/her assignment. How would you refuse the request?

**Situation 3 (Older-Younger, Familiar, Higher-Lower Social Status):**

Imagine you are a teacher. One day while you are walking, one of your students, whom you are familiar with, comes on his motorbike and offers you a ride. How would you refuse the request?

**Situation 4 (Older-Younger, Not Familiar, Higher-Lower Social Status):**

Imagine you are a 40 year-old manager of a company. One day a young salesman comes to your office offering his products. How would you refuse the offer?

**Situation 5 (Younger-Older, Familiar, Lower-Higher Social Status):**

In a Sunday morning, you are sitting in front of your boarding house. Suddenly, the owner of the boarding house calls and asks you to accompany him taking a walk. How would you refuse the request?

**Situation 6 (Younger-Older, Not Familiar, Lower-Higher Social Status):**

You are sitting in a crowded city park. Suddenly an old man, who is sitting next to you, offers you a cigarette. How would you refuse the offer?

The analysis was conducted based on the *number* and the *forms* of speech acts in therefusals. The analysis included only verbal utterances, while body languages were excluded.

The analysis was done in two stages: the first stage analysed the number of speech acts, and the second stage analysed the form of speech acts.

**A. Refusals Based on the Number of Speech Acts**

Based on the data, refusals in English by the Indonesian learners and the native speakers of English were characterized by similar patterns proposed by Turnbull and Saxton (1997) i.e. *giving reason*, *offering*, *apologizing*, and *giving appreciation to the*

hearer. However, the data showed that there were several different preferences in terms of the number of speech acts used in the refusals.

No.	Refusals	IL	NS
1.	One Speech Act	-	10
2.	Two Speech Acts	40	29
3.	Three Speech Acts	43	38
4.	Four Speech Acts	4	8
5.	Five Speech Acts	3	2
Total		90	87*

\* 2 respondents used body language and 1 respondent did not refuse

The table shows that in expressing refusals 10 native speakers used single speech acts, whereas none of Indonesian learners used this pattern. Two speech acts were used by 40 Indonesian learners and 29 native speakers. In using three speech acts, both respondents share almost the same number, i.e. are 43 by the Indonesian learners and 38 by the native speakers. Then we see native speakers used more four speech acts than the Indonesian learners: 8 native speakers and 4 Indonesian learners. While, in

using five speech acts the two groups of respondents shared almost the same number: 3 Indonesian learners and 2 native speakers.

We see that both groups tended to use similar combination of speech acts in their refusals especially in the use of three and five speech acts. They got almost identical points. This result implied that by using English, even though it was not their mother tongue, the Indonesian learners produced almost similar refusals with native speakers of English. Nevertheless, local culture as Indonesian was still adopted by the Indonesian learners since they did not produce any single speech acts. Indonesian people tend to produce longer utterances or in other word consider too short refusals may hurt the feeling of their hearers and damage their relationship. This fact seems to show that the Indonesian learners have culture to maintain integrity and harmony by minimizing face threatening acts in their refusals. This fact does not mean that the native speakers did not have a willingness to maintain integrity and harmony. It was perhaps because their culture approved the use of single speech acts.

However, there is a significance difference when we see the use of single speech acts. We see that 10 native speakers used single speech acts, whereas none of the

Indonesian learners used it. For example, one native speaker said *“I need to meet a friend to do something,”* to refuse an invitation. This phenomenon shows that the Indonesian learners considered it not polite enough to produce refusals only using single speech acts. The Indonesian learners tended to produce two or more speech acts in their refusals. It seems that most of the Indonesian learners believed that the longer refusals they made, the more polite their refusals would be.

## **B. Refusals Based on The Forms of Speech Acts**

According to Brown and Levinson (1987) refusals are made using common forms of *giving reason*, *apologizing*, and *show appreciation towards the speaker*. Based on the data, the refusals made by the two groups of respondents used such forms. However, there were some similarities and differences.

### **1. Same Age, Familiar, Same Social status**

In this situation the speaker refuses a request from someone of the same/similar age, who has the same social status as boarding house mates, and is already familiar with. The questionnaire used a situation where a student refuses one of his boarding house mate’s request to borrow his motorcycle.

