"I'm afraid I can't": Initiating Acts on Refusal Strategy Realization

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study aimed to investigate how initiating acts affect refusal strategies realization. The subjects were 45 English Education Program students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. The study used Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which consisted of 12 situations covering four initiating acts; suggestion, request, offer, and invitations, and the classification of refusal strategy by Beebe et al was also used to categorize refusal strategies realized. The results showed that initiating acts were not insensitive towards the use of direct strategy. However, it has an impact on the realization of indirect strategies and adjuncts. It was also found that both initiating acts and the social status of interlocutors play an important role in producing refusal utterances. Hence, it is highly suggested to introduce initiating acts and social status factors to EFL learners so that they would be able to produce an appropriate refusal depending on the context.

1. Introduction

Refusing is one of the speech acts that are frequently used in conversations. The act of refusing can be seen as a face-threatening act since it contradicts what the hearer wants (Alemi & Tajeddin, 2014). This type of speech act is also known as complex since it requires long negotiation and a combination of strategies to mitigate potential face-threat, and it is related to some aspects such as culture, social status, initiating acts, pragma-linguistic competence, and politeness (Wijayanto, 2019). A refusal statement chosen is under initiating speech act, the relationship between interlocutors (Chang, 2009; Eslami, 2010).

Regarding the relationship between interlocutors, Iranian EFL learners' refusal strategies differed. They tended to express *pause filler* in refusing higher status and *non-performative* in refusing equal and lower status (Hariri & Moini, 2020). In the Indonesian EFL context, it was found that the preferred strategy was influenced by the social status of the interlocutors. Indonesian EFL learners tended to utilize *giving alternative* to equal status and to express a *positive opinion* in refusing higher status (Wijayanti, 2016). In relation to the classification of refusal strategy (Beebe et al., 1990), those strategies mentioned are classified as indirect strategies. Another previous study also found a similar thing that Indonesian EFL learners consistently utilized indirect strategy to refuse either lower or higher status (Chojimah, 2015).

Besides the social status of interlocutors, an initiating act is one of the aspects that may influence the chosen refusal strategy. The sequent of refusal strategies and forms may vary depending on the initiating acts (Eslami, 2010). There are usually four types of speech acts that can be used as the initiating acts; suggestion, request, offer, and invitation. It was found that the initiating act was one of the factors for Turkish learners of English in deciding to refuse or not, and it also influenced the variation of refusal strategies realization (Satiç & Çiftçi, 2018). It means that different initiating acts may receive different strategies. For instance, initiating an act of request mostly received excuse, reason, explanation, and statement of regret. On the other hand, a statement of positive opinion was mostly expressed to refuse an invitation. Gratitude and pause fillers were mainly used to refuse an offer. As for initiating the act of suggestion, direct strategy and letting interlocutor off the hook was used (Allami & Naeimi, 2011). It was also found that Iranian EFL learners tended to express regret and excuse to refuse invitations, gratitude, and excuses to refuse offers, explanations followed by regrets to reject the request (Sahragard & Javanmardi, 2011). Another previous study also investigated this matter, it was found that initiating acts did not influence indirect strategy, and it was revealed that initiating acts gave significant influence in indirect strategy and adjuncts to refusal realized by native speakers and EFL learners (Chen & Yang, 2007).

From the previous studies, refusal strategies can be varied based on the initiating acts. However, none of the studies regarding the initiating acts involved Indonesian EFL learners. Thus, the recent study wanted to analyze how the initiating acts (suggestion, request, offer, and invitation) affected the refusal strategies realized by Indonesian EFL learners.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speech Act Theory

A speech act can be defined as meaningful sounds, which is not only performing a speaking act, but also performing a variety of acts such as refusing, requesting, etc. There are three main parts of speech acts; *locution, illocution,* and *perlocution*. A locution is an act of saying something, illocution is the acts performed in saying something, and perlocution is the acts performed by saying something. For instance, someone says, *"It's hot in here!"*, this utterance is called a locution. By saying the utterance, the speaker might think about *"I want some fresh air!"*, which is illocution. Then, the perlocution effect might be someone opening the window.

