
“REFUSAL STRATEGY: PATTERNS OF REFUSAL AMONGST LANGUAGE ACADEMICIANS AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES AT MALAYSIA”

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the patterns of refusal in English used by academicians when given an invitation or when requested to do a favour. The participants of this study were 50 academic staff of various educational backgrounds from two Malaysian universities. The data for this study was collected by means of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and interview sessions with the participants. The taxonomy of refusal by Beebe et al. (1990) was used to categorize the various responses. The findings show that the participants differ in many ways when refusing an invitation or a request. There is a high tendency of participants conforming to the indirect manner of refusal, at the same time providing reasons and explanations. Some participants appear to use polite forms, while others use more diplomatic approach about refusing invitations and requests. Members of the academic community in this study acquire a high level of pragmatic competence, cultural awareness and ethnic sensitivities when dealing with refusals.

Keywords: Refusal Strategy, Beebe et al (1990), Pragmatics, Workplace Communication

Introduction

A great deal of research has been done on the speech act theory of refusals. According to Tank (2003) speakers make use of a variety of speech acts in order to achieve their goals in communication. Rubin (1983) pointed out that, speech acts reflect fundamental culture values that maybe specific to a speech community. Malaysia is a multiracial and multicultural country. Malaysians are not the native speakers of English, whereby they are the second language speakers of the English Language. So with them being second language speakers are they able to perform a speech act of refusal in English is the starting point to this study. In other words, the main aim of this research is to investigate whether the second language speakers of English language at Malaysia are able to perform a refusal appropriately with pragmatic competence

Purpose, Research Problems and Objectives

This study is conducted to investigate the patterns of refusal in English used by Malaysian language academicians at Malaysian public university when given a request at a particular context. According to Al-Kahtani (2005), saying ‘no’ is difficult for non-native speakers of a language. Therefore the speaker must know how to refuse appropriately according to the context and also depending on the interlocutor’s cultural-linguistic values. The participants of this research are second language speakers of the English language who are English language academicians at a reputable university at Malaysia. Therefore, through this research it will be clearly explained whether this participants are able to refuse appropriately according to the circumstances. The objectives of this study are: (1) Investigate the pragmatic competency among language academicians who are second language speakers of the English language, (2) Examine the refusal patterns used by the language academicians based on the ‘Taxonomy of Refusal’ by Beebe et al, 1990 and scrutinize the patterns using the Semantic Word Order method, and (3) Determine whether or not linguistic transfer occurs in the patterns of refusals performed by the language academicians.

Research Questions

This study offers three research questions which will be answered in Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis which are : (1) Are the participants able to portray pragmatic competence when performing a refusal?, (2) Are the responses obtained from the participants, culturally laden to the respondents culture? And finally (3) Is there any similarities in the refusal patterns according to the semantic formula among the participants responses?

Significance of the Study

This study could provide information on the issues of the pragmatic competency among the second language speakers specifically at Malaysia. It is important because, with this community and other researchers will be able to comprehend the choice of refusal strategies being used among the second language speakers at Malaysia. In other words, this study will provide justification to the refusal strategy choice being opted and this will enable the interlocutors to communicate effectively not leading towards a communication breakdown. Further, this study would also review the current studies on refusals strategies and determine to fill in the gap of the missing puzzles to understand this topic clearly. This study would be beneficial to other researchers in terms of being a platform to their future researchers and in providing adequate information on the current issue of pragmatic competency among second language speakers.

Furthermore, this study would be advantageous to speakers of the second language itself (the community) in order to understand their speech patterns. This would expectedly heighten the awareness of the second language speakers and the speakers would be more aware of the refusals strategies used to maintain a good relationship which leads to communicating effectively. In addition, the future researchers, this study can provide baseline information on the recent status of the depth of the pragmatic study on the speech act of refusal strategy.

Scope and Limitations

The overarching aim of the research is to investigate the patterns of refusals employed by language academicians who are second language speakers of the English language. The scope of the study consist of the broad topic of refusals strategies focusing on the patterns of the refusal strategies employed by the target participants. It is important to be noted, this study is from the field of pragmatics: speech act theory.

