While clarity and explicitness in responding to a request are highly desirable, there are conventionally indirect strategies people use when responding. This indirectness cannot be deemed as always indicating impoliteness as different people have different strategies in giving a response; it is determined by the cultural norms and values in which they are brought up. In this paper, we will look at the strategies Indonesians use when responding to a request at times when their circumstances pressure them to make refusals. The study reported here found that apart from giving refusals, in which indirect refusal strategies are preferred, in situations where the ranking of imposition of a request is high, they tend to accept the request. It appears that their strategies of responding are closely related to their strong willingness to maintain the (existing) harmony between them and their interlocutors.

1. Introduction

Since the spawning of the theories of speech act by philosophers such as Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Bach & Harnish (1979), many studies have been conducted to investigate the realization of speech acts in various languages and cultures. Most of the studies have looked at the realization of particular speech acts in relation to politeness phenomena.

Until recently, however, research on speech act realization has mainly focused on requests (e.g. Ervin-Tripp 1976; Blum-Kulka 1989; Blum-Kulka & House 1989; Weizman 1989, 1993; Bilbow 1995; Aijmer 1996, for the study of requests by native speakers of English; Beal 1990; Harlow 1990; Koike 1994, for requests in French; House & Kasper 1981; House & Kasper 1987; Faerch & Kasper 1989; House 1989, for requests in German; Rintell 1981; le Pair 1996, for requests in Spanish; House & Kasper 1987; Blum-Kulka & House 1989; Faerch & Kasper 1989, for requests in Danish; Miyagawa 1982; Ikuta 1988; Fukushima 1996, for requests in Japanese; Lee-Wong 1993; Zhang 1995a, 1995b; and Hong 1996 for requests in Mandarin). The speech act of refusal, on the other hand, has attracted less attention, even though according to Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990: 56), "refusals are interesting from a sociolinguistic point of view. First they are complex. In natural conversation, they often involve a long negotiated sequence, and the risk of offending one's interlocutor is so much a part of the speech act that some degree of directness usually exists. Second, refusals are interesting in that their form and content vary according to the eliciting speech act (invitation, request, offer, or suggestion). They are also sensitive to other sociolinguistic variables such as status of the interlocutor". Furthermore, much of the research on refusals has focused on and involved Japanese learners of English (Kinjo 1987; Ito 1989; Beebe & Takahashi 1989; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990; Ikoma & Shimura 1994; Saeki & O'Keefe 1994; Kodama 1996). According to Beebe and Takahashi (1989), this is partly because the Japanese are stereotyped as people who apologize frequently, are less than explicit, do not make critical remarks to someone else's face, avoid disagreement, and avoid telling people anything that they might not want to hear.

This paper is a report on a study aimed at investigating strategies of politeness used by Indonesians when confronted with requestive speech acts at times when they are confronted with face-threatening situations, i.e. their circumstances pressure them to make refusals. The study was motivated by complaints made by non-Indonesians that Indonesian people did not speak openly and frankly, preferring to express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas indirectly. This is especially the case when an
Indonesian is making a refusal. The non-Indonesian speakers found these behaviors very frustrating and confusing. They often regarded the manner in which Indonesian people spoke as a sign of uncooperativeness and impoliteness. The aim of the study was to investigate and explain these aspects of Indonesian language use.

2. Method

2.1 Subjects

The subjects for the study were randomly selected to represent different social and cultural backgrounds. 163 people were involved in the study. The distribution of the subjects is shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of variables</th>
<th>Categories of variables</th>
<th>Number of respondents and percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>a. Male</td>
<td>74 (45.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Female</td>
<td>89 (54.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age</td>
<td>a. Young respondents (19-30 years)</td>
<td>107 (65.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Middle-aged respondents (31-40 years)</td>
<td>37 (22.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Older respondents (41-55 years)</td>
<td>19 (11.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Employment background</td>
<td>a. Factory labourers</td>
<td>65 (40.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Bureaucrats</td>
<td>22 (13.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Professionals</td>
<td>12 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Academics</td>
<td>35 (21.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. University students</td>
<td>25 (15.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. NGO workers</td>
<td>6 (3.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. First language</td>
<td>a. Indonesian</td>
<td>33 (20.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Sundanese</td>
<td>25 (15.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Javanese</td>
<td>43 (26.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Minang</td>
<td>18 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e. Batakinese</td>
<td>4 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f. Other languages</td>
<td>18 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Language frequently used (Daily language)</td>
<td>a. Indonesian</td>
<td>131 (80.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Sundanese</td>
<td>25 (15.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Javanese</td>
<td>5 (3.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d. Minang</td>
<td>2 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Investigative instruments

The principal method of data collection was through discourse completion tests (DCTs). Initiated in 1982 to investigate the speech act realisation of native and normative speakers of Hebrew (Blum-Kulka 1982), DCT has been developed and used in a number of larger studies to investigate other speech act realisation phenomena. Among others are studies of requests (Blum-Kulka & Olshayn 1986; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), apologies (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989), complaints (Olshayn & Weinbach 1987), refusals (Takahashi & Beebe 1987; Beebe et al. 1990), corrections (Takahashi & Beebe 1993), suggestions (Banarjee & Carrell 1988), and so forth.

Contained in the DCTs is a brief description which clearly identifies the setting, the social distance between participants, and their relative status. Subjects were asked to provide the response that they thought a person in the prescribed situation would give. Three types of discourse completion tests, labelled DCT Types A, B, and C, were used, each of which was different in its nature. DCT Type A, for example, has a similar format to those used in most research to date, except for the provision of more blank spaces and the inclusion of age and sex variables for the participants. DCT Type B, which is a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questionnaire, was developed to limit the number of strategies which can be applied in a given situation. This type of DCT gives the respondents a range of strategies to choose from. Yet, it requests the respondents to provide examples of type of responses in accordance with the strategy they have chosen. It was anticipated that the use of an open-ended DCT such as types B and C would produce more complex responses. The development of DCT Type C was
mainly intended to obtain data not revealed through the use of DCT Types A and B. Unlike Type B, DCT Type C does not provide strategies for respondents to choose. Instead, it requests the respondents to explicitly express their responses to a given situation. In each DCT, there are 9 different situations, making a total of 27 questions that need to be answered by respondents (see Appendix 1 for the differences in the format of each DCT).

3. Findings

The responses given by the respondents to the situations described in the discourse completion types A, B, and C were analysed and then classified according to the types of the 'head act' and the 'supportive moves' used in each response. A head act is "that part of the sequence of [responses] which might serve to realise [a particular] act independently of other elements" (Blum-Kulka 1989: 17). The other elements, which can occur either before or after a head act, are called supportive moves (cf. Searle's (1969) illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs)). It is believed that the realisation of a particular head act corresponds to the speaker's perspective of expressing communication strategies. The analysis of the head act and the supportive moves found that the responses can be classified into four general categories: 1) acceptances, 2) refusals, 3) silence, and 4) comments without exemplification. Each of these categories will be discussed below.

Accepting a request would be performed if the 'felicity conditions' of carrying out the request are met (Austin 1962; but cf. Bach & Hamish 1979; Allan 1986). The conditions include the preparatory condition [P], sincerity condition [S], and illocutionary intention [I]. The act of acceptance to a request clearly delineates the speaker's ability and (genuine?) intention to fulfill the request. Therefore, it can be equated with the act of promise, which Allan (1986: 195; but cf. Allan 1994, 1998 for a variation of the definition), for example, defines as:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[P]} &\quad S \text{ genuinely believes that } S \text{ can do } A \\
\text{[S]} &\quad S \text{ willingly intends to do } A \text{ of his own volition} \\
\text{[I]} &\quad S \text{ reflexively-intends that } U \text{ be a reason to believe that } S \text{ willingly undertakes the obligation to do } A \text{ and intends to do } A.
\end{align*}
\]

On the other hand, an act of refusal must be regarded as the speaker's inability and unwillingness to perform the request uttered by the requester for some reason, regardless of whether it is expressed sincerely or insincerely. The act of refusal can thus be defined as an utterance in which:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[P]} &\quad S \text{ is unable and/or unwilling to do } A \\
\text{[I]} &\quad S \text{ intends that } U \text{ be a reason for } H \text{ to believe that } S \text{ is unable or unwilling to do } A \\
\text{[I]} &\quad S \text{ reflexively-intends that } H \text{ take } U \text{ to be a reason to believe that } S \text{ is unable or unwilling to do } A
\end{align*}
\]

In the sections that follow, the discussion will focus on the markers which can be used to identify acceptances and refusals. This will be followed by a discussion of silence and comments without exemplification. In the course of the discussion, it will become clear as to which strategies express inability and which unwillingness. Moreover, the question of whether a speaker's silence is necessarily indicating his/her inability in a face-saving manner will be considered.

