

English Literature Students' Pragmatic Knowledge: Analysis of Strategy and Politeness of Refusal

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Abstract

This study investigates and describes English literature students' pragmatic knowledge in uttering English refusal statements in different situations (request, invitation, suggestion, offering). The purpose of this study is to analyze and describe students' refusal strategy and politeness strategy while uttering English refusal. The participants in this study consisted of twenty-five undergraduate students, 7 males and 18 females, enrolled in the second and sixth semesters of the English literature department of Diponegoro University. The only instrument used by researchers in this study was a questionnaire based on Beebe et al.'s (1990) work. The result showed that the students use direct and indirect refusal strategies to refuse something. Most students prefer a direct refusal strategy to the interlocutors who are their peers (friends) or subordinates. However, some students (higher semester) prefer indirect strategies with their peers in some situations. It means that the students respect their interlocutor even though they are in a higher position. Moreover, in the politeness strategy, they use two types of strategies which are deference and solidarity politeness strategy. However, the students (higher semester) prefer to use the deference politeness strategy.

Keywords: Pragmatic, Refusal, Politeness

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1. Introduction

The ability to communicate successfully in using language to communicate effectively in social interaction is what we called as pragmatic competence. According to Crystal, pragmatic competence is the competence to use language “from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter, and the effects of the language they use to the interlocutor in the act of communication” (Krisnawati, 2011:106). Nowadays, language problems are not only focused on grammar or vocabulary but more important, on appropriateness. They are conveying the utterances based on the socio-culture context where the human being lives (Wijana, 1997).

Some theorists have explored the subtopics of pragmatism. Leech and Thomas in Krisnawati (2011: 106) “divided pragmatics into two components, namely pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Pragmalinguistics refers to the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational on interpersonal including pragmatic strategies, such as directness and indirectness. An example is given by Kasper in which two forms of apology are proposed ‘Sorry’ and ‘I’m absolutely devastated—could you possibly find it in your heart to forgive me?’ Both utterances are expressions of an apology but are uttered in different contexts. Here the speaker uttering the latter apology has chosen some pragmalinguistic resource of apologizing”. Otherwise, the speech community is mentioned as socio-pragmatics, such as social distance, power, rights, obligations, and imposition degree in the communicative act between speaker and hearer.

Many researchers have researched the topic of pragmatics. Carrió-Pastor and Marchante (2018) contoured an analysis of pragmatic items in an ESL online adaptive placement test to test the pragmatic competence of ESL students. They tried to analyze of content validity of pragmatic items in the Oxford online placement test. The result showed some problematic items founded in pragmatic categories such as direct speech act, indirect speech act, implicature, and lexicalized trope-inferences. While Shooshtari et al.(2017) observed analysis of pragmatics in an unauthentic textbook. He investigated how well pragmatic language perspectives are considered in expanding EFL textbooks.

Moradi et al. (2016) investigated the extent of Iranian EFL students’ pragmatics knowledge about requesting and apologizing. The result showed that their pragmatics knowledge was not at a satisfying level. Moreover, Pérez-Sabater and Montero-Fleta (2013) focused on pragmatics awareness in the workplace, an area of expertise in growing demand today. Specifically, they centered on the power variable and the distinction between powerful and powerless speech styles through negotiation, co-planning, and goal-oriented interactions. Moaveni (2014) investigated refusal strategies by American and International students at an American University. The different performances of the refusal between American and international students at America University have been put forward by researchers. The result showed some differences between American and International students using semantic

formulas. American female and male students tend to use expressions of gratitude, positive opinions, and general excuses. Meanwhile, international students lack positive reasons and tend to use a variety of semantic formulas and specific excuses.

Chen (2017) studied the investigation of the relationship between pragmatic competence and motivation for non-English majors. The result showed that students' general pragmatic competence is low level. Besides that, Saadatmandi et al. (2018) explored the impact of teaching English pragmatics features in the EFL context by focusing on request speech acts. The result showed pragmatic teaching features significantly impacted the Iranian high school students' performances in request speech acts. Besides, the overall responses by the experimental group showed that indirect request speech acts were more widely used than direct request speech acts as a sign of social and cultural politeness. Bazyar et al. (2016) investigated the interest of language learners in the acquisition of appropriate use of second language speech acts, traces the variation over time in the use of speech act of request in Iranian EFL University students and for further clarification groups of non-language University students. The results showed no time effects on the appropriate use of speech act "request".

Arab and Tabatabaei (2016) investigated the use of language learning strategies in four areas of communicative competence among Iranian intermediate learners and the extent of their pragmatic and grammatical awareness. The result was that the participants used grammatical strategies applied frequently, and sociolinguistic strategies less frequently than other strategies. Javdani (2016) investigated the impact of multiword knowledge of chunks on Iranian EFL learners' pragmatic perception of the illocutionary act of request. Bijari (2014) contoured the relationship between the Iranian EFL students' gender, language proficiency, and comprehension of speech acts. Takahashi (2016:61) explained semantic formulas "were said to provide evidence of pragmatic transfer in situations where the percentage of DCT responses containing a given formula reflected any one of several patterns."

