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## **Refusal and Politeness Strategies of Malay Speakers of English As A Second Language**

### *Strategi Penolakan dan Kesopanan Penutur Bahasa Melayu tentang Bahasa Inggris Sebagai Bahasa Kedua*

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#### **Abstract**

Politeness is an essential part in human communication. It plays a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining good relationships and social harmony. It is reflected by linguistic and non-linguistic behavior through which we indicate that we take others' feelings of how they should be treated into account. The present study investigated the application of politeness strategies through the linguistic behaviour of twelve Malay English as a second language (MSE) undergraduate students when refusing their higher status interlocutor's scholarship offer to pursue their studies at an overseas university. Selection of participants was based on a purposive sampling and on the students' MUET results. The study examined how these students employed politeness strategies as they struggled to find an equilibrium between defending their stance of not accepting the scholarship and at the same time maintaining civility towards a persistent university officer. Data on refusal interactions between the students and the university officer were obtained through an open role-play which were transcribed, classified into semantic refusal strategies, categorized into the types of sequence orders of the strategies and finally classified according to Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies. The repertoire of MSE refusal strategies reveals positive politeness to be dominant followed by bald-on-record while negative politeness was employed minimally. Using a combination of these three types of politeness, the MSE refusal interactions show variation of politeness ranging from less to more polite. The study revealed that the degree of politeness depend very much on participants' effort to adapt to the context of situation. The variation of strategies which reflect different degree of politeness generated by the study would be useful as pragmatic input. This input could be utilized by English language teachers to raise pragmatic awareness and to develop their students' ability to use socially appropriate language for the situation they encounter.

## Introduction

### Overview

Generally for most of us, saying “no” could be exceedingly difficult. One of the reasons why it so hard to say ‘no’ is that we want to be liked and we do not want to hurt feelings by going against what is expected. Brown and Levinson (1978) describe the speech act of refusing as a face threatening act (FTA) since it tends to risk the interpersonal relationship of the speakers. In other words, this negative response tends to risk either the speaker’s or the hearer’s feeling or face and may trigger a confrontation that threatens a potential bond. As a result, some find it stressful and difficult to decline and may find themselves trap into saying ‘yes,’ and find themselves committing to things that they dislike and may not be able to fulfil. To prevent from being in such a situation, refusing or saying ‘no’ is an inevitable act which we may have to perform from time to time. Nevertheless, saying “no” itself is not impactful as compared to how the “no” message is conveyed (Rubin, 1983). Refusing in an inappropriate way without considering various contexts will affect interpersonal relationship between speakers<sup>1</sup>.

When we interact or communicate, the language that we use, and in particular the speech acts we utter, are mostly dependent on the context of the situation in which such acts are produced. Mey (2001) argues that all speech is situated speech; a speech act is never just an ‘act of speech’, but should be considered in the total situation of the activity of which it is a part (Mey, 2001). This means the needs to adjust what is said to the contexts i.e. socio status and cultural, distance, power and authority, and situation at hand to ensure appropriacy of the speech act and at the same time attend to the interpersonal relationship with their interactants at the same time. The failure to consider contexts may render the interlocutors to be construed as rude or impolite and place their interpersonal relationship at risk (Walaszewska & Piskorska, 2012). Obviously, interacting or communicating is not just a matter of sending and receiving messages. It requires proper ways of speaking to the others so that interlocutors feel comfortable with the spoken words and their interpersonal relationship is maintained or enhanced. Leech and Thomas (1983) maintain that to attain such desirable effects requires both linguistic knowledge and also understanding of social and cultural factors in a situation. The former is known as pragmalinguistics i.e. the knowledge of the forms and strategies to convey particular illocutions. The latter refers to sociopragmatics which relates to knowledge of the use of these forms and strategies which are based on the understanding of non-linguistic environments or social and cultural factors in a situation which affect language use<sup>2</sup>. contends that the two knowledge will assist learners to ascertain the situational-appropriate utterance, namely what can be said, where it can be said, and how to say it most effectively.