3.1 Markers and strategies of accepting

A response provided by respondents will be categorised as an acceptance if the head act of the sequence of the response or the illocutionary point of the response indicates the speaker's willingness to fulfill the request addressed to him/her. The head act can, for instance, be realised explicitly by using performative utterances and preceded or followed by supportive moves. For example:
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

[Response from a famous cook to his regular customer's request to prepare a special food]

1. Oh, tenut saja saya dengan senang hati menerima pesanan Ibu!
   oh sure only I with happy heart accept order Madam (excl.)
   'Oh, yes, of course, I'll accept your order with pleasure.'

As example 1 illustrates, the acceptance sequence may include: exclamatory expressions ("Oh, tenut saja"), the proper acceptance or head act which is here uttered performatively ("saya menerima pesanan Ibu"), and the intensifier supportive moves ("dengan senang hati"). In the Indonesian context, other illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) that can be used to mark an explicit or direct acceptance are baik; baiklah; boleh (all these three can be translated as 'all right' or 'no problem'); silakan 'yes, please'; tenut saja 'of course'; or jangan kuatir 'don't worry'. Because the uttering of this type of acceptance rests on the speaker's sincerity of carrying out an act, I will call this acceptance the sympathetic acceptance.

With the sympathetic acceptance, the speaker sympathetically welcomes the request directed to him/her and reflexively indicates his/her willingness and/or readiness to undertake the necessary act required of him/her by the requester.

On the other hand, an acceptance can also be expressed implicitly; the understanding of the speaker's willingness to carry out the request is gained from the inference deduced from the expression used by the speaker. This indirect acceptance can be realised through 1) rhetorical responses; 2) expressions of solidarity; 3) acceptances with reservations; or 4) non-committal responses.

A rhetorical response refers to the strategy in which the speaker gives a rhetorical answer to his/her interlocutor as a response to the request addressed to him/her. Such a response does not require an answer on the part of the requestor, who instead interprets the rhetorical response as an acceptance. The rhetorical question may be either preceded or followed by, for example, a philosophical reason why an act must eventually be undertaken. Look at the following example.

[A response to a neighbour requesting to drive him and his sick child to a hospital]

2. Seharusnya saya segera ke kantor dan memimpin rapat, tapi gimana ya kalau sakitnya tambah gawat?
   should I immediately to office and lead meeting but how yes if ill[poss.] add serious
   'I should have gone straight to the office and led the meeting, but... how would it be if her illness becomes more serious?'

The opening expression Seharusnya saya segera ke kantor dan memimpin rapat clearly indicates that the speaker was expected to have left the house and led an urgent meeting at this office. In the concluding expression, however, the speaker throws a rhetorical question to the requester about the possibility that the girl's illness might become more serious. Of course, this question does not have to be answered and it implies the speaker's readiness to set aside his own business and act on the interlocutor's request.

There are occasions in which the speaker found that fulfilling his/her interlocutor's request was equally important to that of fulfilling his/her scheduled plans. However, because the speaker's sense of solidarity outweighs the desire to fulfill his/her own want, the speaker willingly intends to undertake the request of his/her volition, although that would mean forfeiting his/hers. In such an occasion, to reach the objective, the speaker will utter an expression of solidarity. For example:
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

[Uttered by a famous cook to his regular customer asking to prepare special food]

   If not because Madam customer regular I certainly not will want
   ‘I wouldn’t do it for anyone but you.’

[Uttered by a colleague asked to finish jobs while he was about to leave office]

4. Kalau elu bukan sobat deket, pasti gue ogah.
   If you not friend close for sure I unwilling
   ‘If you weren’t a close friend, I certainly wouldn’t do it.’

As example 4 illustrates, the sense of solidarity is explicitly realised through slang words such as elu instead of kamu ‘you’, sobat instead of kawan or teman ‘friend’, gue instead of saya or aku ‘I’, and ogah instead of tidak mau ‘not want’. These slang words, particularly the first person pronoun gue, the second person pronoun elu, and the verb ogah, are rarely used unless there is a long established very close relationship between interlocutors. These words were taken from the Jakarta dialect, normally used among speakers familiar with each other and aimed at expressing warmth and intimacy.

Acceptance with reservations is a category of responses in which the respondents agree to perform an act as requested by their interlocutors if particular conditions are met. The conditions are varied, depending on the weightiness of a given request, from as light as requesting a cup of coffee (as expressed by a subordinate visiting his boss), to the heavier threat of charging double (as expressed by a taxi driver to his passenger asking to return to the station). However, the investigative tool of the present study does not include multiple turn-taking in its description of each situation that would enable the respondents to make subsequent exchanges. Therefore, it is difficult for the study to investigate whether an act is really performed by the respondents as an attempt to show their commitment to their interlocutor. Here are two examples of the responses:

[An invitation to dinner with a new neighbour]

5. Baik, kami akan datang ke rumah Anda nanti vnalam, tetapi kami tidak bisa
   until finish because will go to program special with people old
   sampai selesai, sebab akan pergi ke acara khusus dengan orang tua.
   ‘Well, we’ll come to your house tonight, but we cannot stay long because we have a special gathering with our parents.’

[An employee asked for permission to leave work to take her child to hospital]

6. Ibu saya izinkan, tetapi mohon setelah dari rumah sakit kembali ke
   I'll allow you to go [to the hospital], but please return to the office to finish the important job you’ve been assigned.
   Kantor untuk menyelesaikan tugas penting tersebut.
   office for finish duty important mentioned
   ‘I’ll allow you to go [to the hospital], but please return to the office to finish the important job you’ve been assigned.’

In example 5, the speaker clearly expresses his willingness to fulfil the interlocutor’s requests without abandoning his prior commitment. On the other hand, in example 6, the speaker requested that the requester return to the office to finish off the
job she engaged in upon the completion of her ‘business’. This type of acceptance can be seen as the speaker’s tolerance to the interlocutor and is used in order not to harm their existing relationship.

Non-committal responses refers to a category of responses in which the speaker does not give a specific answer to the request uttered by the interlocutor, but instead ‘floated’ the response and left it undecided. The speaker is unwilling to directly refuse the request, simply because he/she found that the imposition is heavy - refusing it would mean a severe loss for the interlocutor and vice versa. Therefore, the speaker deliberately left up in the air his/her responses and allowed the interlocutor to make decisions. However, looking at the overall contexts in which the responses are uttered and at the choice of words used in expressing the utterances, these non-committal responses are best understood as an acceptance. That the speaker did not express it explicitly must be regarded as a strategy of ‘winning the game’, in the sense that he/she is not willing to be responsible for the consequences that may occur and accordingly cannot be blamed. For example:

[A response from a project manager to his client asking to postpone the meeting due to sudden bad news about his parent in the village]

7. Kalau keadaannya memang begitu, ya... gimana lagi dong?
   if situation indeed like that yes how again part.
   ‘If that’s how it is, what else can we do?’