The delimitation of this study is that it doesn't represent the whole lot of population at Malaysia nor at the selected public university, whereas it is delimited to the participants of this study as the number is small. Next, the limitation of this research is, as the data obtained was in written form and voice recording form the consistency should not be retained as it is individual responses. The important keywords of this study which will be explained in the next segment are: Speech Act Theory, Refusal Theory, Pragmatic Competence, Pragmatic Transfer, Face Threatening Act, Semantic word Formula and The Taxonomy of Refusal (Beebe, 1990).

Literature Review

This section will briefly provide insights and information from previous research studies and results.

Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory (SAT) was first introduced by a British philosopher named Austin in 1962. Basically he is known to be the father of this SAT. According to Austin (1962), utterances which are communicated are equivalent to actions, and this type of utterances is called speech acts. Austin (1962), speech act is performed by uttering utterances, as in, giving orders, making suggestions and so on, so forth. A few examples of speech acts would be apology, greeting, request, complain, refusal and invitation. A speech act does not need to be a long sentence, but then a one word utterance is also considered as a speech act. Basically, if the word serves the function of communicating then it is a speech act. As for an example: "Would you pass me the salt?" By just answering 'OK', 'sure', or even by just passing the salt serves the function, so the act is considered as a speech act.

Speech Act: Refusal Strategy

As it has been stated earlier in this paper, there are many types of speech acts; however this study will be focusing on the speech act of refusal. The speech of refusal is used by one, in order to decline the request/demand posted to the person. In order to perform this particular speech act one can either opt to use the direct strategy for refusing or the indirect strategy of refusing. Principally, there are two types of refusal strategy which are the Direct Refusal Strategy and the Indirect Refusal Strategy and these strategies are use differently by people based on context, situation, culture, social distance, age, relationship and etc. The direct refusal strategy is refusing by stating a direct 'NO' and the indirect strategy is refusing in a more subtle manner.

The Taxonomy of Refusals by Beebe Et Al (1990)

This taxonomy will be used to framework the research and acts as the backbone of this research. Basically, Beebe and et al (1990) developed a Taxonomy of Refusals that offers 3 direct strategies of refusals and 11 indirect strategies of refusal that can be employed in the case of performing a speech act of refusals. The three (3) direct strategies of refusals are: a) performative, b) non-performative and c) negative willingness ability. On the other hand, the eleven (11) indirect strategies are: a) statement of regret, b) wish, c) excuse, reason or explanation, d) statement of alternative, e) set condition for future/past acceptance, f) promise of future acceptance, g) statement of principle, h) statement of philosophy, i) attempt to dissuade the interlocutor, j) acceptance that functions as a refusal and k) avoidance. This taxanomy will act as the data analysis method for the data obtained as for this study.

Second Language Speakers

The participants of this study are language academicians who are second language speakers of the English Language. Second Language speakers maybe fluent with the language in the aspect of grammar and vocabulary but then many researchers have proved that speakers of second language lack in pragmatic competence. In other words, they are still not able to respond appropriately according to different variables like culture, age group, context, situation and etc. As stated by Beebe, Takahashi and Uliz Weltz (1990), refusals are 'striking points' for many non native speakers. Refusals can be tricky speech act to be performed linguistically and psychologically by the second language speaker since the possibility of offending the interlocutors is inherent in the act itself (Know, 2004). This is the reason, refusal speech acts are a face threatening act as it's a sensitive pragmatic task and if the interlocutor fails to perform the task appropriately, it might risk the relationship between the speaker and listeners which might also lead to a communication breakdown. The choice strategies used in refusing may vary across culture (Know, 2004). Example, The Japanese people use a direct strategy while performing a speech act of refusal to people who are socially lower than them in status even in the working-social environment because it is their culture.

Pragmatic Competence and Pragmatic Transfer

An important note to be taken into consideration is that culture plays a vital role in determining the strategies used to perform a refusal act. And culture means the interference of L1. Pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to communicate effectively and involves knowledge beyond the level of grammar (Thomas 1983). Crozet (2003) states that some of the rules that govern interactions but that are not immediately obvious have been referred to as *invisible* rules. Kasper (1989) includes the ability by learners to use speech acts in socially appropriate ways as part of what she calls a speaker's *declarative* knowledge of the target language. Studies of cross-cultural pragmatics report that the way speech acts are realized varies across languages. This variation can sometimes cause misunderstandings, or what Thomas (1983) called pragmatic failure or also pragmatic transfer, which occurs when learners transfer first language (L1) pragmatic rules into second language (L2) domains. This transfer of rules can lead to stereotyping about particular speech communities, as speakers may be perceived as being rude or inconsiderate. But it is to be noted that, this pragmatic transfer can also reflect the culture of the interlocutors and may not perceived to be rude or inconsiderate. Pragmatic transfer occurs when speakers of a second language uses their own communicative strategies from their L1 (their culture) to perform a speech act. Overall, refusals are complex speech acts that not only needs compromise and cooperative achievements, but then it also needs "face saving maneuvers to accommodate the noncompliant nature of the act" (Gas & Houck,1999,p2; Felix Brasdefer, 2006 , p2160).