Refusal is one speech act that affects interlocutors' face needs in a communicative act. Gass and Houck in Moaveni (2014:8) stated, "there are three possible refusal approaches, which are rejection, postponement, or alternative" (Moaveni, 2014:8). Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest politeness strategies applied are indirect strategies to consider Interlocutor's face needs. These indirect strategies are intended to keep an interpersonal relationship or be polite. According to Brown and Levinson, there are two face needs; positive and negative. "*Positive face* means one's desire to be liked and accepted by a certain group to which one wishes to belong, while *negative face* refers to one's desire to be autonomous and have freedom of action" (Moaveni, 2014:10).

Refusals generally act defined as face-threatening acts. Politeness strategies are needed to mitigate face threats and save the face of participants. Referring to Scollon (1983), there are

two kinds of politeness strategies: deference and solidarity. An example of deference is the speaker can provide reasons and “expression negative ability when refusing something. Meanwhile, solidarity is offering alternatives or expressing willingness to comply, or stating direct refusal” (Moaveni, 2014:13). Moaveni (2014) more explains that two refusal strategies can be identified in uttering refusal sentences, which called as semantic formula and adjuncts. The semantic formula is a set of expressions, “which could be a word(s), a phrase(s) or a sentence(s), and can function as a refusal. Adjunct is a set of expressions to supplement a refusal speech act” (p.13).

Based on the previous studies above, there have not many studies about the refusal speech act, especially in the Indonesian context. As stated by Brown and Levinson (1987) in Moaveni (2014), politeness strategies are used to save interlocutors’ faces. Moreover, there are two politeness strategies we know; positive and negative politeness strategies. In positive politeness strategies, the indirect refusal strategies should use an ability to convey the meaning of communication (refusal). However, it does not mean that the students who use negative politeness strategies or direct refusal strategies have common pragmatic knowledge. It is the power and social distance between speaker and interlocutor, and the level of imposition of the act that influence (Živković & Živković, 2020). Scollon (1983) explained a pragmatic competence could be identified by politeness strategies divided into deference and solidarity. In solidarity politeness strategy, people can offer alternatives and express the willingness to comply, or even state direct refusal. Even though refusal is a universal experience, not all language cultures express it the same way. Refusal is considered universal and culturally specific, just like other speaking acts (Dewi et al., 2019).

Thus, in this research, the researchers tend to investigate and describe the form of students’ refusal strategies and relate it to their politeness strategies. In pragmatics, the appropriateness of statements or utterances in refusing someone or something based on the context correctly is important. As stated by Stavans and Shafran (2017), “Pragmatic competence entails the ability to use the grammatical forms and lexicon of a speaker’s language or language(s) in appropriate ways that align with cultural and linguistic conventions”(p.1). Therefore, the researchers will find out to what extent refusal statements used correctly by the students based on the Indonesian context are applied. Hence, the researchers can explore the topic by discussing the students’ pragmatics knowledge and investigating their refusal and politeness strategies.

2. Method

The research design uses descriptive qualitative research since this research focus on the description of refusal strategies and politeness strategies of Refusal performed by Indonesian students.

2.1 Participants

The voluntary participants consisted of twenty-five undergraduate students, 7 males and 18 females (age range: 18-20 years old), enrolled in the second and sixth semester of the English literature department of Diponegoro University. In this study, the researchers offered them to fill out the DCT questionnaire without coercion. Then, the students had the freedom and choice to be involved in gathering data. Their participation in this research was not forced. "An important aspect of voluntary participation in research is the capacity to withdraw from an ongoing study" (Marshall et al., 2014:5). Furthermore, most students in this study were non-native speakers of English, and English is a foreign language for them, so researchers want to know how they use English to do refusal.

2.2 Instruments

The only instrument used by researchers was a questionnaire based on Beebe et al. (1990). The questionnaire consists of 12 situations in the form of a written discourse completion test (DCT) adopted from Discourse Completion Test by Sahragard and Javanmardi (2016). The researchers' reason for selecting this questionnaire is that questionnaire was among the most popular instruments in collecting data to investigate different types of speech acts, especially refusal. Besides, there are some advantages of the questionnaire. (Allami & Naeimi, 2011) cited in (Živković & Živković, 2020) explain that "DCT can be quickly administered to a large number of participants, no transcription is needed, and it is easy to assess. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to control various variables and establish the different statistically" (P.5). Moreover, DCT will not capture how interlocutors speak the utterances. According to Ary et al. (2009:504), one of the standards of rigor for research in a qualitative study is dependability or trustworthiness. As they stated, dependability is "the extent to which variation can be traced or explained". To establish and enhance dependability, the best criterion used in this study was the one suggested by Ary et al. (2009); that is, "documentation".