[A response from a tour leader to a participant asking to separate herself from the group]

8. Ya... kalau begitu, terserah kamu aja deh; kamu kan bisa mutusin sendiri.
   yes if like that up to you only part. you tag can decide alone
   ‘If that’s the case, it’s up to you; you can decide for yourself, can’t you?’

As illustrated in example 7, the speaker rhetorically questions the requester, using an ‘empty’ question, ya... gimana lagi dong? which further marked the speaker’s lack of enthusiasm (but see the next section on hints and strategies of refusing). On the other hand, in example 8, the speaker left the decision to the requester, relieving the speaker of any consequences.

3.2 Markers and strategies of refusing

Like an expression of acceptance, a refusal can be expressed either explicitly or implicitly. In Indonesian, an explicit refusal is always marked by the negator tidak ‘no’ or its (non-standard) variants such as nggak, ndak, ogah, etc., followed by other supportive moves such as modal auxiliaries mau ‘want’, bisa ‘can’, mungkin ‘maybe’, etc. Moreover, a refusal can be expressed bluntly or politely. Blunt refusals are those which explicitly indicate direct refusals. With this type of response, speakers deliberately want to show their unwillingness to cooperate with hearers and therefore discourage the hearers from attempting a further transaction. In their responses there are no hints of the speakers’ deference to the hearers - for instance, by expressing regrets or apologies for not being able to fulfill their interlocutors’ requests. For example

[A response from a colleague asked to continue a shift job]

9. Adaah aku nggak bisa!
   excl. I not can
   ‘Eh! I can’t do that.’
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

10. Q nggak bisa dong!
excl. not can part.
'Eh, I couldn't possibly!'

11. Saya tidak mungkin bisa meladeni Anda sekarang, lagi sibuk!
I not possible can serve you now being busy
'I can't possibly help you now, [because] I'm busy.'

12. Nggak mau ah!
not want excl.
'I don't want to.'

A polite refusal, on the other hand, is on-record but preceded or followed by an explanation or an expression of regret. This type of refusal is generally marked by the use of the downgrader maaf 'sorry', whose functions are both as an expression of regret and as a strategy of the speakers to dissuade the interlocutors. However, the word maaf is never used as a stand-alone expression, because it is always followed by an explanation as short as Saya sedang sibuk 'I'm busy now' or a longer explanation as shown in the example below, uttered by a production staff member to his boss when requested to work overtime.

13. Maaf sekali ya, kali ini saya nggak bisa kerja lembur,
sorry very yes time this I not able work overtime
karena punya acara di rumah; mau ada syukuran keluarga.
because have program at home want have thanksgiving family
Bahkan, saya sudah mengundang sanak saudara dan tetangga.
moreover I already invite relatives brother/sister and neighbour
'I'm terribly sorry. This time I cannot work overtime, because I'm already committed to a family thanksgiving gathering. Moreover, I have already invited members of my extended family as well as my neighbours.'

By explicitly mentioning the reason, ada syukuran keluarga 'committed to a family thanksgiving gathering', the employee wants to direct his boss' attention to the significance of the gathering. By giving this precise reason, the speaker did not want to negotiate with the boss, because such a self-confident explanation can be seen as sufficient in expressing the intent of the speaker.

A response will be seen as an implicit refusal if it does not contain the negator tidak, or its variants, and can only be understood as a refusal if it is put in the context in which the utterance was made. In other words, the interpretation of the expressions is contextually bound. Below are the strategies in which a speaker may realise his/her refusal implicitly (categories 1-6 are taken from Rubin 1983).
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

1) Hesitation and lack of enthusiasm

This strategy is commonly employed when the speaker is unwilling or in fact unable to refuse directly. Rather than using the negator tidak, the speaker instead attempts to manipulate words of courtesy, aimed mainly at saving his/her face. It is apparent from the responses the speaker gave that their expressions lack enthusiasm, which further signal the speaker’s unwillingness to undertake the act requested by the interlocutor. For example:

[The following two examples are from responses to a friend asking to return books to library]

14. Aduh... gimana ya?
   excl. how yes
   ‘Umh ... what can I do?’

15. Saya sih mungkin baru akan ke kampus nemu malam, tapi... nggak tahu nah.
   I part. probably only will to campus next night but not know part.
   ‘I probably won’t go to campus until tonight, but ... I don’t know.’

Examples 14 and 15 clearly exemplify the indefiniteness of the speakers’ responses, leaving the interlocutors to understand that their requests are unacceptable. Unless further reasons and explanations are given, expression 14 can thus be regarded as less ‘enthusiastic’ than expression 15 which provides an explanation.

2) Offer an alternative

When the speaker regards the interlocutor’s request as being in need of immediate fulfilment, but on the other hand he/she is already committed to complying with his/her own planned schedule, the speaker is inclined to offer an alternative to his/her interlocutor. Moreover, the offer can be interpreted either as an indirect refusal of the speaker to undertake the request by himself/herself, or as an indicator of the speaker’s sincere courtesy. Such a negotiation commonly occurs if the speaker intends to save both the speaker’s and the hearer’s faces. For example:

[A response to a parent’s request to pick up grandparents from the village]

16. Bagaimana kalau yang jemput kakak sama nenek itu kakak ajal
   how if who pickup grandfather and grandmother that elder sibling just
   ‘What if it is my elder brother who picks up our grandparents?’

[A response to the request of a student to discuss study progress]

17. Minggu depan ajaya kita diskusikan lagi?
   week front only yes we discuss again
   ‘How about if we discuss it next week?’

18. Aduh, aku senang sekali bakal jumua sama kamu. Tapi maaf ya aku tak mungkin
   excl. I pleased very will meet with you but sorry yes I not possible
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

bisa menjemputmu. Bagaimana kalau anakku saja yang jemput.

Well, I'm very pleased to see you again. But I'm very sorry because it's impossible for me to pick you up. How about if my son picks you up?

In some cases, as indicated in example 18 above, the speakers would show their sympathy to the request uttered by the interlocutor, and they sound apologetic about their inability to fulfil the request. Accordingly, they felt obliged to apologise.

3) Postponement

The speakers do not immediately accept or refuse the interlocutors' requests, instead they deliberately delay their answers. This is simply because the speakers need to reconsider the requests or they really need more time before an act is actually carried out. This strategy loosely commits the speaker to doing an act, although it makes the interlocutor uncertain as to whether the speaker will actually undertake the act or not. Very often, this strategy creates misunderstandings. However, because the situations described in the questionnaires require immediate undertaking, the speaker's postponement must be seen as an indirect refusal. For example:

[A response from a mechanic asked to repair a damaged car]

19. Aduh, sekarang saya sedang sangat sibuk, mau tunggu nggak?

excl. now I being very busy want wait not

'I'm extremely busy now, can you wait or not?'

[A response from a project manager to a client asking to postpone the meeting]

20. Sebentar... sebentar. Besok adalah hari terakhir, dan lusa saya akan keluar kota. Jadi uhm....

for a moment for a moment tomorrow is day final and day after tomorrow I will out city so excl.

'Just a minute, just a minute. Tomorrow is the last day, and the day after tomorrow I'll be out of town. So....'

4) Put the blame on a third party

In order to protect themselves from either immediate or subsequent consequences, speakers scapegoat a third party or state of affairs which prevents them from fulfilling the interlocutor's request. Immediate consequences are blames, curses, grumbles, etc., that the speaker will receive from the interlocutor immediately after a refusal is made. Moreover, the speakers also want to avoid the risk of getting disparaged by persons other than their present interlocutor. For example:

[A branch manager replied to his regular customer who is also his neighbour]

21. Begini Bu, peraturan di toko kami tidak membolehkan

like this Madam regulation at shop we not permit
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

"change item that already buy[pass.] without receipt purchase"

"Well, Madam. The regulations in our shop do not permit changing purchased items without the receipt of purchase."

Looking at the responses provided by the respondents, it is evident that they were generally willing to fulfill the interlocutors’ requests but felt powerless to do so.