Appropriateness in communication is closely related to the concept of politeness. Lakoff (1973) for instance, posits that “to be polite is saying socially correct things”<sup>3</sup> associates politeness with situations in which a person “speaks or behaves in a way that is socially and culturally acceptable and pleasant to the hearer” (p.58). Relates politeness to “language associated with smooth communication”<sup>4</sup>. Brown and Levinson view politeness “as a complex system for softening face threats”<sup>5</sup>. Similar to Brown and Levinson, Kasper contends that communication is “fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavour” (p. 194) and hence, she refers to politeness as part of conversational interlocutors’ efforts to make their communication more successful and courteous by employing strategies to remove the risk and reduce the antagonism in communication<sup>6</sup>. In the same vein, Eelen states that “to be polite is always to act appropriately’ according to the hearer’s expectations” and Wang sees politeness as “a sociocultural phenomenon” in which interlocutors show consideration of others. In brief, politeness is identified with conflict avoidance strategies which are employed to promote smooth communication directed towards maintaining or enhancing interlocutor’s interpersonal relationship.

The present study is conducted to ascertain refusal and politeness strategies employed by local Malay undergraduate students to refuse a scholarship offer to pursue their studies. The speech act of refusal was realized in their second language i.e. English. Kuang (2009) suggests that refusing, in particular people in authority, is an extremely difficult task for most people in Malaysia. Declining in a language which is not their native language could be a challenge for them. This study identifies the refusal as well as the politeness strategies used by these Malay speakers of English as a second language (MSE) in their efforts to minimize and mitigate the impact of their refusals as they negotiate their way through the conversation. The politeness strategies is analysed based the framework of Brown and Levinson politeness theory. The present study also employed open role-play to obtain data. The use of Discourse Completion Test (DCT) Sattar & Farnia; Sattar et al generated a limited range of semantic formulas compared to the richer data elicited through role play<sup>7</sup>; <sup>8</sup> with conversational features and negotiation.

## Literature Review

### Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory (1978, 1987) is one of the most influential politeness theories, and is also known as the face-saving view by Fraser<sup>9</sup>. Brown and Levinson link three basic notions: (a) the view that people are rational agents, (b) Grice’s<sup>10</sup> maxims of conversation, and (c) Goffman’s<sup>11</sup> notion of face, i.e. “...the public self-

image that every member wants to claims for himself...". Within the politeness theory, "face" is best understood as every individual's feeling of self-worth or self-image; this image can be damaged, maintained or enhanced through interaction with others (Thomas, 1995). In their framework, *face* consists of two related aspects which they claim are universal and refer to two basic desires of any person in any interaction. The first is positive face - the desire to be liked/admired/appreciated and approved of by at least some other people. 'Positive face' is fundamentally determined by culture and by the social group to which the participant belongs. The second is negative face - the desire to be unimpeded by others, to be free to act without being imposed upon. They also claim that 'face' is 'something emotional invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.12). Besides having 'face', people are also rational agents and they will choose the means of satisfying their goals as efficiently as possible. Since one's own face-wants can only be sustained by the actions of others, it is in everyone's interest to cooperate in order to maintain each other's face. Hence, these rational people take the initiative to preserve both kinds of face, for themselves and the people they interact with, and people tend to maintain one another's face continuously in their interaction.

Brown and Levinson's approach is also speech act-based and assumes that most speech acts, for example requests, offers and compliments, inherently threaten either the hearer's or the speaker's face-want. In order to reduce the possibility of damage to the hearer's face or to the speaker's own face, he or she may adopt certain strategies. Thus, politeness strategies are developed in order to formulate messages to save the hearer's face when threatening acts (FTA) are inevitable or desired.