The result found that the most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made by Indonesian learners in this context was *apologizing* and *giving reason*. For example, one Indonesian learner said *“Sorry, I want to use it now”*. The second combination frequently used was *apologizing*, *stating inability*, and *then giving reason*. This second combination was quite similar with the first one. Yet, in this combination the respondents stated explicit inability expression, for example, *“I’m sorry, I can’t borrow you my motorbike. I’m going to use it now”* The third most frequently used combination was *apologizing*, *giving first reason*, and *giving second reason*. For example, *“Sorry, but I need to use the motorcycle. I have a meeting with my friend today.”*

Another finding was that the most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made by native English speakers in this context was *apologizing* and *giving reason*. For example, one native speaker said *“I’m sorry. I need to use it later.”* The second combination frequently used was *apologizing*, *giving reason*, and *offering*. This second combination was quite similar with the first one. Yet, in this combination the respondents offered something to the hearer. For example, *“Sorry, I need to use my*

*motorbike today. Maybe I can go with you later.*” or “*Sorry, I’m not really comfortable letting people use my bike, but I can take you to the shop if you like.*”

The two groups of respondents shared the same most frequently used combination of speech act that which was *apologizing* and *giving reason*. This combination, instead of using explicit expressions of refusal such as “*No*” or other inability expression such as “*I can’t ...*” or “*I’m not ...*”, it used indirect refusals by giving reasons to show inability. From this result it can be inferred that towards the same-age familiar hearers the two groups of respondents had similar preference by using combination of *apologizing* and *giving reason*, without using explicit refusal expression “*No*”. Toward the people who were of the same age and whom they were familiar with these types of refusals consider acceptable. Those were concise utterances. Equipped by *apology* and *reason*, they were adequate refusals already without using explicit refusal expression “*No*”.

From the view point of social status, in producing refusals toward same-social status familiar hearers, both respondents used the same combination of *apologizing* and *giving reason*. Toward people who were of same age and same social status, as boarding

house tenants, this type of refusal was adequate. They did not use explicit use of refusal expression such as “*No*”. They were sure that their hearers would understand that it was a refusal. We see also that the content of the refusal was little bit “rude”. This choice probably was preferred to produce refusals toward same age, same social status and familiar with hearers.

However, we can see the difference between the two groups of respondents’ production of refusals. For instance, in the use of combination *apologizing*, *reason*, and *reason*, there were three Indonesian learners who used it, whereas only one native speaker used it. Thus, it may be inferred that the Indonesian learners, even though toward their familiar with the same age and the same social status friends, tended to produce refusals with more than one reason, whereas the native speaker did not. Giving more than one reason may seem to minimize the face threatening act and may convince the hearers to accept the refusals.

## **2. Same Age, Not Familiar, Same Social Status**

In this situation the speaker refuses a request from someone of the same/similar age, who has the same social status as students, but they are not familiar with to each other. The questionnaire used a situation

where a student refuses another student's request to borrow his laptop.

The result found that the most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made by the Indonesian learners in this context is *apologizing* and *giving reason*. For example, one Indonesian learner said "*I'm sorry. I need to do my assignment, too*". The second combination frequently used is *apologizing*, *stating inability*, and *giving reason*. This second combination was quite similar with the first one. Yet, in this combination the respondents used explicit inability expression, for example, "*I'm sorry I can't because it is out of battery*".

The most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made by native English speakers in this context was *apologizing* and *giving reason*. For example, one native speaker said "*Sorry, I'm using my laptop today for a group assignment.*" Another combination was *refusing*, *apologizing*, and *stating personal principle*. For example, they said "*No, sorry. I don't lend my laptop to people I don't know,*" or "*Sorry, I can't lend you my notebook. I feel uncomfortable about lending something so personal out to strangers.*" Here respondents used their personal principle to refuse.

Both the Indonesian learners and the native speakers mostly used the combination

of *apologizing* and *giving reason*. From this result it may be inferred that towards people with the same age and whom they do not know, both respondents had the same inclination to produce combination of *apologizing* and *giving reason*. People with similar age are considered to have the same feeling and needs. They do not have to think of sophisticated deference for instance if they have to refuse an old man's request. However, we see the difference in which native speaker used their personal principle, whereas none of the Indonesian learners used it. It seems that the native speakers felt comfortable to use their personal principle to refuse, whereas the Indonesian learners did not.