5) General acceptance of an offer but giving no details

When the speaker expresses an acceptance but gives no additional details, the general expression cannot necessarily be interpreted as the speaker’s readiness to undertake the interlocutor’s request. This is simply because such indefiniteness implies the speaker’s unwillingness to act on the request and the speaker’s hesitation to directly refuse the request. For example:

[A response to the request of a regular customer ordering special food]

22. Inya Allah deh kalau bisa.
    ‘God willing if I can.’

[A response to a friend’s request to return books to the library]

23. Ya... gimana nanti aja.
    ‘Well, what about later on?’

In its proper use within the Islamic culture, the expression Inya Allah ‘God willing’ describes the speakers’ commitment to undertake the act requested by the interlocutor. Under no circumstances would the speaker break his/her commitment; otherwise he/she would be liable to blame, disparagement, and other forms of criticism. However, in the Indonesian context, the expression cannot necessarily be seen as the speaker’s readiness to carry out the act. If speakers utter it enthusiastically, it will be interpreted as an acceptance, but not otherwise. Nevertheless, in the analysis of the responses of the present study, this general expression will be treated as the speaker’s refusal unless further specific explanations are provided.

6) General acceptance with excuse

In the first sequence of his/her utterance, the speaker seems to have accepted the interlocutor’s request, but he/she eventually negates it in the concluding sequence for some reason. In expressing this indirect refusal, the speaker often shows a positive attitude toward his/her interlocutor, indicates a feeling of sympathy and appreciates the interlocutor’s request. However, the speaker’s previous commitments prevent him/her from fulfilling the request. For example:

[A response to a colleague’s request to continue a shift job]

24. Sebenarnya sih saya mau nolong, tapi maaf ya kali ini sedang sangat sibuk.
    ‘Actually I would like to help, but sorry yes time this being very busy’
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

[A response to an invitation from a neighbour to join a picnic to the beach]

25. Bukarnya saya nggak mau ikut piknik, tapi kali ini saya punya urusan penting.

Not it I not want join picnic but time this I have business important

Selamat menikmati pikniknya saja ya, dan pasti menyenangkan.

Safe enjoy picnic the just yes and certainly pleasing

'It's not that I don't want to join the picnic, but I'm already committed to something. Just enjoy the picnic and I'm sure it will be very nice.'

7) Giving reason and explanation

Although this strategy clearly indicates a refusal, it is quite different from the direct refusal using the negator tidak, in the sense that, in some cases, the speaker appears to be vague in his/her refusals, even to the point of being verbose. It is clearly indicated in the responses that the words used tend to be indirect, and the interlocutor has to wait until the final word before he/she can conclude that the speaker actually intends to refuse the request. For example:

[A response from a famous cook to a request from his regular customer]


day this I being busy very as you know much order have order for repeat year for party wedding for thanksgiving and it

'Today I'm very busy. I've got a lot of orders, you know. Orders for a birthday party; for a wedding celebration; for a thanksgiving gathering and so on'.

On the other hand, the reason and explanation can be as short as:

27. Maaf Mbak, saya sedang terburu-buru

sorry Miss I in the process of hurried

'Sorry Miss, I'm in a rush.'

This was uttered by a male applicant to another applicant who was asking to borrow his pen. This short explanation and words used in other similar responses clearly delineate the speakers' intention to refuse the interlocutors' requests.

8) Complaining and criticising

Instead of giving an acceptance or a refusal, the speaker expresses his/her complaints and criticisms to his/her interlocutor. Looking at the manner in which the expressions are uttered, this indirect refusal will be perceived by the interlocutor as a blunt refusal. Nevertheless, the speakers avoid using the negator tidak or its variants, using other means of expressing their off-record refusals. For example, a response to a staff member asking permission to leave work to take her child to hospital:

29. Adah, kamu ini gimana; kemarin minta izin, sekarang udah minta

excl. you this how yesterday request permission now already request
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

izin lagi. Kapan kerjanya kamu ini?
permission again when work the you this

‘Ah! Who do you think you are? Yesterday you asked for leave and now you're asking again. When are you going to do any work?’

[A response from an elder brother to his younger brother asking to help him explain maths problems]

29. Kok kamu minum tolong tensi sih? Apa nggak bisa kerja sendiri?
part you request help go on part what not able work alone

‘Why do you keep on asking for help? Can’t you do it yourself?’

9) Conditional ‘Yes’

The speaker is willing to carry out the request expressed by his/her interlocutor if certain conditions are fulfilled. However, from the interlocutor’s point of view, such conditions may seem unfair. A response, for example, may contain a condition that for some reason is difficult to fulfil by a requestor. Or, the speaker just wants to be cynical to the interlocutor. For example

[A response from a taxi driver to his passenger asking to return to the station]

30. Boleh saya kembali ke stasiun, tapi Bapak harus bayar ongkosnya dua kali
may I return to station but Sir must pay fare the two times
lipat karena saya sebenarnya sudah punya janji dengan langganan saya.
fold because I actually already have promise with customer I

‘I’ll return to the station but I’ll charge you double because actually I’ve already got another customer.’

10) Questioning the request

The speaker uses this strategy generally as a means of ensuring whether or not what he/she has heard is correct. As an indirect refusal which employs rhetorical questions, this strategy is mainly aimed at convincing the interlocutor that his/her request is unacceptable. To avoid saying tidak ‘no’ directly, the speaker pretends not to understand what he/she has heard. For example:

[A response from a colleague asked to finish jobs]

31. Apa kamu bilang?
what you say

‘What did you say?’

[A response to an elder brother asking to borrow new shoes]

32. Apa benar begini?
what correct like that

‘Is that right?’
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

33. Memang kamu sendiri bagaimana?
   according yourself how
   "What do you think yourself?"

11) Threatening or warning

The speaker does not either accept or refuse the request uttered by his/her interlocutor directly, but instead threatens - or at least warns - the interlocutor of the consequences of the proposed action. Therefore, it more likely that the requesters would reconsider the requests.

34. Ah, kalo kamu nggak bisa datang, proyek ini gue kasih sama yang lain aja deh!
   excl. if you not able come project this I give to that other just part.
   "Well, if you cannot come, I'll give this project to somebody else."

35. Kalau kamu memang mau memisahkan diri, kita akan tinggali kamu sendirian!
   if you indeed want separate self we will leave you alone
   "If you insist on separating yourself [from the group], then we'll leave you by yourself."

3.3 Silence

Silence is used as a category to refer to the absence of responses from the respondents to the situations described in the discourse completion of all types A, B, and C. The present study recognised two types of silence: 1) total silence, in the sense that the respondents did not provide any response at all to the discourse completion questionnaires; and 2) silence with reasons, in which the respondents supplied their reasons for remaining silent. This type of silence - silence with reasons - is investigated in accordance with the option provided in DCT Type B, in which once they chose the option, the respondents were required to produce the reasons that underlie the decision.

The significance of silence as a strategy of communication cannot be disregarded and its important role has attracted researchers from such fields as (socio)linguistics (e.g. Gumperz 1977; Hymes 1972; Rubin 1983; Ervin-Trip 1979; Levinson 1983); psychology (e.g. Goldman-Eisler 1951; Cook 1964; Macalay and Osgood 1959; Jaffe and Feldstein 1970; Crown and Feldstein 1985); ethnography and anthropology (e.g. Goffman 1959, 1963, 1967; Saville-Troike 1985, 1989; Chafe 1985; Basso 1972; Eneneger 1987; Scollon and Scollon 1981, 1996). The researchers concluded that silence cannot necessarily be interpreted as an absence of communication, because silence itself can be regarded as a form of communication and thus cannot be separated from an integral theory of communication (Saville-Troike 1985).