Semantic Word Formulas

Semantics is the study of meaning. It is a wide subject within the general study of language. An understanding of semantics is essential to the study of language acquisition (how language users acquire a sense of meaning, as speakers and writers, listeners and readers) and of language change (how meanings alter over time). It is important for understanding language in social contexts, as these are likely to affect meaning, and for understanding varieties of English and effects of style. Semantic word formulas were employed by Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) to analyze their data of research. The same method will be adapted in this research to analyze the data obtained through the Taxonomy of Refusals.

Related Research Work

Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990), studied the refusals produced by American English speakers and Japanese self learners, analyzed the refusals as a formulaic sequence, comprised – in the case of refusing an invitation – of (1) an expression of regret followed by (2) an excuse, an ending with (3) an offer of alternative. In studying these refusals, they found that Japanese speakers of English and native speakers differed. In in three areas: the order of the semantic formulae, the frequency of the formulae, and the content of the utterances. While the Japanese speakers appropriately produced the same semantic components as their American peers, the quality of the utterances was very different. American subjects tended to offer specific details when giving explanations, while the Japanese subjects often produced explanations that might be interpreted as vague by Americans.

Chen (1996) used semantic formulae to analyze speech act sets of refusal (refusing request, invitations, offers, and suggestions) produced by American and Chinese speakers of English language. She found that direct refusals (i.e 'No') was not a common strategy for any subjects regardless of their language background. Further, she found that an expression of regret, common in American speaker's refusals, was generally not produced by Chinese speakers, which could lead to unpleasant feelings between speakers in an American context.

Hiba Qusay and et al (2011) conducted a research on the refusal strategies in English by Malay University students. This research was conducted among 40 undergraduate and postgraduate students at a Malaysian university by requiring them to complete a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which was later analyzed and categorized according to the refusal taxonomy of Beebe and et al (1990) and also according to the semantic word formula.. The results obtained showed that most participants used an indirect strategy

to refuse. The indirect strategy used by the participants differ from the native speakers of the English Language because usually native speakers refuse by offering statement of gratitude, whereas, in this research the participants mostly offered statement of regret. Therefore the results suggest that pragmatic transfer occurred as the responses of the respondents somehow is influenced by the Malay culture.

Methodology

This chapter will explain further about the theoretical framework, the research design, participants, research instruments and the data collection procedure in conducting the research.

Theoretical Framework

Speakers employ a variety of communicative acts, or *speech acts*, to achieve their communicative goals. A speech act set is a combination of individual speech acts that, when produced together, comprise a complete speech act (Murphy and Neu, 1996). A speech act might contain just one word such as 'No' to perform a refusal or several words or sentences such as: "I'm sorry, I can't, I have a prior engagement". It is important to mention that speech acts include real-life interactions and require not only knowledge of the language but also appropriate use of that language within a given culture. Socio-cultural variables like authority, social distance, and situational setting influence the appropriateness and effectiveness of politeness strategies used to realize directive speech acts such as requests. The influence of these variables often differs from one culture to another. This leads to the research question 2 if this research: (2) Are the responses obtained from the participants, culturally laden to the respondents culture?

The speech act of refusal occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says *no* to a request or invitation. Refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/requestor/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). Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990), studying refusals produced by American English speakers and Japanese EFL learners, analyzed the refusals as a formulaic sequence, comprised – in the case of refusing an invitation – of (1) an expression of regret, followed by (2) an excuse, and ending with (3) an offer of alternative. In studying these refusals, they found that Japanese speakers of English and native speakers differed in three areas: the order of the semantic formulae, the frequency of the formulae, and the content of the utterances. While the Japanese speakers appropriately produced the same semantic components as their American peers, the quality of the utterances was very different. American subjects tended to offer specific details when giving explanations, while the Japanese subjects often produced explanations that might be interpreted as vague by Americans.