2.3 Data Analysis

The twelve situations were first codified based on a modified version of Beebe et al. (1990) taxonomy refusal strategies. A brief description of the situation, including the context, the interlocutor's social distance from the participant, and the interlocutor's power over the participant, was followed by an incomplete conversation in each test item. In this presentation of the study, the researchers divided refusal strategies into three types of refusal strategies based on Beebe et al.'s (1990); direct refusals, indirect refusals, and adjuncts of refusals. Meanwhile, the refusal strategies not uttered by the participants were omitted.

3. Finding and Discussion

3.1 Finding

The research probes the issue of refusal that refers to the differences in the strategy used in the given situations in request, invitation, suggestion, and offer. Based on the research conducted, the English Literature students have two refusal strategies which are direct, indirect, or adjuncts to the refusal of the request, invitation, suggestion, an offer based on the different situations. Through the findings, the researchers codified the data based on the category of refusal strategy Beebe et al. (1990) took from Allami and Naeimi (2011), then analyzed and interpreted the data.

The researchers found several points that have been mentioned repeatedly by the participants in different situations. In the following, the participants' statements were put forward for each by researchers (request, invitation, suggestion, and offer).

3.1.1 Refusal Strategy in Request

In the discourse completion test (DCT), situations 1, 2, and 12 were regarded as requests. In conducting refusal of a request, the second semester students mostly used *direct strategies* (64.2%) more frequently than *indirect strategies* (35.7%) in situation 1. In other side, the sixth semester of students mostly used *indirect strategies* (45.4%) less frequently than *direct strategies* (54.5%). Following were some statements of direct strategies; however, their statements preceded or followed by an excuse, a regret, and an alternative which is uttered repeatedly by most of the students in situation 1:

“I'm sorry, I can't”

“Your fee is highest in here, So, I can't give it”

“I really appreciated your hard work over these past months. I am sorry to say that I can't raise your payment just yet”

“Sorry, I can't fullfil it, because our bookstore not doing well lately. Maybe you can take for another job”

“I know that you are of the senior staff in our bookstore, but unfortunately I can't raise your current wages”

“I can't. These past months, there is a lot of stuffs happened in bookstore”

“I'm happy that you enjoy to work here, but I'm afraid I can't raise your salary”

The second semester students mostly used *direct strategies* (42.8%) as equally as *indirect strategies* (42.8%) in situation 2. In other side, the sixth semester of students mostly used *indirect strategies* (36.3%) less frequently than *direct strategies* (63.6 %). Following were also some statements of direct strategies expressed frequently by the students; however their statements preceded or followed by an excuse, a regret, and an alternative which is uttered repeatedly by most of the students in situation 2:

“Ohh sorry I couldn't”

“As much as I want to help you, like the usual, this time I really need to study so I can't borrow you my notes this time”

“Sorry bud, Gavin already borrowed it first, so it's a no”

“I couldn't lend you my notes, but maybe I could tell you the important things about yesterday lesson”

“I am sorry but I'm afraid I can't, you can lend from other students”

The students of second semester mostly used *direct strategies* (50 %) as equally as *indirect strategies* (50 %) in situation 12. In other side, the sixth semester of students mostly used *indirect strategies* (72.7%) more frequently than *direct strategies* (27.2 %). Subsequent statements of direct strategies were expressed repeatedly by most of the students; however their statements preceded or followed by an excuse, a regret, and an alternative which is uttered repeatedly by most of the students in situation 12:

“I can't stay sir, my wife looking for me”

“Sorry, I can't, I have set a plan with my friend”

“Oh, I'm sorry sir, but I can't”

“I can't I getting sick to day”

In other side, there are students used *indirect strategies* such as excuse, regret, explanation, and alternative to refuse the interlocutor. The following statements expressed frequently by the students in the situation 1:

“I'm sorry, I want to increasing in you pay, but it will be a quite harm my business”

“I'm sorry but you know that our shop not doing well lately”

“Sorry, but this bookstore income is quite unstable”

“Yes, you're right but I think that's not quite wise since our current revenue is decreasing”

“I really want to do that, but as you can see our income wasn't that good and it's all I can do. I hope you understand”

“I'm sorry, you still one year in here, try more hardwork”

“I respect your loyalty, but we have a strict structural wage that is hard to change”

“I'm sorry but we already pay all employees according to their position”

The following indirect statements expressed frequently by the students in the situation 2:

“You better borrow hers, I came late last week so mine is incomplete”

“You can ask others”

“Actually, I'm gonna read it too, ask someone else”

“Oh I am sorry about it”

The following indirect statements expressed frequently by the students in the situation 12:

“I am sorry boss, it's hard to find bus in the night”

“Sorry for asking, I have another house work to do so I have to back home”

“Sorry bos, I promised my kid I'll be home early to help him, so I'm afraid I have to leave now”

“I think I can finish this at my home or we can continue this tomorrow”

“Sorry sir, you must already know that I'm tired, right?”