Silence can take various forms and levels, namely a) the unnoticed cessation of sound in the production of vocals and consonants that make 'speech' a vocal stream (Crown and Feldstein 1985); b) pauses within the stream of speech that make up a speaker's turn and between speaker turns, which are sometimes perceived as hesitation and sometimes not perceived at all (Crown and Feldstein 1985; Walker 1985; Chafe 1985; Tannen 1985; Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1985); c) pauses that are apparent and perceivable in interaction, such as 'lulls' in conversation (Goffman 1967); and d) the complete silence of one party to a conversation (Nwoye 1985).
While it does exist ubiquitously in different cultures (cf. Samarin 1965), silence is conceptualised differently. Emmenger (1987: 275), for instance, noted that silence phenomenon is realised in different ways among different cultures, but he mostly exemplifies its universality, illustrating with the following sayings: English: “Silence is golden”; “It is better to remain silent and be thought of a fool than to open your mouth and remove all doubt”; Japanese: “Mouths are to eat with, not to speak with”, “A man of many words has little refinement”; “To say nothing is a flower”; Obeya: “Speech is a reedstick. Some stay down (that is, keep hidden), and some stand up (and are seen)”; anonymous: “It is not the case that the man who is silent says nothing”. Silence can also correspond to a speaker's personality (Crown and Feldstein 1985) or can even be associated with the ‘national character’ (Lehtonen and Sajavaara 1985). Condon and Yousef (1975:137) noted the different values of speaking versus silence in conversation perceived by different cultures, and claimed that:

“...persons from identifiably doing oriented societies tend to regard silence as an absence of words, a waste of time, a period when “nothing is doing”. For those who can be characterised as of the being or being-in-becoming mode, silence in conversations has positive meaning: It is essential to self-fulfilment and to awareness of here and now.”

Basso (1972) carried out an ethnographic study on silence among the Western Apache, and found that one does not speak 1) when meeting strangers for the first time; 2) during the initial stages of courtship; 3) when children come home for a reunion with relatives and friends after a long absence; 4) when “getting cussed out”; 5) when being with people who are sad; and 6) when being with someone for whom they sing in the context of curing ceremonials (1972: 71-80).

According to Rubin (1983), silence is a strategy of an indirect refusal, although its real meaning varies from culture to culture — ‘no’ in one culture but ‘maybe’ in another. Rubin noted that in the United States “if you don’t receive answer to an inquiry, it means ‘no’. However, in Britain it means ‘maybe’ or ‘I’ll write later when I have something to say” (1983: 13). My study, however, did not make any attempt to investigate this phenomenon, although respondents’ opinions pertaining to this phenomenon were sought through interviews. When asked about remaining silent in response to the situations described in the questionnaires, one interviewee claimed that:

36. Tetap diam tidak menyelesaikan masalah, sebab kita jadi tidak tahu apa sebenarnya yang menjadi keputusan dia, apakah mau menerima atau menolak.

‘Remaining silent won’t solve the problems, because we don’t know what actually their decision is, whether they will accept or refuse.’

Another interviewee regards keeping silent as impolite because:

37. Dengan tidak adanya jawaban, rasanya saya merasa dipermakan, bahkan paling tidak ya... dalam ukuran budaya kita, orang Timur.

‘By not providing any answer at all, I’ll feel cheated or even offended; and I regard this manner as impolite; at least, unacceptable in our Eastern culture.’
The respondent's answer is comparable with that of Ennenger's (1987) analysis which maintains that in cross-cultural communication, a non-proficient hearer may fail to observe the intention of a speaker conveyed in a conversational exchange. This may make him/her liable to be regarded as a faulty interactant and if such failures are repeated, the hearer may be stigmatised as a faulty person. This stigmatisation is likely to be intensified and "if such interactive derailments are experienced with more members of a culture, the ascription of 'faulty interactant' and 'faulty person' may be generalised into the cultural stereotype of 'faulty people'" (1987:273).

From the respondent's perspective, however, silence cannot necessarily be interpreted as an act of making a fool of their interlocutor. One respondent of the present study claimed that he kept silent because of reasons such as:

38. *Saya bingung harus ngomong apa*  
   'I'm not sure what I should say.'

39. *Dengan diam saya harapkan dia bisa mengerti bahwa saya dalam posisi sulit.*  
   'By keeping silent, I hope that my interlocutor would understand that I'm in a difficult position.'

40. *Saya tidak mau mencecakannya akibat saya tolak, padahal menerima.*  
   'I don't want to disappoint my interlocutor by refusing his/her request, although to fulfil [the request] is not possible either.'

As indicated in their claims above, the respondents seem to have some valid reasons for remaining silent. Their silence, for instance, can be associated with the time (Saville-Troike 1989) as well as emotion (Saunders 1985) management of the speaker to have the appropriate "transition relevance places" (Sacks et al. 1974), whose length varies from person to person and from culture to culture. Saville-Troike (1989:21), for example, noted that "certain American Indian groups are accustomed to waiting several minutes in silence before responding to a question or taking a turn in conversation, while the native English speakers they may be talking to have very short time frames for responses or conversational turn-taking, and find silences embarrassing". Echoing other researchers' opinions (e.g. Brandes 1980; Witherspoon 1975; and Bock 1976), Saunders (1985:181) concluded that:

"[It] is when people are silent that something is going on .... Silence is ... a common strategy for the management of tense solutions. It is especially appropriate when people are highly emotional, particularly when fully satisfactory solutions to the issue are unlikely. Silence helps the individual to control the emotion, and may at times also allow the passive expression of discontentment without the dangers of a direct challenge."

Nevertheless, the silence of respondents as investigated by the present study in particular, can presumably be associated with: a) their reluctance to complete the questionnaires; b) their limited time due to the daily business which undoubtedly needs immediate attention and more energy; and c) the respondents being exhausted from filling in the questionnaires (cf. Chafe 1985).
3.4 Comments without exemplification

In addition to the responses described above, some respondents of the present study also provided responses which are simply comments that describe the acts that they would carry out if presented with the situations described in the discourse completion questionnaires. Viewed from the objective of the study, such responses are anomalous, in the sense that they do not exemplify the utterances the respondents would produce. Nevertheless, the responses clearly indicated that the respondents would either accept or refuse the requests uttered by their interlocutors described in the questionnaires. Their responses, however, cannot be classified into the proper acceptance or refusal, but must be treated as a different category of responses. For example, in response to a request from a boss to work overtime while the employee needs to be at home for a long-awaited family gathering, one respondent claimed that:

41. Saya akan menolak, karena acara di rumah sangat penting. Dan saya akan menyarankan agar dia mencari teman lain yang mungkin bisa menolongnya. ‘I’ll refuse, because the agenda at home is very important. And I’ll suggest that he find somebody else who can help him.’

In another case, one respondent claimed that he would comply with his father’s request to pick up his grandparents from the village because he did not dare defy his father’s request. Therefore, he would have to cancel playing football for his team and was prepared to be disparaged by his team’s members. He responded:

42. Saya akan menuruti perintah Ayah, karena saya tidak berani menentang. Lebih baik saya diomeli oleh teman-teman daripada dimarahi oleh Ayah sendiri. Itu namanya durhaka. ‘I’ll obey my father’s order, because I don’t dare to defy him. It’s better for me to be grumbled at by friends than get blamed by my own father. That would be called disloyalty.’

The fact that some respondents provided non-utterance responses can be attributed to various factors. Firstly, the respondents were not clear enough about the task required of them. Secondly, even if they did understand the directions, they were not completely sure about what they would say if they were presented with the situations described in the questionnaires. That being so, the respondents opted to ‘spell out’ the actions they would perform rather than providing the utterances they would express. Lastly, it seems to be have been difficult for the respondents to describe the actual utterances they would express in face-to-face communication in the form of scripted responses in a questionnaire. It may partly be because they cannot effectively mobilise their writing skills, and hence realise their feelings. Moreover, some respondents are not really accustomed to filling in written questionnaires.