From the view point of social status we can see also that it was similar with the previous category (same social status familiar with participants). In this context both speaker and hearer have the same social status as students, but they are not familiar to each other. In this situation, both the Indonesian learners and the native speakers mostly used a combination of *apologizing* and *giving reason*. They did not worry about bad effects of their refusal.

### **3. Older-Younger, Familiar, Higher-Lower Social Status**

In this situation the speaker refuses an offer from someone who is younger, with lower social status, and is already familiar with. This context used a situation where a lecturer refuses an offer for a ride made by his student.

The result found that most of the refusals made by the Indonesian learners in this context contain preferences. However, the most frequently used combination is *thanks giving* and *stating preference*. For example, one of the Indonesian learners said “*Thanks a lot, but I prefer walking,*” or “*Oh, thank you. But I think I prefer walking.*” Most of the refusals made by the native speakers in this context contained *preferences*. However, the most frequently used combination was *refusal, thanks giving, and stating preference*. For example, they said “*No, thanks. Rather walk,*” or “*No, thank you. I’m more than happy to walk.*”

The Indonesian learners and the native speakers used almost similar combinations of speech acts. The difference was the use of *refusal* expression by native speakers. Thus, it may be inferred that in producing refusals towards younger and familiar hearers, both groups of respondents used the combination of *thanks giving* and followed by *stating preference*. Yet, the native speakers seemed to put explicit refusal

expression such as “*No*” in the beginning. For example, one of the Indonesian learners said “*Thanks a lot, but I prefer walking*”, whereas one native speakers said “*No, thanks. Rather walk.*” This difference might be caused by different culture of each group of respondents. The Indonesian learners perhaps considered it impolite to use explicit “*No*” in their refusals.

From the view point of social status, in this context the speaker has higher social status since he is a lecturer, whereas the hearer is a student which is considered to be lower. A lecturer who has higher social status is supposed to have more power or authority, for instance to give good or bad grade to his students. But at the same time he is a teacher who is supposed to give good examples to his students. All his attitude and words may be adopted by his students. Thus, the lecturer should consider appropriate refusals. In this situation both groups of respondents had similar forms mostly used by combining *thanks giving* and *stating preference*. Still, the only difference was the native speakers used explicit refusal expression in the beginning of the refusals.

#### **4. Older-Younger, Not Familiar, Higher-Lower**

This part discusses refusals in a context in which the speaker refuses an offer

made by someone who is younger, with lower social status, and is not familiar with. This context used a situation where a company manager refused a product offered by a young salesman. The result showed that the most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made by native speakers in this context was *refusal apologizing* and *giving reason*. For example, they said “*Sorry, but I am not interested.*” or “*Sorry, I’m busy now.*”

From the view point of age, the manager is 40 years old, much older than the salesman. Since he has more freedom in producing utterances, he may use less “sophisticated” utterance. For instance, he does not have to give *deference* to the salesman since *deference* is commonly used when we are talking to older people to show respect. The situation is actually similar with the previous one, but in this case the participants are not familiar one to each other. When talking to strangers, people usually produce more polite utterances.

The result showed that both the Indonesian learners and the native speakers had the same most frequently used combination of speech act that was *apologizing* and *giving reason*. This finding indicated that to refuse a request by a younger and unfamiliar hearer, both the Indonesian

learners and the native speakers had the same preference to use combination of *apologizing* and *giving reason*. So, in this situation there was no significant difference between these two groups of respondents. In fact, there was a similarity: they both produced less “sophisticated” refusals and contained no *deference*.

From the view point of social status, the speaker, who has higher social status, refuses an offer by a salesman who is considered to have lower social status. A manager with higher social status is supposed to have more power or authority, for instance to ask security officials to send the salesman out of his office. However, at the same time he is the company manager who has responsibility to show a good reputation of his company. So, if he uses an inappropriate refusal, the salesman might tell it to other parties, which is not good his company. Thus, the manager considers making an appropriate refusal. In this situation both groups of respondents had similar forms mostly used by *apologizing* and *giving reason*. Both groups of the respondents mostly used similar kinds of refusals. We did not find any significant difference on their refusals. In fact, their refusals seemed to be similar: short and direct, which perhaps to show the power of the speaker against a hearer from lower

social status. Interestingly, both groups of the respondents applied similar politeness strategy by saying “*Sorry*” to the salesman.