Therefore, it is clearly noted that the non native speakers differ somehow in producing the patterns of refusal when compared to the native speakers of the language. According to Al-Kahtani (1990), refusals are the striking point for a non –native speaker. This is because 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. This leads to the first research question and the last research question of this research which are: (1) Are the participants able to portray pragmatic competence when performing a refusal?, (3) Is there any similarities in the refusal patterns according to the semantic formula among the participants responses?

Research Design

The research design used in this research is qualitative research design method: a case study on the patterns of refusals performed by language academician at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Whereby the method used to collect data was triangulation method as it involves data collecting in two (2) different manner and the results are triangulated to validate the date obtained.

Participants

The participants of this study will be 25 English language academicians from Universiti Putra Malaysia whose second language is English. The participants' age range is from 26 years old to 40 years old. The participants are all Malaysians from different ethnicity.

Sampling Method

Sampling method is very important in any research. This is because a sampling frame enables the researcher to identify the potential participants from the whole lot of population.

As for this study, the researcher will use the non-random sampling strategy. A non random sampling strategy defines as choosing the potential participants based on certain characteristics or availability. In this research, the potential participants are chosen based on their availability. As it has been stated that the participants of this study are English language academicians, therefore time restrain is forecasted by the researcher. Therefore the researcher intends to only approach the potential participants based on their availability. The method branched out from non random sampling strategy which is Convenience sampling is used in detail to identify the

potential participants. Basically convenience sampling involves identifying the potential participants by their availability. It also involves the people that the researcher already know: who probably are the researcher colleagues or neighbours.

Research Instruments

An instrument in the context of research means a device/manner/way used to stimulate/ elicit data from the participants. In this research, the researcher plans to use two (2) research instruments which are:

Discourse Completion Test (Dct)

The development of the discourse completion test involved several steps: First, a comprehensive review of related literature was studied thoroughly to acquire good background and knowledge in the construction of a valid discourse completion test questionnaire which is relevant to the study. Next, the discourse completion test was designed.

The elicitation method used for data collection method was the DCT questionnaire in the form of open-ended discourse completion test. (Refer to Appendix) The DCT is a standard form in which a situation of request is presented. The subjects were asked to refuse to the situations presented. In the DCT questionnaire, there were 10 open-ended different situations. All type of relationships was tested to clearly determine the subjects’ pragmatic competence. The relationships have been summarized in the table below.

Table 1

DCT ITEM	STIMULUS TYPE	RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REFUSER
1	Request	Cousin/Personal relationship
2	Request	Course mate/ Social relationship
3	Request	Sister/Personal relationship
4	Request	Friend/Personal relationship
5	Request	Boyfriend/Girlfriend / Personal relationship
6	Request	Friend/ Personal relationship
7	Request	Head of Department / Formal relationship
8	Request	Deputy Dean / Formal relationship
9	Request	Colleague / Formal and social relationship
10	Request	Neighbour/ Social relationship

Oral Completion Test (Oct)

Once the respondents, have completed the written discourse completion test, the respondents will have to go through another test: oral discourse completion test. The researcher will use the same questionnaire as the as the written discourse test’s questionnaire. The differences is that, in the oral completion test the situation of request will be asked orally by the researcher and the respondents are expected to refuse to the situations orally (verbally) while the researcher uses a voice recorder to record their responses. This test is conducted to triangulate the validity obtained from the written discourse test.

Data Collection

This section will briefly explain the procedures which took place in order to conduct this research. The procedure for this study was simple. Firstly, the researcher decided the focus of the research which is the speech act of refusal. Next the researcher narrowed down the focus and determined to investigate the refusal patterns of the language academicians at Universiti Putra Malaysia. Next, the researcher constructs a DCT with 10 requests in which the participants will be asked to refuse. Then, the researcher distributes the DCT's to the participants. When the participants are done, the researcher conducts an interview session with them, in order to triangulate the validity of the data obtained through the DCT.