Table 2 below describes the 19 categories of responses; 12 categories of refusals and 5 acceptances, silence, and comments without exemplification.
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

Table 2: Categories of responses given to DCT types A, B and C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories of Responses</th>
<th>REFUSALS</th>
<th>Categories of Responses</th>
<th>ACCEPTANCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Direct NO</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Direct YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hesitation and lack of enthusiasm</td>
<td>(Sympathetic acceptance)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Offer an alternative</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Rhetorical responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Postponement</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Expression of solidarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Put the blame on a third party</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Acceptance with reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>General acceptance of an offer but giving no details</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Non-committal responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>General acceptance with excuse</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Silence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Giving reason and explanation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Comments without exemplification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Complaining and criticising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conditional YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Questioning the request</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Threatening or warning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Discussion

4.1 Refusal strategies

An analysis of the total of 1467 responses for the DCTs that the responses are distributed unevenly for both refusal and acceptance categories. Compared to the responses given to DCT type B, for instance, DCT types A and C contain more refusals - the distribution being 951 responses (64.8%) for DCT type B; 1311 responses (89.4%) for DCT type A; and 1147 responses (78.2%) for DCT type C. That the trend of the distribution in which the percentage of refusal responses far exceeds the percentage of acceptance responses is not very surprising, considering the fact that the investigative tool is designed to reveal refusal strategies.

The analysis further revealed that the distribution of the responses for each strategy within categories is not even. For example, the direct refusal strategy (Strategy #1) in which the negator tidak 'no' is explicitly conveyed, appears to be preferred over any other strategy in all DCTs. The finding suggests that, to a great extent, most respondents would employ this direct refusal strategy if confronted with a request which puts them in a critical situation. While explicitness of expressing the negator tidak 'no' is regarded as necessary, the manner in which such a refusal is expressed is equally important. The refuser cannot ignore politeness when refusing. This is indicated by the fact that the respondents are apt to use the downgrader maaf 'sorry' or its equivalent in most of their responses. The downgrader is generally used 'naturally' in the sense that it only occurs once before or after the negator or other supportive moves (example 43) although in some cases it is conveyed in an exaggerated way (example 44).

43. Aduuuh... maaf yaa, saya nggak bisa bantu Anda, sedang sangat sibuk.
   Excl. sorry yes I not able help you being very busy
   'Oh, I'm sorry, I can't help you, [I'm] very busy.'

44. Saya mohon maaf seribu kali maaf, karena tidak bisa memenuhi undangan Anda
   I request sorry thousand times sorry because not able fulfil invitation you
   'I apologise a thousand times because I cannot accept your invitation.'
Examples 43 and 44 clearly illustrate that while their refusals are conveyed explicitly, the respondents are apt to accompany their refusals with an apology for their inability to comply with their interlocutor's request. This strategy is understandably intended to maintain harmony among them (cf. Deephuengton 1991; Lyuh 1992; Kodama 1996).

With the exception of DCT type C, whose responses center round the direct refusal strategy (Strategy #1) (32.9%), the percentage distribution of strategies #1, #3, and #8 in DCT types A and B is very similar. Despite distribution similarities, strategy #8 (giving reason and explanation) was used in more responses than the other two strategies. Nevertheless, strategy #1 (direct refusal) is far more preferable than strategy #3 (offering an alternative). In contrast, the trend of the distribution to DCT type C is more towards strategy #1 than strategy #8, although the preference is given more to strategy #3. If complying with the interlocutor's request is not likely, giving reason and explaining the inability would be sufficient and can be seen as a satisfactory attempt in maintaining the harmony between interactants. If a satisfactory reason is given, the interlocutor would feel appreciated and the strategy will be perceived as polite accordingly. One interviewee, for instance, claimed that:

45. Kalaupun akhimya permintaan kita ditolak, asalkan ada alasan yang jelas although finally request we rejected provided that exist reason that clear and satisfying we part, not matter rather than speaker who refuse dan tidak memberi alasan, kita rasanya dilecehkan.

Even if our request is finally refused, so long as [the speaker] gives a clear and satisfactory reason, that doesn’t matter; far better than a speaker who refuses but gives no reason, so we feel despised.

Strategy #3 (offering an alternative) can be regarded as a compromise attempt offered by the speaker which is intended mainly as a redemption for his/her inability to comply with the interlocutor's request. This face-saving strategy would potentially be effective in keeping harmony between the speaker and the hearer, although the offer would not always satisfy the requestor. In some cases, for instance, the proposed offer might be used only as an avoidance strategy in the sense that the offer is very unlikely to fulfill the requestor's request. Look at the following example which was uttered by a bicycle owner in response to the request of a stranger to borrow a bike so that the stranger could take part in a race.

3nn. Mau nggak pakai sepeda saya yang lain, tapi bukan sepeda balap?

'How about if you use my other bike, but it's not a racing-bike?'

As example 46 illustrates, the bicycle owner seemed to be willing to accommodate the stranger's desire to take part in the bike race. His accommodation was explicitly conveyed in the first part of his expression (Mau nggak pakai sepeda saya yang lain) which was not a refusal, but basically a sympathetic offer. However, the offer was naively proposed with respect to the second part of the expression (tapi bukan sepeda balap) which sounds ironical to the stranger: how would he be able to win the race by riding a non-racing bike?

While category #7 (general acceptance with excuse) gained only 4.1% of the total responses in DCT type B, the percentage doubles in DCT types A and C, which reach a total of 9.6% and 9.7% respectively. These figures, which are high, indicate that to a certain degree the speakers were unwilling to refuse their interlocutors' requests for some reason. Even if they eventually were unable to comply with the requests, it was not due to their unwillingness, but rather it was primarily due to their prior commitment elsewhere. For instance, a neighbour was invited to have dinner, but she could not come.
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

47. Mau sih mau, tapi bagaimana ya sih udah kahong janji sama temen mau want part want but how yes I already go too far promise with friend want ngadaain acara. Jadi, mau uga ya kali ini ngrak bisa, knya Allah kain carry out program so sorry only yes time this not able willing God other kali deh sayu mau datang. time part. I want come

‘Actually I do want to, but I’ve already promised my friend to get together with him. So, I’m sorry, this time I can’t. God willing, next time I’ll come.’

Within the indirect refusal categories, the percentage gained by strategy #8 (giving reason and explanation) and strategy #3 (offering an alternative) exceeds the average percentage of the distribution of all types of responses. By contrast, strategies #10 and #11 - conditional yes and questioning the justification of request, respectively - seem to be the least preferred strategies to be used as the responses to DCT types A and C, which is also the case for strategy #5 (postponement) in DCT type B. In DCT type A, categories #10 and #11 collected no responses, while in DCT type B they gained 1.5% and 0.3% respectively. In DCT type C collected only 0.5% for category #10 and no responses for category #11. The findings suggest that expressing an insincere promise through a conditional yes strategy (Category #10) or pretending not to understand the interlocutor’s request by questioning the justification of the request (Category #11) seemed to be viewed by most of the respondents as an unfavourable mode of refusal. From the requestors’ point of view, these strategies may even be regarded as attempting to make a fool of them, and would therefore be perceived as impolite, if not insulting. Presented with responses containing an ‘empty’ promise, one interviewee grumbled, while stating that:

48. Kalau mau tolak, ya tolak aja, nggak usah ngasih janji macem-macem. if want refuse yes refuse only not need give promise this and that Kita kan jadi nggak enak dibohongin kayak gitu, sebab kita menang we then become not feel good cheated like that because we indeed nggak yakin apakah dia blang gitu itu serius apa nggak. Jadi, enaknya not sure whether he say like that that serious or not so good the ya langsung aja terns terang menolak ‘nggak bisa’ gitu. yes directly only frankly refuse not able that

‘If [the speaker] wants to refuse, just say it; [it’s] not necessary to promise this and that. [That will] make us feel bad, as if [we’re] cheated; [it’s] because we’re not really sure whether he said that seriously or not. So, the best thing is [that he] refuses explicitly [by saying] I can’t.’