Speech act also has been classified based on the function by Searle (in Astia, 2020). They are declaration (the act of producing words to alter the world), assertive (the act of stating words of what the speakers believe), commissives (the act used by the speaker to commit future

action), directives (the acts of asking the hearer to do something), and expressive (the act of showing a feeling of the speakers) (Astia, 2020).

2.2 Act of Refusing

Refusal is one of the speech acts that are frequently used in conversations. Refusal belongs to the category of 'commissives' in which speakers commit themselves to some future actions by producing the speech act (Ilmiani et al., 2016). It is also described as a 'sticking point' in cross-cultural conversations for non-native speakers. Refusal is seen as complex from the view of sociolinguistic as it involves a long negotiation and the risk of offending the hearer. Its content and form also may vary depending on the initiating acts as well as the status of the interlocutors (Beebe et al., 1990). The speaker might negotiate by doing "frequent attempts at directness or indirectness and various degrees of politeness that are appropriate to the situation" (Eslami, 2010).

Alike any other speech act, the classification of refusal strategy has been proposed. There are three main strategies; direct, indirect strategy, and adjuncts to refusal. Each strategy has many sub-strategies as listed (Beebe et al., 1990) below:

Table: 1 Refusal Strategy Realization

Strategies	Examples
Direct	
a. Performative	*I refuse*
b. Nonperformative statement	*I can't; I won't; I don't think so.*
Indirect	
a. Statement of regret	*I'm sorry...; I feel terrible*
b. Wish	*I wish I could help you*
c. Excuse, reason, explanation	*My children will be home that night*
d. Statement of alternative	*I'd rather...; I'd prefer*
e. Set condition for future or past acceptance	*If you had asked me earlier, I would have...*
f. Promise of future acceptance	*I'll do it next time*
g. Statement of principle	*I never do business with friends*
h. Statement of philosophy	*One can't be too careful*
i. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor	
i. Threat	*I won't be any fun tonight*
ii. Guilt trip	*I can't make a living off people who just offer coffee*
iii. Criticize request	
iv. Request for help	
v. Let interlocutor off the hook	*Don't worry about it; That's okay*
vi. Self-defense	*I'm trying my best*
j. Acceptance that functions as a refusal	
i. Indefinite reply	
ii. Lack of enthusiasm	
k. Avoidance	
i. Nonverbal	
ii. Verbal (Topic switch, Joke, Repetition of part of a request, Postponement, Hedging)	
Adjuncts to Refusals	
a. Statement of positive opinion	*That's a good idea; I'd love to*
b. Statement of empathy	*I realize you are in a difficult situation*
c. Pause fillers	*Uhh; well; oh; uhm*
d. Gratitude	

3. Research Methodology

The recent study attempted to investigate the refusal strategies realized by Indonesian EFL learners and how it was influenced by initiating acts. The total population of the study was 143 English Education Program students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang. Then, 45 students were selected to be the subjects of the study. They were chosen based on whether they had passed all basic English skill classes. The classes were listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar classes which they took on the first four semesters of their study. It was assumed that they had good English proficiency.

3.1 Instruments

Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used in collecting the data. There were 12 situations. The DCT covered four types of initiating acts; suggesting, requesting, inviting, and offering. The situations given were also related to the learners' background, so the social variables such as familiarity and dominance were controlled to avoid some unwanted interferences. Open-ended DCTs were selected since the researcher wanted the learners to accumulate experience within a given setting and react as they would, rather than choosing what they would react from some choices as in closed-ended DCTs. Hence, the learners were required to write their responses in the blank space given.