Data Recording

Firstly, the researcher will categories the responses obtained from both the research instruments according to the strategies from the taxonomy of refusals by Beebe et.1990 in separate tables. Next, the researcher will quantify the strategies from the both table and compare the results to validate the results obtained. A joined table will be formulated to show the obtained data both from the DCT and the interview. Then, throughout the data analysis section, this table of data will be utilized. Responses from the respondents will be recorded according to the situations and the semantic pattern. Graphs and Numerical data will also be tabulated.

Data Analysis

Once the data is all transcribed into words and numerical forms, the researcher conducts a validity comparison between the data obtained from the written DCT and the oral DCT. Next, the validated data is analyzed situation by situation. (Example provided in table 2 and sample interpretation 1.) Firstly, all the responses will be categorized into semantic formulas. Next, the frequency of the semantic formula will be calculated. In addition, the strategy used to perform the refusal whether direct or indirect will also be identified All this 3 steps will be used to analyze each and every situation presented in the questionnaire. Next, the researcher will identify which semantic formula is used frequently in all ten situations followed by the frequency of the refusal strategies. Finally, the researcher will use the obtained data to answer the research questions offered in chapter 1 and will draw conclusion on the research conducted.

Findings and Results

In this section, the findings and results will be analyzed according to the statement of refusals from the DCT questionnaires (Refer to appendix 1). Firstly, the results between the written DCT and oral DCT will be compared and a table will be created. Secondly, the analysis of the findings will take place by analysing the response responded by the participants towards the statement of refusals. Finally, a short summary of the results will be presented.

4.1 Accuracy of the data from the written DCT and oral DCT.

This data will be presented in the table below.

Refusal Strategy Refusal Statement	Written DCT		Oral DCT	
	Direct Strategy	Indirect Strategy	Direct Strategy	Indirect Strategy
1. Your cousin wants to borrow Rm500 from you for shopping.	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	20 (80%)
2. Your course mate wants to borrow your notes to study for the upcoming exam.	4 (16%)	21 (84%)	4 (16%)	21 (84%)
3. Your sister wants to borrow your expensive Coach handbag.	12 (48%)	13 (52%)	12 (48%)	13 (52%)
4. Your friend asks you to lend him/her your car to go to the beach this weekend.	10 (40%)	15 (60%)	10 (40%)	15 (60%)
5. Your boyfriend/girlfriend wants to lend your car	2 (8%)	23 (92%)	2 (8%)	23 (92%)

6. Your friend wants to lend him/her your new shirt/dress.	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	20 (80%)
7. Your head of the department wants you to participate in the 'gotong-royong' event.	0 (0%)	25 (100%)	0 (0%)	25 (100%)
8. Your deputy dean wants you to join him/her for a drink after work.	0 (0%)	25 (100%)	0 (0%)	25 (100%)
9. Your colleague wants you to bake a cake for the upcoming faculty meeting.	5 (20%)	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	20 (80%)
10. Your neighbor wants you to look after her children.	4 (16%)	21 (84%)	4 (16%)	21 (84%)

From the table presented, it is found that there is zero (0) discrepancy between the written DCT's data obtained and the oral DCT's data obtained in this research.

Analysis by Statements of Refusals from the DCT

In this section, the statements from the DCT of this study will be used as the stimulant for the results analysis. The data collected and obtained will be recorded according to the Taxonomy of Refusals by Beebe et al (1990).

Statement 1: Your cousin wants to borrow Rm500 from you for shopping.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Negative Willingness Ability] [Non Performative Statement]	5	20	i) I don't tink i have that much money. Probably no.
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Excuse] [Statement of Regret]	10	40	i) I have spent all my money this month. Sorry.
	ii) [Statement of Reasons]	12	48	ii) I am really broke this month dear.
	iii) [Statement of Regret] [Set for condition in the future]	3	13	iii) I am really sorry maybe next month.
Total		25	100	

Situation (1) involves a cousin and the respondent in which the respondent has to refuse to borrow money to the cousin. The relationship between the interlocutors is personal from the form of family members. From the data obtained 5 respondents have employed the direct refusal strategy to perform the refusals with the semantic formula code of [Negative Willingness Ability] [Non Performative Statement]. On the other hand 20 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The semantic formula most used in the indirect refusal strategy was [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] followed by [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] [Statement of Regret] and finally [Statement of Regret] [Set for condition in the future]. Basically, a family member is someone who everyone has a close relationship with and the social distance is very close. Therefore it is highly important to maintain a good relationship between family members. From the obtained data, about 80% of the participants have chosen to refuse using the indirect strategy with the [statement of reasons/excuse] being the pattern most favourable. Therefore, it clearly portrays that the respondents are well aware of the social standing and have opt to carefully choose the refusal strategy to be used. so that, it does not jeopardize the relationship between cousins.