Complaining and criticising (Category #9) and threatening (Category #12) are perceived among other strategies as two of the least polite strategies of refusal. In contrast to the complaining and criticising strategy (Category #9) which is more preferred in DCT Type A than in the other DCTs, threatening (Category #12) seemed to have been used more in DCT Type B. The analysis of responses revealed that these two strategies were mostly employed by superior persons, either in terms of power or social distance when conveying refusals to the less powerful. The analysis also found that questioning the justification of request (category #11) is the least preferred strategy compared to the other strategies.

In DCT Type C, category #5 (putting the blame on a third party) gained almost twenty times (3.8%) as many responses as those in DCT Types A and C; each DCT gained 0.2%. Responses of category #2 (hesitation and lack of enthusiasm) are distributed
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

quite evenly over all types of DCT, with type C gaining more responses followed by type A. Both in DCT Types A and C, hesitation and lack of enthusiasm occupies the sixth most preferred strategy while in DCT Type B it is the ninth.

The table clearly shows that there are four strategies which are far more preferred than other strategies and which are distributed evenly in all DCTs. The strategies are direct "no" (Cat #1), giving reason and explanation (Cat #8), offering an alternative (Cat #3), and general acceptance with excuse (Cat #7). However, the order of such preferences, particularly for the last three indirect strategies, is not necessarily indicative of the order of politeness perceived by the respondents. This is evidenced mainly in the claims made by most respondents who state that their strategy choice was determined more by both the nature of the request (or the ranking of imposition) addressed to them and their own availability to comply with the request, rather than by the differences of the formats of DCT they had.

4.2 Acceptance strategies

Acceptance categories constitute 19.5% (856) of the 4401 responses. This figure is distributed as follows: 8.2% for DCT Type A, 31.7% for DCT Type B, and 18.4% for DCT Type C (these figures are based on the analysis of the total of 1467 responses obtained by each DCT).

Unlike the distribution of the refusal responses described previously, the acceptance responses are distributed more evenly within each category of strategies. Of the five strategies of acceptance, explicit acceptance or direct "yes" (earlier Category #13) and acceptance with reservation (Category #16) seemed to have been preferred to other types of strategies. On the other hand, category #14 (rhetorical replies) becomes the least preferred strategy almost in all types of DCTs. To a greater extent, expression of solidarity (Category #15) is preferred in DCT Type C. Most respondents regard the format of DCT Type C as giving them more options as to whether to refuse or accept the request addressed to them.

With regard to the direct acceptance (Category #13), most of the responses can be subsumed under the sympathetic acceptance category in which the speakers show their deep desire to comply with their interlocutor's request. This finding suggests that while the speakers are already committed to their prior schedule, their feeling of sympathy and the intent to maintain friendship outweigh or even override their own commitment. Therefore, they are apt to commit themselves to the request made of them. The following response clearly illustrates how deep the speaker's feeling of sympathy is:

49. Oh, mari... mari saya bantu. Mudah-mudahkan bisa segera selesai dan bisa
excl. come on come on I help hopefully able quick done and able
dipakai nganter anak Ibu yang sakit. ‘Kan kasihan kalau sakitnya keterusan?
used deliver child Madam who sick not dear if illness the continue
Topi kalau missalnya nggak selesai, pake aja mobil panya saya, dan mobil Ibu
but if for instance not finish use just car own I and car Madam
ditinggal di sini. Besok saya lanjutkan lagi.
left at here tomorrow I continue again
‘O, let me, let me, help [you]. Hopefully, it can be done quickly and you can use it to deliver your daughter who is sick.
Won't it be a pity if her illness persists? But, if I cannot finish repairing your car, use mine, and leave yours here.
Tomorrow, I'll continue [repairing] it.’

The above example clearly shows that, apart from welcoming a regular customer whose car was damaged, the speaker is impressively prepared to lend his own car if unable to repair his customer's car in time. His expression of acceptance is further intensified by his feeling of sympathy to the sick child (‘Kan kasihan kalau sakitnya keterusan?’), although the opening expression (Oh mari..., mari saya bantu) has sufficiently shown his intent to help and comply with the customer's request.
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

Expressed rhetorically, such feeling of sympathy may be seen as the speaker’s readiness to set aside his prior commitment regardless of any potential risks.

Acceptance with reservation (category #16) must essentially be regarded more as an acceptance than a strategy of declination. Some interviewees claimed that their reservation about a particular request was raised only to anticipate any state-of-affairs which might prevent them from carrying out the act requested. In other words, they are essentially willing to comply with the request. Only because they were not sure of being able to fulfil the request had they been finally forced to raise a particular reservation.

50. Syarat yang saya ajukan semata-mata untuk berjaga-jaga jangan-jangan condition that I propose only for anticipation in case karena satu dan lam hal saya akhirnya tidak bisa memenuhi permintaan because one and other thing I finally not able fulfil request
kawan bicara. Kalau saya langsung menerima, tapi akhirnya ingkar janji, nama friend talk if I directly accept but finally deny promise name baik saya akan tercoreng. Jadi, pada dasarnya saya mau menerima permintaan good I will tarnished So on basically I want accept request
kawan bicara itu.
friend talk that
‘The reservation I raised was only in case for one or another reason I finally can’t fulfil my promise to the interlocutor: If I accept [the request] and then break my promise, my reputation will be tarnished. So, basically, I am willing to comply with my friend’s request.’

In conjunction with the above claim, the following examples may illustrate how a reservation to a particular request is essentially a ‘reserved’ readiness of the speakers to comply with the requests addressed to them:

51. Bagaimana Bu kalau yang bikinnya bukan saya, tapi teman saya? how Madam if who make it not I but colleague I
Tapi, jangan kuadr Bu semua resepnya saya yang nyelapa.
but don’t worry Madam all recipe the I who prepare
‘Madam, how about if [the one] who’ll make it is not me, but my colleague? But don’t worry Madam, all recipes will be prepared by myself.’

52. Boleh Mamah beliin mainan, tapi Adik harus rajin belajar biar jadi anak may Mummy buy toys but Adik must diligent study so that become child yang pintar. Jadi, sekarang belajar dulu ya, kan udah malam. Besok kalau who clever so now study first yes not already night tomorrow if Mamah pulang kerja Mamah beliin mainan-nya ya? Mummy return work Mummy buy toys the yes
‘Okay, Mummy will buy you the toy, but you have to study diligently, so that you become a clever girl. So, now you study first, okay? It’s night already. Tomorrow, when Mummy returns from work, Mummy will buy the toy, okay?’
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

53. *Oke deh gue kembalin bukunya, tapi beliin pisgor sama gehu, ya?
okay part. I return book the but buy fried banana with mixed tofu yes
Lu 'kan tahu gue belom makan. Jadi, gue ke kampus nganterin
you tag know I not yet eat so I to campus return
buku 'lu sekalain ngisi penut. Gimana, mau apa nggak?
book you while fill in stomach how want or not

'All right, I'll return the book, but buy me pisgor and gehu, okay? You know I haven't yet eaten. So, I'll go to campus to return the book while you fill my [empty] stomach. What do you think? Do you want it or not.'

In example 51, the speaker seemed to agree to accept the request to prepare special food for the customer's daughter's party. He acted accordingly, although he was already extremely busy with a prior order that needed to be finished urgently. However, the request from his regular customer is not likely to be refused. Thus, as a compromise, he accepted the offer on the condition that his colleague would do it although he would prepare the recipes by himself. The cook would not have accepted the offer and let his colleague do the job unless he trusted his colleague. Otherwise, his reputation would be tarnished.

Unlike in example 51, the acceptance expression in example 52 was conveyed persuasively only because the interlocutor is a small child. The speaker seems to be prepared to comply with the child's request to buy a new toy as long as the child studies diligently. This proposal is apparently not always easy to comply with or observed by the child even in the near future. This is because the mother - although she is always more powerful - will not always be able to force her little daughter to study. The reservation raised by the mother to her daughter, therefore, cannot be regarded as a rigid commitment without whose compliance the toy would never be bought. Rather, the reservation is best seen as a persuasive strategy from the mother to make her daughter study diligently. This is because the mother would eventually buy the toy even though she was not convinced of her daughter studying diligently.