Table: 2 DCT Specifications

No	Situations	Initiating Act
1	Refuse an advisor's suggestion about taking a particular course	Suggestion
2	Refuse a student's suggestion about course excise	Suggestion
3	Refuse a classmate's suggestion about going together to campus	Suggestion
4	Refuse a classmate's request to borrow notes	Request
5	Refuse a new teacher's request to borrow a dictionary	Request
6	Refuse a student's request to have a private course	Request
7	Refuse an advisor's offer about the elective course	Offer
8	Refuse a friend's offer of a piece of cake	Offer
9	Refuse a student's compensation offer	Offer
10	Refuse an invitation from a representative from another university	Invitation
11	Refuse a classmate's invitation to go to a picnic	Invitation
12	Refuse a professor's invitation to have a dinner together	Invitation

3.2 Data Analysis Procedures

After getting the learners' responses, it was categorized by using refusal strategy classification by Beebe et al. (Beebe et al., 1990), which could be seen in **Table 1**. To avoid some biases, the researcher had invited two inter raters to break down the learners' refusal statements and classify them. Then, the researcher did an in-depth analysis to find out whether initiating acts could affect refusal strategies realization.

4. Findings

In responding to the situations given, the learners used varied strategies from direct strategy to adjuncts. As seen in Figure 1 below, the learners mostly utilized indirect strategy in refusing the four initiating acts.
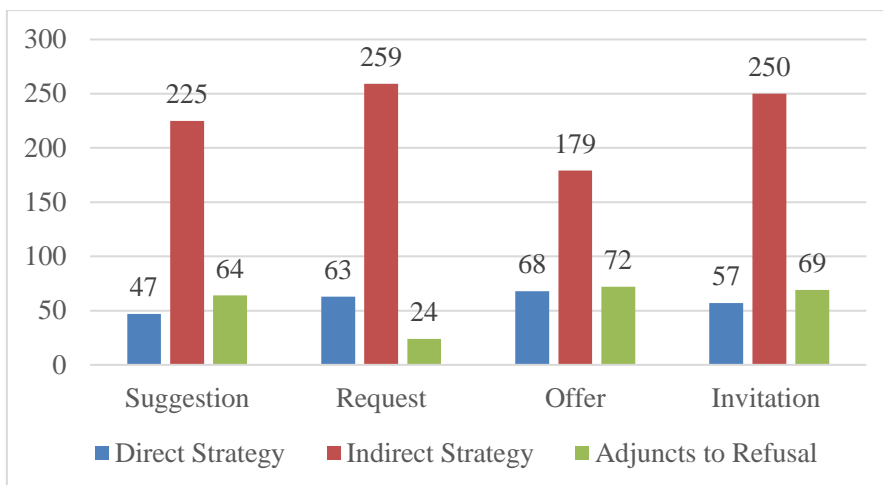
Figure: 1 Refusal Strategies Distribution

From the distribution, the speech act of request was refused mostly by using an indirect strategy with 259 utterances, followed by invitation, suggestion, and offer. It was also found that the learners utilized a more direct strategy in refusing offers with 68 utterances followed by requests, invitations, and suggestions. Besides direct and indirect strategies, the learners were also found to add some adjuncts to their refusal. They mostly added adjuncts to refuse offers with 72 utterances, followed by invitations, suggestions, and requests.

4.1. Initiating Acts on Direct Strategy

Based on the refusal strategy classification, there are two sub-strategies classified as direct; *performative* and *nonperformative*. As seen in **Table 3**, the learners were found to utilize more *nonperformative* than the other sub-strategy. *Performative* was applied in refusing an invitation, while *nonperformative* was utilized in responding to all initiating acts. It was found that the learners mostly utilized it to refuse offers with the mean of 22.67, followed by suggestions, requests, and invitations. Based on the frequency, it seems that the learners were slightly more direct in refusing offers comparing to other initiating acts.