Statement 2: Your course mate wants to borrow your notes to study for the upcoming exam.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Negative Willingness Ability ii) [Performative]	3	4	i) I can't. ii) I don't think so.
		1	12	
		4	16	
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	18	72	i) I have not revised.
	ii) [Statement of Alternative]	2	8	ii) Try asking Sheila
	iii) Statement of Philosophy	1	4	iii) Everyone should prepare their own notes.
		21	84	
Total		25	100	

Situation (2) involves a course mate and the respondent in which the respondent has refuse in lending the course mate his/her notes. . The relationship between the interlocutors is social in the form of social members of the community. From the data obtained 4 respondents have employed the direct refusal strategy to perform the refusals with the semantic formula code of [Negative Willingness Ability] [Non Performative Statement]. On the other hand 21 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The semantic formula most used in the indirect refusal strategy was [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] followed by [Statement of Alternative and finally [Statement of Philosophy]. From this it can be concluded that the respondents are aware the importance of a relationship with a course mate and has carefully opted to perform refusal by using the most appropriate and polite manner which is through indirect refusal strategy.

Statement 3: Your sister wants to borrow your expensive Coach handbag.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Non Performative]	12	48	i) No, you can't.
		12	48	
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	8	32	i) You know I love my bad too much.
	ii) [Statement of Wish}	5	20	ii) I wish I can dear.
		13	52	
Total		25	100	

Situation (3) involves a sister and the respondent. In this case, 12 respondents have chosen the direct strategy to refuse whereas 13 respondents have chosen the indirect strategy to

perform the refusal. Among all 10 statements in the DCT of this research, this statement has the highest rate of direct strategy responses from the respondents. This situation occurred probably because of the close relationship between the interlocutors. However, the highest rate (52%) for this statement is still the indirect strategy with the semantic formula of Statement of Reasons. So it can be concluded that, social distance between the interlocutors play a vital role in performing a refusal.

Statement 4 : Your friend asks you to lend him/her your car to go to the beach this weekend.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Non Performative]	2	8	i) No, I don't think so. ii) I really don't think if I can.
	ii) Negative willingness ability	8	32	
		10	40	
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	10	40	i) I am sending my car for service
	ii) [Statement of Wish]	5	20	ii) I wish I can, but you know my dad.
		15	60	
Total		25	100	

Situation (4) involve a friend and the respondent in which the respondent has refuse in lending his/her car. The relationship between the interlocutors is personal. From the data obtained 5 respondents have employed the direct refusal strategy to perform the refusals with the semantic formula code of [Negative Willingness Ability] [Non Performative Statement]. On the other hand 15 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The semantic formula most used in the indirect refusal strategy was [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] followed by [Statement of Wish]. From this it can be concluded that the respondents are aware the importance of a relationship with a friend and has carefully opted to perform refusal by using the most appropriate and polite manner which is through indirect refusal strategy.

Statement 5: Your friend asks you to lend him/her your car to go to the beach this weekend.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Non Performative]	2	8	i) No, I can't.
		2	8	
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	23	92	i) It's not m car, you know right.
		23	92	
Total		25	100	

Situation (5) involves a boyfriend/girlfriend and the respondent in which the respondent has refuse in lending his/her car. The relationship between the interlocutors is personal-intimate in the form of lovers. From the data obtained 2 respondents have employed the direct refusal strategy to perform the refusals with the semantic formula code of [Non Performative Statement]. On the other hand 23 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The semantic formula most used in the indirect refusal strategy was [Statement of Reasons/Excuse]. Comparing this situation to situation 4 which has the same situation and only the target is different as this question is boyfriend/girlfriend and in situation 4 is friend the results differ. As for this situation participants who chose indirect strategy are more and all opted to use the semantic code os [statement of reasons]. This is because the personal-intimate relationship is very important to the interlocutors and they have opted to choose the most polite manner to refuse.