“Unfortunately sir, someone's already waiting for me outside the office”

However, in situation 1,2 and 12 of requesting, none of students use adjuncts such as gratitude, appreciation, positive opinion, empathy and pause filler.

3.1.2 Refusal Strategy in Invitation

In the discourse completion test (DCT), the situations 3, 4 and 10 were regarded as an invitation. Based on the obtained data, the students of second semester mostly used *direct strategies* (50%) as frequently as *indirect strategies* (50 %) In other side, the sixth semester of students mostly used *indirect strategies* (45.4 %) less frequently than *direct strategies* (54.5%) in situation 3. The following utterances of direct strategies mostly used by the students in situation 3:

“It hear good, but I can't”

“But, I have another appointment, so I can't”

“Oh, I want, but I can't sorry”

“Maybe, for this time, I can't because I have a full schedule”

“I apologize I have to refuse your invitation as I am very bust this week”

In the discourse completion test (DCT), situations 3, 4, and 10 were regarded as an invitation. Based on the obtained data, the second-semester students mostly used *direct strategies* (50%) as frequently as *indirect strategies* (50%) On another side, the sixth-semester students mostly used *indirect strategies* (63.6%) more frequently than *direct strategies* (36.3%) in situation 4. Here are also other statements of direct strategies expressed frequently by the students in situation 4:

“I'm sorry, I can't. Next Sunday I have a meeting with another executive”

“I'm sorry sir, I can't come to your party. Hope you have a good party”

“I don't think I can fulfill your invitation”

“Ah! I'm sorry boss. But I have urgent family matter to attend, so, I won't be able to come”

In the discourse completion test (DCT), situations 3, 4, and, 10 were regarded as an invitation. Based on the obtained data, the second-semester students used *direct strategies* (28.5%) less frequently than *indirect strategies* (71.4%). On another side, the sixth-semester students used *indirect strategies* (63.6%) more frequently than *direct strategies* (36.3%) in situation 10. Moreover, the students used direct strategies in situation 10. Here are the statements frequently used by the students:

“Hmm, that's sound good, but I can't

“I can't, I must keeping my cat she is sick right now”

“I don't think I can come over this Sunday night”

While, there are some statements using *indirect strategies* preceded and followed with appreciation, regret, reason, and explanation to refuse the interlocutor. Here are mostly utterances used by the students in situation 3:

“Sorry, I have another schedule”

“It's a pleasure for me to have a meeting but I'm quite hectic for the next few days”

Students also use *indirect strategies* in situation 4 like the following statements frequently used by the students:

“My wife would be happy to come over but she already has another appointment”

“I really appreciate that you invited me to your party, but I've already set a meeting with our client next Sunday”

“My friend would be happy, but I'm afraid she can't come”

“I really want to go but next Sunday I have to for my mother's check-up”

“I'm sorry, I would have to pass. I already have an agenda for next Sunday”

In situation 10, here are some statements of indirect strategies frequently used by students:

“hmm, I'm sorry I have another appointment”

“I'm happy for the invitation but Sunday night is quite hectic night for my company”

“Glad to hear that but I have a schedule that I've been planning since last month”

“Thanks for your invitation but I have to study tonight”

“I'm sorry I'm afraid I'm busy on Sunday night”

In situation 10, there some students use adjunct such as pause filler, appreciation, and gratitude:

“Will see huh? I have someone's coming over that day”

“Aw, that would be nice, but my boss already invited me on his dinner party. So, sorry”

“Hmm, I'm sorry I have another appointment”

However, in situation 3 and 4, the students used the pause filler and appreciation in direct strategy such as:

“Hmm, that's sound good, but I can't”

“Ah! I'm sorry boss. But I have urgent family matter to attend, so, I won't be able to come”

3.1.3. Refusal Strategy in Suggestion

Situations 5,6, and 8 are regarded as a suggestion. The students of the English Literature Department used direct strategies (71.4%), and indirect strategies (28.5 %) in situation 5. On another side, the sixth semester of students mostly used *indirect strategies* (14.2%) less

frequently than *direct strategies* (64.2%) in situation 5. Here are the statements of direct strategies that students frequently used to refuse situation 5, 6, 8 which preceded and followed with non-performative/performative statement, reason, promise of future acceptance, threat, and positive opinion:

Direct strategy statements of refusal of your friend's suggestion in situation 5 about new diet:

"I'm sorry I can't"

"Oh no thanks, maybe another time"

"I think don't need a diet. Maybe next time"

"No, thanks. I feel more terrible when dieting"