Table: 3 Initiating Acts on Direct Strategy

Strategies	Suggestion	Request	Offer	Invitation
Performative	0	0	0	.33
Nonperformative	21.67	21	22.67	18.67

4.2. Initiating Acts on Indirect Strategy

The indirect strategy was utilized in all situations given. Based on the refusal strategy classification, the learners almost used all the sub-strategies but *statements of philosophy, nonverbal avoidance,* and *lack of enthusiasm.* As seen in Table 4, the most preferred strategy was *excuse, reason, explanation* followed by the *statement of regret.*

In relation to the initiating act, suggestions as the initiating acts was refused mostly by *excuse, reason, explanation* followed by *statement of regret* and *statement of alternative.* There are sub-strategies that could not be found in the responses towards suggestions; *let interlocutor off the hook, indefinite reply,* and *topic switch*. It is also similar to the responses towards

requests. The learners mostly gave excuses, statements of regret, and statements of alternative. However, it was also found that the learners did not realize *set condition for future and past acceptance, statement of principle, threat and negative consequences, self-defense, indefinite reply,* and *repetition*

As for the speech act of offering as the initiating act, the learners were found to refuse it by using *excuse, reason, explanation, statement of regret* and *let interlocutor off the hook*. Interestingly, even though *let interlocutor off the hook* became one of the most preferred strategies, it was applied only on Situation 9, in which the learners were required to refuse a student's offer. Some sub-strategies were not found in the refusals towards offers; *statement of principle, the threat of negative consequences, criticize request, self-defense, indefinite reply,* and *repetition*. For invitations, the two most preferred strategies were still *excusing, reason, explanation,* and *statement of regret*. The learners were also found to utilize the *promise of future acceptance* with a mean of 5.

Table: 4 Initiating Acts on Indirect Strategy

Strategies	Suggestion	Request	Offer	Invitation
Statement of regret	21.67	36.67	14.67	32.33
Wish	1.67	2.33	.67	3.33
Excuse, reason, explanation	22	36.67	20	39.67
Statement of alternative	11	8.33	6.33	.33
Set condition of future or past acceptance	.67	0	.67	0
Promise of future acceptance	9.33	1.67	3.67	5
Statement of principle	.67	0	0	0
Threat of negative consequences	1.67	0	0	0
Criticise request	.33	1	0	0
Request for help, empathy by holding the request	3	.33	1.33	1.67
Let interlocutor off the hook	0	1	11.33	0
Self defence	1	0	0	0
Indefinite reply	0	0	0	.33
Topic switch	0	0	.33	.33
Repetition	.33	0	0	.33
Postponement	1.67	.33	.67	0

As seen in Table 4, requests and invitations were refused by using lesser strategies comparing to the other two initiating acts. Among 16 sub-indirect strategies, there were only 9 sub-indirect strategies realized by the learners in refusing requests and invitations. Meanwhile, the learners realized 13 sub-strategies in refusing suggestions and 10 sub-strategies in refusing offers.

4.2. Initiating Acts on Adjuncts to Refusal

Based on the classification of refusal strategies, all four adjuncts appeared in the learners' refusals. As shown in Table 5, the learners mostly added *statement of positive opinion* (mean=10) and *gratitude* (mean=8.67) in refusing suggestions. It is similar to offers and invitations. The learners were found to add *gratitude* (mean=12.67) in refusing offers and followed by *statement of positive opinion* (mean=5.67). As for invitations, the mean of *gratitude* and *statement of positive opinion* were 15 and 6.33 respectively.

Table: 5 Initiating Acts on Adjuncts to Refusal

Adjuncts	Suggestion	Request	Offer	Invitation
Statement of positive opinion	10	4.67	5.67	6.33
Statement of empathy	.33	0	1.67	0
Pause filler	2.33	1.67	4	1.67
Gratitude/appreciation	8.67	1.67	12.67	15

Unlike the other three initiating acts, the learners barely added adjuncts in their refusals towards requests; they mostly used *statements of positive opinion* with the mean of 4.67. As for the other two adjuncts, the learners were found to also utilize *pause filler* in refusing all initiating acts. However, they barely added a *statement of empathy* as it only appeared in the responses towards suggestion and offer.

5. Discussion

In refusing to the situations, a direct strategy was utilized by the learners. One of the sub-strategies was utilized in all situations; it was *nonperformative*, the other sub-strategy, which was performative was barely expressed. Acts of refusing can be very complex, and face-threatening and *nonperformative* can be the safest strategy to refuse without hurting the hearer's feelings (Asmali, 2013). The learners mostly utilized direct strategy in refusing offers. It is in line with the previous study, which also found that EFL learners utilized more direct strategy in their refusals to suggestions and offers (Chen & Yang, 2007). On the other hand, invitations as the initiating acts had the lowest mean indirect strategy. It is in line with Chen & Yang, (2007).