### **5. Younger-Older, Familiar, Lower-Higher Social Status**

In this situation the speaker refuses a request made by someone who is older, with higher social status, and is familiar with. This context uses a situation where a tenant refuses a request from the owner of the boarding house where he/she lives in to have a walk together.

The result found that the most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made by the Indonesian learners in this context was *apologizing*, *term of address* and *giving reason*. For example they said, “*Sorry, Mbak, I am tired*” or “*I’m sorry, Sir. But there’s something I need to do.*” The most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made by native speakers in this context was *apologizing* and *reason*. For example, they said “*Sorry, I’m waiting for a friend to bring something to me*” or “*Oh sorry. I’m waiting for a friend of mine to arrive. She’ll be here any minute now.*”

From the view point of age, the tenant is supposed to be younger than the owner of the boarding house. Therefore, s/he is not as free as when s/he talks to his/her friends. In fact, s/he has to use “sophisticated” formula

in order to make as polite as possible refusals. In Indonesian culture, it is an unwritten rule that in talking to older people, politeness is required to show respect, and one way to show respect is by giving *deference*. Deference is usually used in utterances towards older people by using terms of address such as *Pak, Bu, Mbak* in Indonesian, or *Sir* or *Madam* in English.

In terms of age, toward older hearers most of the Indonesian learners used a combination of *apologizing*, *term of address* and *giving reason*. There were four respondents who used *terms of address* in their refusals. Thus, it may be inferred that the Indonesian learners applied a politeness strategy by *giving deference*. S/he showed his/her respect to the owner by addressing her “*Mbak*”. If s/he said, “*I’m sorry I’m tired,*” without addressing, it might feel impolite to be spoken to an older hearer. Meanwhile, most of the native speakers used a combination of *apologizing* and *reason*. It was almost identical with the Indonesian learners’ combination: *apologizing*, *term of address*, and *reason*. The difference is that most of the native speakers did not use term of address. In this case, they did not use one of Brown and Levinson’s politeness strategies, *giving deference*, in producing refusals toward an older hearer.

From the view point of social status, in this context the speaker has lower social status since she is a tenant, whereas the hearer is considered to be higher as s/he is the owner of the boarding house. A tenant who has lower social status is supposed to show respect to the owner of the boarding house. Otherwise, the owner might be insulted and has a full authority to expel him/her from the boarding house. In this case, some of the Indonesian learners tried to use an appropriate refusal as in Indonesian culture, terms of address are considered very important, especially to address people who are older or who have higher social status.

#### **6. Younger-Older, Not Familiar, Lower-Higher Social Status**

In this situation the speaker refuses an offer from someone older, with higher social status, and is not familiar with. This context used a situation where a student refuses a cigarette offered by an old man in a city park.

The result showed that some refusals made by the Indonesian learners used *stating personal principle* and the most frequently used combination was *apologizing* and *stating personal principle*. For example, the Indonesian learners said “*Sorry, I do not smoke.*” or “*I’m sorry! I’m not a smoker.*” Meanwhile, the most frequently used combination of speech acts in refusals made

by the native speakers in this context was *refusal*, *thanks giving*, and *stating personal principle*. For example, they said “*No, thanks. I do not smoke.*” or “*No thank you. I don’t smoke.*”

From the view point of age, in this context the speaker is a student, who is supposed to be younger than the old man. In producing refusals s/he is not as free as when s/he talks to his/her friends. More over s/he does not know him at all. So, here s/he has to use different formula in order to make a polite refusal as s/he does not want to be considered as a bad boy or bad girl for behaving insolent.

The Indonesian learners mostly used a combination of *apologizing* and *stating personal principle*, while the native speakers mostly used the combination of *refusal*, *thanks giving*, and *stating personal principle*. The differences seen in the two combinations were the use of *apologizing* by the Indonesian learners and the use of *refusals* and *thanks giving* by the native speakers before stating their personal principle. The two forms are both polite to be used in refusals. Nevertheless, this difference shows that there was a different difference between the two groups of respondents. To refuse the offer, the Indonesian learners tended to apologize and stated their personal principle. Whereas the native speakers, in refusing an

offer, they used explicit refusal expression such as “*No*”, thanked the hearer, and then stated their personal principle.