"Not yet, I don't think it would be work though"

The students of the English Literature Department used direct strategies (35.7%) and indirect strategies (64.2 %) in situation 6. On other side, the sixth semester of students mostly used *indirect strategies* (90.9%) more frequently than *direct strategies* (9 %) in situation 6. In situation 6, the students also used the direct strategy of refusal about the boss's suggestion to use little notes. Here are the most statements used by the students:

"I will try next time but not right now"

"I'm sorry I can't"

"Sure but I don't think so, let me think"

"I can't do it boss, all this paper is important"

The second-semester students used direct strategies (57.1%) and indirect strategies (35.7%). On another side, the sixth-semester students used *indirect strategies* (54.5%) more frequently than *direct strategies* (36.3%) in situation 8. The students also used the direct strategy of refusal. Here are the most statements used by the students:

"Nice to hear that, but I'm sorry I couldn't"

"I don't think so, perhaps another"

"I don't agree with you because our class is mostly grammar not speaking"

"Thank you, but I think it's no needed. We already have much conversation practice"

"I'm sorry, I'm afraid I can't give you more practice as we have enough lessons"

"Sorry not today I have a new lesson for you, and I trust you're not boring about it."

The students use adjunct like giving the appreciation in situation 6 and 8 such as:

"It's a good idea but I don't like writing too often"

"Nice to hear that, but I'm sorry I couldn't"

Here are the indirect strategies statements students used frequently to refuse suggestions in situations 5, 6, and 8 which were preceded and followed by self-defense, negative consequences, appreciation, positive statements/gratitude, and reason. In situation 5, the following statements uttered by the students:

“I have been tried it but it’s hard to me”

“Hmm, that may be works. I will consider it”

In situation 6, the following statements uttered by the students:

“Sorry I have been tried it but it isn't work on me”

” Thank you for your recommendation but I have another trick to remind me”

“Oh yeah sure sir, I'm making notes in my phone, thanks for your idea”

In situation 8, the following statements uttered by the students:

“We could cope up with that during classes. But I should keep up with syllabus”

“Thank you for suggestion, but I think I need to finish this session first, then we can try more practice on conversation later”

“I'm sorry but I'm busy with my basketball exercise. I don't have lot of times”

Regarding the use of adjuncts such as pause filler, and positive statements/gratitude, only in situation 8:

“Thank you for suggestion, but I think I need to finish this session first, then we can try more practice on conversation later”

“Hmm..., thank you for suggesting but we are on the grammar class so focusing on grammar is priority”

3.1.4. Refusal Strategy in Offer

The second-semester students used direct strategies (7.1%) and indirect strategies (50%). On another side, the sixth-semester students used *indirect strategies* (18.1%) less frequently than *direct strategies* (63.6%) in situation 7.

Here are the statements frequently used by the students using *indirect strategies* followed by a reason like in situation 7:

“No, you don't have to”

“No need to pay. I understand your struggle”

“Oh, no that's ok, no problem. This just a little accident”

“Oh, don't do it. This is only a small accident, don't feel scary. No problem. That's okay”

“No, it's fine. You don't need to pay for it. It's just a vase I bought randomly on the shop”

“Oh no, those were limited edition. You don't have to. I think it is one of a kind”

The second-semester students used direct strategies (85.7%) and indirect strategies (14.2%). On other side, the sixth-semester students used *indirect strategies* (63.6%) less frequently than *direct strategies* (81.8%) in situation 9.

The statements frequently used by the students using *direct strategies* in situation 9:

“Oh I'm sorry I don't want it”

“Sorry I don't like because it is too sweet, no thanks”

“Dude, I'm full like chipmunks cheeks. No, one more cake would kill me”

“Ahh, I think that's enough, I'm full. No thanks but my stomach is full”

“Nope I'm full, no”

“Thank you, I'm full. No thank you, please eat it by yourself”

“No, thanks I am full. No but thanks”

The second-semester students used direct strategies (50%) and indirect strategies (50%). On another side, the sixth-semester students used *indirect strategies* (45.4%) less frequently than *direct strategies* (54.5%) in situation 11. The statements frequently used by the students using direct strategies in situation 11:

“I am sorry I don't want to go”

“I am sorry I can't leave this town because I have to take care of my mother”

“I am sorry I couldn't receive your offering”

“I am sorry I can't, because I am too scared go out by plane”

“I'm very appreciate sir, but if you ask me to move from this town. I feel I can't. I have a husband and a son “

“That's a kind of you, however I can't move to another city”

“Sorry boss, I don't want to move to far from my comfort zone”

“I can't sir. I can't handle it”

“I appreciate the offer but I may say no, sorry”

There are some *indirect strategies* used by students in situation 9 and 11. Here are the statements in situation 9:

“Thanks, but I want enjoy in here maybe any time”

“Thanks for the great offers but I really can't leave my family right now”