The indirect strategy also has become one of the most preferred strategies. Comparing to other strategies, an indirect strategy was utilized in almost all situations because they were trying to avoid having a conflict with the hearer (Basthomi, 2014). Indonesian EFL learners did not want to do acts of refusing unless they really should because refusing can have an impact of discomfort between the interlocutors. Therefore, they tried to make a refusal as polite as possible by utilizing an indirect strategy (Chojimah, 2015). It is also relevant to the Indonesian politeness culture from *Prinsip Saling Tenggang Rasa* or the Principle of Mutual Consideration (PMC), which means "to avoid using expressions to your interlocutors which you would not be addressed to you if you were in his/her shoes" (Chojimah, 2015; Sartika et al., 2020). Thus, the learners expressed indirect strategy in almost all situations.

The researcher found that the learners realized 16 subs of indirect strategies in their refusal statements. The speech act of request and invitation as the initiating acts were only refused using 9 sub-strategies. Meanwhile, 13 out of 16 sub-strategies were utilized in refusing suggestions, and 10 sub-strategies were used in refusing offers. It was discussed in the previous study suggesting that the overuse or underused indirect strategy might cause cross-cultural miscommunication. Comparing to native speakers, EFL learners might have more difficulty in maintaining conversation (e.g. refusing suggestions from higher status). They can be seen as rude if they fail to refuse appropriately in accordance with their roles in the conversation (e.g., higher, lower, or equal status).

In refusing the situations, the learners were found to add adjuncts to their refusal. Among the four adjuncts, expressing gratitude was mostly utilized. The speech act of invitations as the

initiating act had higher means, followed by the speech act of offering. *Statement of positive opinion or agreement* was also mostly utilized by the learners, especially in refusing suggestions. This is in line with the previous study, which suggested that the reason this adjunct added in refusing suggestions was because the learners were being aware of the hearer's face about getting rejected (Fitri et al., 2020). As seen in the example responses below, it seemed the learners tended to add this adjunct to show some positive reaction to the hearer for giving some suggestions even though it was later rejected.

Refusing suggestions:

> "*It's a good idea sir*, but I cannot take the course now; I'll probably take it next semester." (1)

> "*The idea is great,* but you must know about grammar first before having conversation." (2)

> "Yes I know that, *actually I'd like to go to the campus with you*, but we have a different schedule, maybe next time." (3)

Regarding to the learners' responses towards the initiating acts, it was found that the learners were slightly more direct in refusing offers comparing to other initiating acts. It can be seen from how the learners utilizing more *nonperformative* in refusing an offer. Act of offer as the initiating act sometimes is for the benefits of the speaker, and the use of direct strategy could avoid "any suspicion of the addresser and decreases the trouble or costs the addresser will bear" (Yang, 2008). Thus, the learners tended to refuse offers directly. Even though they uttered direct strategy, the learners tended to combine it with other strategies such as gratitude, regret and let interlocutor off the hook, as in example 1, 2, and 3 respectively below.

Refusing offers:

> "Ohhh *thank you for offering*. But I can't eat anymore. Because I am already full." (1)

> "*I'm so sorry miss*. I think, I may not be able to commit myself to either course this semester." (2)

> "*Don't worry my student*. You don't have to pay it." (3)

In refusing requests, the learners tended to express regret in all situations. Expressing regret indicates that we are at fault for refusing the hearer. Among those four initiating acts, to refuse requests can give more harm to the hearer than the speaker. Unlike the other three initiating acts that bring benefits for the speaker (Chojimah, 2015), requests are usually done for the benefits of the hearer. Thus, showing regret can mitigate the refusal statement. It can also minimize the discomfort that might happen between the interlocutors. Example (1) showed that *statement of alternative* was also added to refuse the request from an equal status (e.g., a fellow friend). It seemed that the learners did not lose the relationship with the hearer, which was their fellow friend. The result is also similar to the previous study, which found that Indonesian EFL learners tended more indirect to refuse their friends' request because they do not want to ruin their friendship with the hearer (Ilmiani et al., 2016). It is quite similar to how they refuse higher and lower status in examples 2 and 3. The learners

tended to utilize indirect strategy the most in refusing requests. They barely added adjuncts to their refusal.