In this situation the speaker has lower social status since s/he is a student and the hearer, the old man, whose social status is unknown, is assumed to have higher social status. In Indonesian culture, young people are supposed to give deference and show respect to those who are older and have higher social status. Thus, in producing refusals s/he is not as free as when s/he talks to his/her friends who have the same social status. Moreover in this case s/he does not know the old man at all. Here the Indonesian learners decided to use different formula in order to make a polite refusal. Compared to the Indonesian learners who said “*Sorry*” to begin the refusal, the native speakers preferred to say “*No*” then followed by “*thank you*” to refuse an offer. For example, one of the Indonesian learners said “*Sorry, I do not smoke*”, whereas one of native speakers said “*No, thanks. I do not smoke*”.

## CONCLUSION

The Indonesian learners and the native speakers had similar and different preferences in producing refusals in English. The two groups of respondents shared similarities in terms of speech act variants in

their refusals. However, some differences prevailed in terms of the number of speech acts, choice of words, and the use of politeness strategy.

The Indonesian learners and the native speakers produced similar variants of speech acts in their refusals. Their refusals contained *refusing, apologizing, thanks giving, giving reason, stating personal principle, stating preference*, etc. In certain cases they even produced similar combination of these speech acts, even though they were put in different order. For example, in producing three speech-act-refusals the Indonesian learners used combination of *thanks giving, reason, preference*, whereas the native speakers used a combination of *thanks giving, preference, and reason*. In another example, they even produced exactly the same refusals: “*No, thanks. I do not smoke*”. This phenomenon shows that in certain cases both the Indonesian learners and the native speakers had the same preference.

However, some differences prevailed according to the analysis. The first one was in terms of the number of speech acts. Based on the data, there were some of the native speakers who produced single speech acts, whereas none of the Indonesian learners did it. From this phenomenon it can be inferred

that the native speakers considered it polite to refuse a request or an offer by using single speech acts. They did not see it necessary to produce long utterances. On the other hand, the Indonesian learners considered longer utterances to be more polite than the shorter ones. Thus, the face threatening acts may be reduced and integrity and relationship can be maintained.

In terms of choice of words there was one obvious difference. In refusing an offer, the Indonesian learners preferred to use *apologizing*, whereas native speakers tended to use *thanks giving*. For example, when they were offered a cigarette, the Indonesian learners said, “*Sorry, I do not smoke*”, whereas the native speakers said “*No, thanks. I do not smoke*”. Different cultural background may be the cause of this difference.

In terms of the use of politeness strategy, the two groups of respondents employed different strategies. The Indonesian learners used more terms of address such as *Sir, Mbak* (elder sister), *Mam*, etc. in producing refusals toward older hearers or those who have higher social status as the application of one of Brown and Levinson’s politeness strategies, *give deference* and *in group identity markers*. Thus, it may be since the two groups of

respondents have different cultural background. One of Indonesian norms says it is impolite to talk to other people without using terms of address especially to those who are older or have higher social status, whether those they are familiar with or not. Ignoring this norm can be considered as a violation. Meanwhile, the western culture approves to produce utterances without using terms of address to older people, especially to whom they are familiar with. They even call directly their names without using terms of address. Thus, these two different cultures play big roles in producing two different kinds of refusals.

Another difference was that the native speakers produced more various face threatening acts-reducer statements and give an offer in their refusals. For example, they used statement of “*It’s nothing personal*,” or “*Don’t take it personally*,” which meant when they refused it not because of their personal dislike towards the hearers; instead, the refusal would be applied for anyone in the same situation. This strategy can reduce the hearers’ face threatening acts since they will not feel distinguished from other people so that they can accept the refusal. Then, in refusing a request, some of the native speakers gave an offer after their refusals. For example when some of the native speakers

refused to lend their motorbike out, they said, “I’m not really comfortable letting people use my bike, **but I can take you to the shop if you like**” or “Sorry, I’d prefer that you didn’t, **but I can come with you to buy it.**” Such phenomena were not found in the Indonesian learners’ refusals.

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