“I'm glade and quite surprise for your offer but I cannot move to another town due to my wife's condition”

“Thanks but I was happy in here”

“Considering the circumstances, I think I should turned it down, sorry sir”

“Sorry boss, but I can't leave my family alone”

Here are the statements in situation 11:

“It's kind of you to promote me but I have three children who go to school and I can't leave them”

“I guess I've already comfortable with my position right now”

“Thank you for your offer but I like this place very much”

“Sorry boss, maybe next time. I have some privacy reason”

“Thank you so much for your kindness, but I like being here”

There are the students who use pause filler in situation 9:

“Dude, I'm full like chipmunks cheeks. No, one more cake would kill me”

“Ahh, I think that's enough, I'm full. No thanks but my stomach is full”

Having codified the obtained data and with these issues in mind, in what follows, the results of the study for each research question were presented and discussed one by one.

Table 3.1 Percentage of refusal type used by students of second and sixth semester

Acts of rejection	Situation	Type of refusal (%)		Type of refusal (%)	
		Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
Requesting	1	64.2 %	35.7 %	54.5 %	45.4 %
	2	42.8 %	42.8 %	63.6 %	36.3 %
	12	50 %	50 %	27.2 %	72.7 %
Invitation	3	50 %	50 %	54.5 %	45.4 %
	4	50 %	50 %	36.3 %	63.6 %
	10	28.5 %	71.4 %	36.3 %	63.6 %
Suggestion	5	71.4 %	28.5 %	64.2 %	14.2 %
	6	35.7 %	64.2 %	9 %	90.9 %
	8	57.1 %	35.7 %	36.3 %	54.5 %
Offer	7	7.1 %	50 %	63.6 %	18.1 %
	9	85.7 %	14.2 %	81.8 %	63.6 %
	11	50 %	50 %	54.5 %	45.4 %

Table 3.2 Semantic formula of second semester students

Situation	Statement	Semantic Formula
1	“I'm sorry, I can't”	[reg+dis] (ds/req/3)
	“I really appreciated your hard work over these past months. I am	[app+reg+dis] (ds/req/9)

Situation	Statement	Semantic Formula
	sorry to say that I can't raise your payment just yet"	
	"Sorry, I can't fullfil it, because our bookstore not doing well lately. Maybe you can take for another job"	[reg+dis+reas+esc] (ds/req/10)
	"I know that you are of the senior staff in our bookstore, but unfortunately I can't raise your current wages"	[pos+dis] (ds/req/11)
2	"Ohh sorry I couldn't"	[reg+dis] (ds/req/1)
	"As much as I want to help you, like the usual, this time I really need to study so I can't borrow you my notes this time"	[wish+exc+dis] (ds/req/9)
	"Sorry bud, Gavin already borrowed it first, so it's a no"	[reg+exc+dis] (ds/req/11)
	"I couldn't lend you my notes, but maybe I could tell you the important things about yesterday lesson"	[dis+alt] (ds/reg/13)
3	"It hear good, but I can't"	[pos+dis] (ds/inv/1)
	"But, I have another appointment, so I can't"	[exc+dis] (ds/inv/2)
	"Oh, I want, but I can't sorry"	[pos+dis] (ds/inv/4)
	"Maybe, for this time, I can't because I have a full schedule"	[dis+exc] (ds/inv/6)
4	"I'm so sorry I can't go because I have to go to another city"	[reg+dis+exc](ds/inv/3)
	"I'm sorry boss, I can't come to your office, mercy".	[reg+dis](ds/inv/5)
		[reg+dis+exc](ds/inv/6)

Situation	Statement	Semantic Formula
	“I'm sorry, I can't. Next Sunday I have a meeting with another executive”	
5	“I'm sorry I can't” “Oh no thanks, maybe another time” “I think I don't need a diet. Maybe next time”	[reg+dis] (ds/sug/1) [no+alt] (ds/sug/5) [neg will+alt](ds/sug/7)
6	“I'm sorry I can't” “Sure but I don't think so, let me think” “I can't do it boss, all this paper is important”	[reg+dis] (ds/sug/1) [neg will+pospon](ds/sug/5) [dis+exc] (ds/sug/13)
7	-	
8	“Nice to hear that, but I'm sorry I couldn't” “I don't agree with you because our class is mostly grammar not speaking” “Thank you, but I think it's no needed. We already have much conversation practice”	[pos+reg+dis](ds/sug/8) [neg.will+exc] (ds/sug/6) [pos+neg.will+exc] (ds/sug/7)
9	“Sorry I don't like because it is too sweet, no thanks” “Nope I'm full, no” “Thank you, I'm full. No thank you, please eat it by yourself”	[reg+neg.wil+exc](ds/of/5) [no+exc](ds/of/12) [pos/exc/no] (ds/of/13)
10	“Hmm, that's sound good, but I can't	[p+pos+dis](ds/inv/4)
11	“I am sorry I can't, because I am too scared go out by plane” “I'm very appreciate sir, but if you ask me to move from this town. I	[reg+dis+exc](ds/of/6) [pos+dis+exc](ds/of/7)