Statement 6: Your friend wants to lend him/her your new shirt/dress.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Negative Willingness Ability]	3	12	i) I can't.
	ii) [Performative Statement]	2	8	ii) I don't think so, I can.
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	15	60	i) I have not worn it even once.
	iii) [Statement of Regret]	5	20	ii) I am sorry la. I can't.
Total		25	100	

Situation (6) involves a friend and the respondent in which the respondent has to refuse to lend her/his new shirt/dress. The relationship between the interlocutors is social relationship in the form of friends. From the data obtained 5 respondents have employed the direct refusal strategy to perform the refusals with the semantic formula code of [Negative Willingness Ability] [Performative Statement]. On the other hand 20 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The semantic formula most used in the indirect refusal strategy was [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] followed by [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] . Basically, a friend is someone who everyone has a close relationship with as this relationship is the most important relationship in the aspect of society. Therefore it is highly important to maintain a good relationship between friends. From the obtained data, about 80% of the participants have chosen to refuse using the indirect strategy with the [statement of reasons/excuse] being the pattern most favourable. Therefore, it clearly portrays that the respondents are well aware of the social standing and have opt to carefully choose the refusal strategy to be used. so that, it does not jeopardize the relationship.

Statement 7: Your head of the department wants you to participate in the 'gotong-royong' event.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	25	100	i) My mother is not well so i am taking her to the hospital
Total		25	100	

Situation (7) involves a Head of Department and the respondent in which the respondent has to refuse to participate in the gotong royong event. The relationship between the interlocutors is formal from the form of superior officer-worker. From the data obtained 25 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The only semantic formula used in this situation to refuse is the [Statement of Reasons]. It can be concluded that, refusing to a superior officer who has power is difficult and it is very important to maintain a good relationship. From the obtained data, about 100% of the participants have chosen to refuse using the indirect strategy with the [statement of reasons/excuse] being the pattern most favourable. Therefore, it clearly portrays that the respondents are well aware of the social standing and have opt to carefully choose the refusal strategy to be used. so that, it does not jeopardize the relationship.

Statement 8: Your deputy dean wants you to join him/her for a drink after work.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Indirect Strategy	i) [Statement of Reasons]	25	100	i) My father is waiting for me to attend a wedding.
Total		25	100	

Situation (8) involves Deputy Dean and the respondent in which the respondent has to refuse to participate in the gotong royong event. The relationship between the interlocutors is formal from the form of superior officer-worker. From the data obtained 25 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The only semantic formula used in this situation to refuse is the [Statement of Reasons]. It can be concluded that, refusing to a superior officer who has power is difficult and it is very important to maintain a good relationship. From the obtained data, about 100% of the participants have chosen to refuse using the indirect strategy with the [statement of reasons/excuse] being the pattern most favourable. Therefore, it clearly portrays that the respondents are well aware of the social standing and have opt to carefully choose the refusal strategy to be used. so that, it does not jeopardize the relationship.

Statement 9: Your colleague wants you to bake a cake for the upcoming faculty meeting.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Non Performative]	5	20	i) No, I don't think so I am free.
		5	20	
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	15	60	i) My oven is faulty.
	ii) [Statement of Wish}	5	20	ii) I really wish that I can but my in-laws are around.
		20	80	
Total		25	100	

Situation (9) involves a colleague and the respondent in which the respondent has to refuse to bake a cake for the upcoming faculty meeting. The relationship between the interlocutors is social relationship in the form of colleagues. From the data obtained 5 respondents have employed the direct refusal strategy to perform the refusals with the semantic formula code of [Non Performative Statement]. On the other hand 20 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The semantic formula most used in the indirect refusal strategy was [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] followed by [Statement of Wish]. Basically, a colleague is someone you work together with, therefore it is highly important to maintain a good relationship between family members. From the obtained data, about 80% of the participants have chosen to refuse using the indirect strategy with the [statement of reasons/excuse] being the pattern most favourable. Therefore, it clearly portrays that the respondents are well aware of the social standing and have opt to carefully choose the refusal strategy to be used. so that, it does not jeopardize the relationship between cousins.

Statement 10: Your neighbour wants you to look after their children.