Refusing requests:

> "I'm sorry, I need this note too, but you can copy my notes." (1)

> "I kind of need the dictionary for my English class later, sir. I'm so sorry." (2)

> "I'm sorry, my schedule is so full. I'm afraid I can't handle that." (3)

It is quite different from their responses towards invitations. The learners tended to add adjuncts such as gratitude in their refusals to invitations. In fact, gratitude was mostly added in refusing invitations comparing to other initiating acts. Interestingly, the frequency of gratitude was higher when they refused an invitation from lower status than higher status. This result is in line with the previous studies, which also found that Indonesian EFL learners expressed less gratitude to higher status comparing to native speakers, especially in refusing an invitation from higher status (Eviliana, 2015; Fitri et al., 2020).

Refusing invitations:

> "Thank you very much for the opportunity *(gratitude)*, but I apologize *(regret)* I could not attend the seminar *(nonperformative)*." (1)

> "I really appreciate your invitations *(gratitude)*, but I cannot come *(nonperformative)*. Because I promised to help a friend who is moving to another city tomorrow *(excuse)*." (2)

> "Thank you for the invitation, sir *(gratitude)*, but I just remember that I have to go to the airport in 15 minutes *(excuse)*, so I could not join dinner and the discussion *(nonperformative)*. I apologize for that, sir *(regret)*." (3)

In relation to other strategies used, the learners tended to combine a *statement of regret*, *excuse, nonperformative,* and *gratitude* in refusing invitations. Example 1, 2 and 3 above were responses towards invitations from lower, equal, and higher status respectively. This similar sequential of semantic formulae in refusing invitations from all the social status might indicate that the learners were being uncertain about the appropriateness of rejecting invitations. The sequential utilized by native speakers might be different in accordance to the hearer's social status as native speakers "had a different perception on the perceived threats on the refusal to those of three status levels" (Wijayanto, 2013).

Regarding the social status of the interlocutors, the results also showed that both initiating acts and social status have an impact in realizing refusal strategies. For instance,

Refusing a classmate's suggestion:

> "Hey, *I think that's not a good idea* because we have a different schedule but once in a while we can go together." (1)

Refusing a classmate's request:

> "I can't lend my notebooks because I have to study too, and *it's also kind of your fault for not coming last week.*" (2)

As seen from the examples, *criticise request* appeared in the learners' responses in refusing suggestion and request for equal status. *Self-defense* also was found only in the learners' responses towards a student's suggestion which can be seen from the examples below (3) (4). *Indefinite reply* and *repetition of part of request* also were only utilized in refusing an invitation from lower-status, which can be seen in the example (5) below. The learners were also found to express *gratitude* in all the initiating acts elicited by lower status, but it only appeared in responses to offers and invitations from equal status. The learners also expressed *gratitude* to a higher status in refusing all the initiating acts but speech act requests.

Refusing a student's suggestion:

"I'm sorry, the lesson plan provides grammar lesson. *I can't do anything*."(3)

"Okay, thank you very much for the suggestion, but *the course has its own policy, and I must obey it*. Perhaps I would convey your suggestion." (4)

Refusing an invitation from lower-status:

"This Friday? *(repetition)* I can't promise to come *(indefinite reply)*, because I have another event that day." (5)

This proves that the refusal strategies realized by the learners were not only dependent on the initiating acts but also on the status of the refuser. The speech act of refusal is known as complex and face-threatening. Therefore, the responses might vary depending on the initiating acts, status, and relationship between the interlocutors (Eslami, 2010). To prove that both initiating acts and social status influence the refusal strategy realization, it can be seen from how the learners refuse suggestions from higher, lower, and equal status. The learners tended to refuse suggestions of higher and equal status by utilizing *statements of regret, nonperformative* and *excuse, reason, explanation*. Meanwhile, in refusing a student's suggestion, the learners were found to give a reason.