Situation	Statement	Semantic Formula
	feel I can't. I have a husband and a son “ “That's a kind of you, however I can't move to another city”	[pos+dis](ds/of/13)
12	“Sorry, I can't, I have set a plan with my friend” “Oh, I'm sorry sir, but I can't” “I can't I getting sick today”	[reg+dis+exc](ds/req/7) [reg+dis](ds/req/11) [dis+exc](ds/req/13)

Table 3.3 Semantic formula of sixth semester students

Situation	Statement	Semantic Formula
1	“I can't. These past months, there is a lot of stuffs happened in bookstore” “I'm happy that you enjoy to work here, but I'm afraid I can't raise your salary”	[dis+exc] (ds/req/6) [pos+dis] (ds/req/11)
2	“Hey, I'm so sorry, but I really need this time right now,so no” “I'm sorry but I can't, I'm going to study tonight and I don't have other time”	[reg+ exc+ no] (ds/req/4) [reg+ dis + exc] (ds/req/9)
3	“I apologize I have to refuse your invitation as I am very bust this week” “I cannot sign that contract right now, it's internal situation” “I'm flattered, but with due respect, I refuse your invitation”	[reg+perfor+exc] (ds/inv/2) [dis+ princ] (ds/inv/3) [pos+ perfor] (ds/inv/7)
4	“I'm sorry sir, I can't come to your party. Hope you have a good party”	[reg+dis+pos] (ds/inv/3) [dis] (ds/inv/5)

	“I don't think I can fulfill your invitation”	[p+reg+exc+dis] (ds/inv/7)
	“Ah! I'm sorry boss. But I have urgent family matter to attend, so, I won't be able to come”	
5	“No, thanks. I feel more terrible when dieting”	[No+grat+ self] (ds/sug/2)
	“Not yet, I don't think it would be work though”	[neg.will] (ds/sug/11)
6	“I will try next time but not right now”	[promise for future] (ds/sug/10)
7	-	
8	that's a good idea but I can't make it in this week	[pos+dis] (ds/sug/5)
9	“No, thank you I am still on diet. Don't try ruin my diet”	[No+grat+exc+treat] (ds/of/3)
	“No, thanks I am full. No but thanks”	[No+ grat] (ds/of/11)
10	“I can't, I must keeping my cat she is sick right now”	[dis+exc] (ds/inv/3)
	“I don't think I can come over this Sunday night”	[dis] (ds/inv/5)
11	“I can't sir. I can't handle it”	[dis+ dis] (ds/of/3)
	“I appreciate the offer but I may say no, sorry”	[pos+ no] (ds/of/5)
12	“I can't stay sir, my wife looking for me”	[dis+ exc] (ds/req/3)

In direct strategies, there are two categories of direct strategies which are performative “No” and disability or negative willingness. In order to refuse four acts of refusal, the students of sixth semester used disability [dis], and followed 1 until 4 components of semantic formula such as excuse [**dis+ exc**] (**ds/req/3**), positive statement [**pos+dis**] (**ds/sug/5**), regret [**p+reg+exc+dis**] (**ds/inv/7**), and statement of principle [**dis+ princ**] (**ds/inv/3**). Besides, the use of performative “No” to refuse of situations consist of 2 until 4 components of semantic formula consist of positive statement [**pos+ no**] (**ds/of/5**), gratitude [**No+grat+exc+treat**] (**ds/of/3**), self defence [**No+grat+ self**] (**ds/sug/2**), regret and excuse [**reg+ exc+ no**] (**ds/req/4**). Negative willingness also used by sixth semester students [**neg.will**] (**ds/sug/11**).

However, second semester students used disability [dis] frequently to refuse the acts followed some components of semantic formula, such as regret [**reg+dis**] (**ds/req/3**), appreciation/positive statement [**app+reg+dis**] (**ds/req/9**), reason/excuse [**reg+dis+reas+exc**] (**ds/req/10**), wish [**wish+exc+dis**] (**ds/req/9**), pause filler [**p+pos+dis**](**ds/inv/4**). Negative willingness [**neg.will**] followed by alternative [**neg will+alt**](**ds/sug/7**) , postponement [**neg will+pospon**](**ds/sug/5**), excuse [**neg.will+exc**] (**ds/sug/6**), regret and excuse [**reg+neg.wil+exc**](**ds/of/5**). Performative “No” followed by positive statement [**pos/exc/no**] (**ds/of/13**), excuse [**no+exc**](**ds/of/12**), alternative [**no+alt**] (**ds/sug/5**).