Refusal Strategy	Semantic Formula Code	f	f (%)	Examples (from the respondents responses)
Direct Refusal	i) [Non Performative]	4	16	i) No, I don't think so I am free.
		4	16	
Indirect Refusal	i) [Statement of Reasons]	20	80	i) I am going out with my friends.
	ii) [Statement of Set Condition in the Future]	1	4	ii) Maybe some other time as i am going out.
		21	84	
Total		25	100	

Situation (10) involves a neighbour and the respondent in which the respondent has to refuse to look after the neighbour's children. . The relationship between the interlocutors is social relationship in the form of cs. From the data obtained 4 respondents have employed the direct refusal strategy to perform the refusals with the semantic formula code of [Non Performative Statement]. On the other hand 21 respondents have employed the indirect strategy to refuse in this situation. The semantic formula most used in the indirect refusal strategy was [Statement of Reasons/Excuse] followed by [Statement of Set condition in the future]. From the obtained data, about 84% of the participants have chosen to refuse using the indirect strategy with the [statement of reasons/excuse] being the pattern most favourable. Therefore, it clearly portrays that the respondents are well aware of the social standing and have opt to carefully choose the refusal strategy to be used. so that, it does not jeopardize the relationship between neighbour.

Summary of Findings

Summary of Findings: Analysis by Relationship

In this paper, the researcher has examine how an interlocutor will refuse in all aspects of a relationship. The table presented, clearly explains the favourable strategy in refusing opt by the participants when refusing to the respective relationships.

DCT ITEM	STIMULUS TYPE	RELATIONSHIP WITH THE REFUSER	Refusal Strategy	
			Direct	Indirect
1	Request	Cousin/Personal relationship	5 (20%)	20 (80%)
2	Request	Course mate/ Social relationship	4 (16%)	21 (84%)
3	Request	Sister/Personal relationship	12 (48%)	13 (52%)
4	Request	Friend/Personal relationship	10 (40%)	15 (60%)
5	Request	Boyfriend/Girlfriend / Personal relationship	2 (8%)	23 (92%)
6	Request	Friend/ Personal relationship	5 (20%)	20 (80%)
7	Request	Head of Department / Formal relationship	0 (0%)	25 (100%)
8	Request	Deputy Dean / Formal relationship	0 (0%)	25 (100%)
9	Request	Colleague / Formal and social relationship	5 (20%)	20 (80%)

10	Request	Neighbour/ Social relationship	4 (16%)	21 (84%)
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In a context of refusing to any type of relationship as illustrated in the table, most of the participants of this study has opted to employ the indirect strategy of refusing which clearly portrays that the participants of this study are highly equipped with pragmatic competence.

Summary of Findings: Analysis by Responses

The total responses obtained in this study were 250 responses from 25 different participants of this study. The total number of responses accumulated for the Direct Refusal Strategy of Refusal are forty seven (47) responses, while for the Indirect Refusal Strategy are two hundred and three (203) responses.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study has been an attempt to outline the preferred Refusal Strategy used by language academicians when given a request. This study investigates the speech act of refusing requests in all type of relationships: personal relationship, social relationship and formal relationship. Although the small sample size does not permit broad generalizations, yet the results do provide a basis for future study.

Basically, based on the findings, it clearly portrayed that the participants of this study are pragmatically competent as they have carefully choose the refusal strategy to perform the refusals in this study. This results also further supports the notion by Brown and Levinson (1972) that refusals are face threatening act and it is very important to refuse appropriately so that communication breakdown does not occur. From the obtained results, the participants are aware of the FTA and have chosen the most polite manner to refuse the request which portrays pragmatic competence and answers research question (1) of this study.

According to Marylna Maros (2006), the rules of speaking in a society are always related to the cultural values of the society. The Malaysians are “expected to communicate with good manners and sensitivity to those they communicate with” (Teo 1996,p.3 cited in Marylna Maros 2006). From the results of this study, 203 responses out of 250 responses were refusals in the form of indirect strategy refusals. This notion proves that, the participants of this study have good manners and also culture had played a vital role in the refusals opted by the participants of this study which answers research question (2) of this study.

In sum, from examining the responses, it is clear that sociopragmatic factor such as relationship plays a significant role in the manner of the refusals being employed. The order of semantic varied in the responses, but the most used semantic expression was [Statement of Reasons]. This answers research question (3) of this study that, the preferred semantic expression obtained from the findings of this research is [Statement of Reasons]

Finally, this study further confirms that the participants of this study are pragmatically competent despite being a second language speaker.

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