54. *Pokoknya kita ada upaya duhi untuk tawar-menawar dengan anak.
main the we have attempt first to bargain with child
Maksudnya, kita nggak langsung blang 'nya nanti ibu beliin tempa syarat
mean the we not straight say yes later Mummy buy without condition
anything later tag child potentially become spoiled that even will trouble

'The thing is we first attempt to bargain with our child. I mean, we don't straight out say 'Okay, Mummy will buy it' without any condition at all. That would be to spoil the child. That will eventually be a trouble to us.'

Example 53 illustrates an exchange between two friends whose level of intimacy is very close. This is clearly indicated by the use of some colloquial and slang words by the speaker. Apart from using the intimate forms of terms of address (gue instead of saya or aku to refer to the speaker and lu instead of kamu or Anda to refer to the hearer), the speaker also used non-standard or colloquial forms of Jakarta dialect such as kembaliin, beliin, belom, nganterin, ngisi, gimana and nggak for kembalikan, belikan, belum, mengantarkan, mengisi, bagaimana and tidak, respectively, along with the use of particle deh which also marks intimacy. The reservation proposed by the speaker, in its very nature, cannot always be taken very seriously because it might sometimes be proposed non-reflexively, in other words, even if the requestor did not comply with the speaker's request to buy him pisgor [pisang goreng] 'coated fried banana' and gehu [tauge dan tohu] 'fried tofu filled with bean sprouts', the speaker, in order to fill his stomach, would finally have to find food to eat. In other words, the speaker did not mean to propose it seriously and he did not expect his hearer to comply with it accordingly. The speaker stated that:
Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations

55. Saya bilang begitu itu bukan dengan maksud sebenarnya. Tahu sama tahu.
I say like that that not with intention actual the know with know
deh sebagai mahastowa. Masuk saya mina dinajain sama kawan yang
part as student how come I ask bought by friend who
mungkin juga lagi boke. Yaa, itu sih hitung-hitung ngerjain dia aja.
possibly also being broke yes that part unintentionally teas he only
possibly also being broke yes that part unintentionally teas he only

'I said it in a way that that was not to be taken seriously. We know among ourselves as students that I would not ask to
be bought some food by a friend who is possibly broke. Well, that's only meant to tease him.'

Although silence (Category #18) constitutes only a small percentage of the total tokens (1.7% or 74 tokens out of 4401), its
importance cannot be ignored (refer the discussion in previous section). The percentage of responses in the silence category is
distributed unevenly among the different types of DCT: 0.6%, 2.9%, and 1.6% for DCT types A, B, and C respectively (based
on the total number of tokens of each DCT, 1467). These different distribution figures can partly be associated with the
different nature for each DCT. The difference is also due to the presentation of the investigative instrument which places
DCT type A at the beginning section, followed by DCT types B and C in the concluding section. A number of respondents
claimed that the format of DCT type A, in which the hearer response is included, enabled them to mobilise their pragmatic
knowledge when they were requested to fill in the questionnaire. The format allows them to think of the most suitable
response, although they do not always agree with the hearer responses provided in the questionnaires (and apparently the
respondents who do not agree with the hearer response are those who supplied non-refusal responses). For instance, one
interviewee maintained that:

56. Dengan adanya bagian respon pendengar pada angket bagian A itu, kita
with provided section response hearer on questionnaire section A that we
memang dipaksa untuk membuat penolakan, walaupun kadang-kadang tidak
indeed forced to make refusal although sometimes not
pas benar dengan apa yang saya pikirkan. Jadi saya pikir, kecil sekali
appropriate exactly with what that I think so I think small very
kemungkinan responden tidak mengisi angket ini. Apalagi, bagian A itu
possibility respondent not fill in questionnaire this moreover section A that
ditempapakannya pada bagian awal. Sebelum mengisi bagian lain, kan kita
placed the on section beginning before fill section other not we
pasti membaca dan sekaligus mengisi bagian ini.
surely read and automatically fill section this

'Provided with the hearer response on the questionnaire section A, we are indeed forced to make refusals, although
sometimes [the hearer response] does not completely fit with what I think. So, I think, there will be a little chance that
the respondents do not fill in the questionnaires. Moreover, section A is placed at the beginning section. Before filling in
other sections, we would surely read and automatically fill in this section first, wouldn't we?'

Responses of category #19 (comments without exemplification) constitute 1.4% (or 62 tokens) of the total of 4401 tokens. 26 and
27 tokens are distributed to DCT Types A and C respectively, which are 17 and 18 tokens higher than those distributed to
DCT Type B. As has been mentioned in the previous section, category #19 comprises both refusal and acceptance responses
and this type of response has been driven by factors discussed in section 3.5.4. The differences in this distribution strongly
suggest that they are due to the different nature of each DCT. For example, DCT Type B, which includes introductory hints in each option, gives less possibility for the respondents to provide responses other than utterance types, defined as responses that clearly simplify the words that the respondents will utter and not the particular act, when they are presented with a particular situation described in DCT. In fact, by contrast, DCT Types A and C do allow some room for the respondents to provide responses which are comments without exemplification (category #19).

5. Concluding remarks

This paper has looked at the speech act realisation made by Indonesians in situations where their circumstances pressure them to make refusals. A comprehensive analysis of the responses given by respondents to three different types of questionnaires revealed that the responses can be classified into three categories - acceptances, refusals, and silence - under which finer distinctive strategies are subsumed. In addition, there is a category of responses which I have described as comments without exemplification. A further analysis of the latter category showed that responses of this category can be related to the other three categories. Acceptance and refusal categories each comprises five and twelve types of strategies respectively.

The analysis of the distribution of responses to three different types of discourse completion tests (DCTs) appears to point towards the preference of respondents for using particular strategies according to the situation described in the DCTs. This preference seems to have been employed intentionally in the sense that this is aimed mainly to maintain the (existing) harmony between interactants. This is indicated, for example, in the provision of responses other than refusals. It is also found that the preference to maintain harmony is further augmented through the use of some intensifiers or supportive moves. This finding confirms the truth of the Indonesian proverb 'Udah lebih tajam daripada pedang' which means 'The tongue is sharper than the sword'. The proverb enjoins the Indonesian people to be extremely careful with the words they use when making communication transactions so that they do not offend their interlocutors.

Appendix: Examples of the three types of DCT used in the study

Type A:

Situation A#1: This afternoon you are busy fixing up your bicycle for a tour tomorrow. Your elder brother, who just arrived from another province, asks if you can go shopping with him and have dinner in a restaurant in town.

You: ____________________________________________

Your brother: That's okay. I'll ask our sister to go with me, then.

Type B:

Situation B#1: One evening, you were visiting your male friend's house on personal business. When you arrived, he was having his dinner and he invited you to join him. Before going, you had some light refreshments and at that moment you didn't feel like eating again. In such a situation, how will you react to his offer?

a) I will bluntly refuse; by saying ____________________________________________

b) I will politely refuse; by saying ____________________________________________

c) I will accept the offer with reservations; by saying __________________________

d) I will accept the offer; by saying __________________________________________

e) I will react in another way; that is ....................... by saying ___________________

f) I will keep silent because ________________________________________
Indonesian speech act realization in face-threatening situations

Type C:

Situation C#1: You are an office manager of a big supermarket. A regular female customer, who is older than you and also your neighbour, comes to your supermarket and wants to change some items she bought last week but for which she has lost the receipt. What will you say to her?

You:

References

Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations


Indonesian speech act realisation in face-threatening situations


E. Aminudin Aziz completed his PhD at Monash University in 2000, having investigated the strategies and politeness implications of making refusals in Indonesian.