3.2 Discussion

Based on the findings, many students have the competence to refuse something using indirect strategy and direct strategy of refusal. It shows that they are good enough in pragmatics knowledge. It can be seen by researchers when the student would be the boss, teacher, or someone with a higher position; then the students stated it directly in situations 1 and 2. These findings are in accordance with the theory presented by Leech and Thomas in Krisnawati (2011) that social distance, power, rights, obligations, and imposition degree as socio-pragmatics affect speech act of refusal. For example, many students are able to refuse by using the direct strategy while refusing their peers a request or an offer. On another side, the students prefer an indirect way to reject their boss’ invitation or suggestion. It is also in line with (Živković & Živković, 2020) that the students tend to use the direct refusal strategy because of power and social distance between them and their interlocutor.

Moreover, students in the second or sixth semester have different ways to express their refusal to their interlocutors who are equal or lower. For example, the students (sixth semester) used an indirect refusal strategy to their friends, students, or employee in refusing invitations or suggestions. It is in line with Al-Issa (2003) that the refusal statements are influenced by EFL learners’ sociocultural context. Besides, many Indonesian prioritize etiquette. It shows that students (higher semester) can express refusal politely. It is following Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory that the politeness strategy is indirect because the speaker considers Interlocutor’s facial needs.

In stating the direct strategy of refusal, the students used some semantic formulas such as excuse, regret, and alternative statement and preceded or followed by negative utterances or performed “no”. It is stated by Cutting (2002) that “both direct and indirect speech act was that much of the time, what we mean is not the words themselves but the meaning implied”. Moreover, some students used pause filler to express refusal in some situations. Argued to Sadler and Eroz (2001) addressed Turkish and Americans used pause fillers followed by an utterance to express their gratitude and appreciation. Moreover, semantic formula differences were investigated by researchers through the components followed after the “no” statement, negative willingness, and disability. From the findings, the students did not have many

differences in using the semantic formula. In other words, the sixth-semester students as higher-level students did not use various semantic formulas.

In this study, students choose a direct or indirect refusal strategy based on their social distance, power, and imposition degree with their interlocutors. Because of different statuses or positions, the students show their freedom to the action (speech act of refusal) by stating direct refusal. Scollon (1983) explained the students express their refusal in polite ways because it is a solidarity politeness strategy by negative ability, willingness to comply, and stating direct refusal.

In addition, there are two types of politeness strategies used by students; deference and solidarity strategy. Like explained by Scollon in Moaveni (2014), refusal statements contain the inability to agree with something and provide the reasons behind a deference politeness strategy. The examples of students' refusal statements are:

- (1) "Sorry, I can't fulfill it, because our bookstore not doing well lately. Maybe you can take for another job"
- (2) "Maybe, for this time, I can't because I have a full schedule"
- (3) "I'm so sorry I can't go because I have to go to another city"
- (4) "I'm sorry, I can't. Next Sunday I have a meeting with another executive"

Meanwhile, the solidarity politeness strategies uttered by the students are statements giving suggestions or alternatives, willingness to comply, and direct refusal. The examples of students' statements are as follow:

- (1) "Thank you, but I think it's no needed. We already have much conversation practice"
- (2) "I'm very appreciate sir, but if you ask me to move from this town. I feel I can't. I have a husband and a son"
- (3) "I'm happy that you enjoy to work here, but I'm afraid I can't raise your salary"
- (4) "I'm sorry sir, I can't come to your party. Hope you have a good party"

Moreover, based on the findings, most students who use the solidarity strategy are frequent rather than the deference strategy. Students prefer to give agreement and alternatives to their interlocutor while refusing. As explained by Brown and Levinson, the ability to state a polite statement is to keep a *positive face*. Hence, students have pragmatic knowledge to do refusal in English. Related to the different politeness strategies proposed by Scollon (1983) between second and sixth-semester students, researchers can analyze that students in the second semester frequently use the solidarity politeness strategy, while the sixth semester prefers to use the deference politeness strategy.

4. Conclusion

Pragmatics plays a very significant role in the process of communication. Hence, the action of refusal performed in our daily lives in such situations is mainly one of the interesting topics

in the discourse of pragmatic research over the past few decades. Therefore, in the present study, the researchers have investigated how university students as EFL learners followed different pragmatic patterns to produce speech acts of refusal. Moreover, the strategies they use in different situations. From the finding and discussion, the researchers conclude that students of English literature at Diponegoro University have the pragmatic knowledge to do the refusal speech act. The researchers conclude they are significant to the theories proposed in this study. This research to those learners interested in increasing their knowledge of pragmatics in general and speech act of refusal in particular. In English Language Teaching, pragmatic knowledge is able to be substantial material for students who learn English, especially in English speaking and listening activities. For example, the students can increase their understanding of English dialogue about the refusal. Therefore, the students can speak English appropriately based on the settings or context of the conversations.

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