Leaners refusing an advisor's suggestion:

"I'm sorry sir, I cannot follow your suggestion. Because I think I can take the course from another lecturer." (1)

"Thank you for your suggestion, but I'm sorry, sir, I cannot take it now."(2)

Learners refusing a student's suggestion:

"My students, grammar is important when you are talking to each other. It will make your conversation clearer, that is the reason." (3)

"I have to focus in grammar because by studying grammar. We can know the sentence structure in conversation." (4)

Learners refusing a classmate's suggestion:

"I'm afraid I can't, I want to go to somewhere else by foot." (5)

"I'm so sorry I can't. I have to drop off my brother first." (6)

From the examples above, the learners were more direct in refusing suggestions of equal status. It is in line with the previous study, which proved that EFL learners used *nonperformative* to refuse a suggestion from equal status because they feel that they do not

have "any responsibility or obligation to their friends, so the speaker becoming free and independence" (Ilmiani et al., 2016). On the other hand, the learners tended to utilize *excuse, reason, explanation* in refusing a suggestion from lower status. It seems that they wanted to show the hearer that their decision was based on some reasons, so the hearer should not question it. They felt that their authority being threatened by getting suggestions from lower-status (Ilmiani et al., 2016). In refusing suggestions from higher status, the learners still, indeed, utilized *nonperformative*. However, they smoothened their refusal by adding *statement of regret* and *gratitude* (examples 1 and 2). It is done because the learners did not want to hurt the advisor's feelings. The combination of direct strategy with other strategies such as regret and gratitude indicated how the learners realizing that direct strategy can sometimes be considered as impolite. (Sartika et al., 2020).

Based on the explanations above, the learners' refusals were influenced by the initiating acts and social status. For instance, giving excuses and alternatives are the most preferred strategy in refusing invitations, and the relationship between interlocutors could likely determine other strategies added (Yang, 2008). The combination of those factors contributes in the choices of refusal strategies realized by the learners, hence, getting to know the factors are very important to produce refusal statement appropriately. The impact of these variables also proves how important it is to introduce these variables in L2 pragmatic instruction (Chang, 2009). Since the act of refusing is very complex, and the risk of offending the hearer is very much likely, appropriate pragmatic instruction is strongly needed so that EFL learners would be able to interpret and produce this speech act appropriately and successfully (Eslami, 2010).

6. Conclusion

The act of refusing is very complex since the refusal statement can be varied based on so many factors, one of which is initiating acts. The initiating acts usually found are the act of suggesting, requesting, offering, and inviting. In refusing to the initiating acts, the learners utilized varied strategies. However, the researcher found that initiating acts were less sensitive towards the use of direct strategy comparing to the use of indirect strategy and adjuncts to refusal. Concerning how the learners refused the initiating acts, it was found that they were slightly more direct in refusing offers. However, they tended to add some other strategies to make it polite as possible. It was also found that they tended to be more indirect to refuse requests as refusing requests could likely bring harm to the hearer. The learners barely add adjuncts in their refusals to requests comparing to the other three initiating acts. Unlike requests, the learners tended to add some adjuncts such as the statement of positive opinion and gratitude in refusing invitations. However, it seemed that the learners utilized the similar sequential of semantic formulae in refusing invitations indicating they were uncertain in refusing invitations. For suggestions, the learners utilized more varied strategies in refusing suggestions as they realized 13 out of 16 sub-indirect strategies, and added 4 adjuncts to their refusals to suggestions.

This recent study also found that the learners' refusals might be influenced by both initiating acts and the social status of interlocutors as some strategies only appeared in refusing certain social status and initiating the act. For instance, the learners used *criticize request* in refusing suggestion and request of equal status and *self-defense* in refusing a suggestion from a lower

status. Hence, it is very important to introduce these two factors in EFL learners to be able to utter an appropriate refusal.

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