In realising a speech act, the speaker has to choose from five super-strategies. The decision is determined by the weightiness of the speech act. Speakers calculate the weight of their speech acts based on three social variables: the perceived social distance between the hearer and the speaker, the perceived power difference between them, and the cultural ranking of the speech act. These strategies are; three sets of "on-record" super-strategies: a) perform FTA without redressive action (**bald-on-record**), b) perform the FTA with redressive action (on-record) using **positive politeness**, c) perform the FTA with redressive action (on-record) using **negative politeness**, d) one set of 'off-record' strategies, and e) if the speaker decides that the degree of face threat is too great, he/she may decide to avoid the FTA altogether, i.e. to say nothing. These strategies are sequenced in terms of the degree of politeness involved. The risk of the loss of 'face' increases as one moves up the scale from 1 to 5; the greater the risk the more polite the strategy being employed. The strategies are summarized in Figure 1:

**Figure 1.** *Brown & Levinson Politeness Strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.69)*

The first strategy is performing an FTA without any redressive action which is also known as **bald-on-record**. This strategy is used when an individual speaks very directly and does nothing to minimize threat to the hearer's face. The **bald-on-record** strategy is most often utilised by speakers who closely know their audience or someone who has no power over the speaker or are constrained by external factors such as time or emergency cases.

The second and third strategies involve performing an FTA with redressive action: the speaker tries to maintain his/her face as much as possible and at the same time he/she tries to mitigate the potential threat of the act. The second strategy, that is the positive politeness strategy shows that you recognize your hearer has a desire to be respected/liked/approved of. This strategy is commonly used in situations where the audience knows each other fairly well. The speaker employs **positive politeness** strategy by establishing with the audience that they may have common ground with the topic. Hence, the **positive politeness** strategy is characterized by the expression of approval and appreciation of the addressee's personality by making him/her feel part of an in-group. Other examples of **positive politeness** are: paying attention to the other person, showing exaggerated interest, approval and sympathy, use of in-group identity markers, search for agreement and common ground.

The third strategy, the **negative politeness**, not only recognizes the hearer's face but also recognizes that you are in some way imposing on them. Thus, **negative politeness** mainly concentrates on those aspects of the addressee's face-wants, which are concerned with the desire not to be imposed upon and is characterized by self-effacement and formality. Examples of **negative politeness** relate to etiquette, avoidance of disturbing others, indirectness in making requests or in imposing obligations, acknowledgement of one's debt to others, showing deference and over emphasis on other's relative power.

The fourth is performing an FTA - off-the-record politeness which uses indirect language and removes the speaker from the potential of being imposing. Brown and Levinson list fifteen ways for performing off-the-record politeness. These include: 'give hints', 'use metaphors', 'be ambiguous or vague'. Brown and Levinson's final strategy is 'Don't do the act'. This particular strategy is employed when the risk of loss of face is great that nothing is said. The interpretation is left to the addressee.

## Previous Studies



Studies involving Malay speakers refusing in English in Malaysian context indicate their preference for indirectness and the lesser degree of directness. These studies employed DCT to elicit data on refusals and used Beebe et. als 13 refusals taxonomy to analyse their data. Findings of two studies; the first by Sattar and Farnia and the second by Al-Shboul, Marlyna Maros and Mohd Subakir Mohd Yasin revealed that the Malay students employed indirect strategies i.e. *reason* substantially and this strategy was followed by *apology* to refuse their higher status interlocutors invitation. The studies also found that the Malays preferred the lesser degree of directness i.e. *negative willingness* when using direct strategies. The first study compared Malay ESL postgraduate students to Iraqis refusal strategies while the second to Jordanians refusal strategies. Farnia and Wus14 study which focused on refusal strategies employed by Chinese international students refusal which was compared to Malay students refusal strategies in English when refusing an invitation by a higher status interlocutor also had the same findings. Likewise, another two studies, the first by Sattar, Salasiah and Raja Rozina, and the second by Nur Asyarani who examined refusal strategies by the Malay undergraduate students also found *reasons* in the first rank followed by *apology* in terms of strategy employment.

Findings of studies conducted in terms of realization of refusal in participants' mother tongue also discovered similar findings. Yusniza, Faizah and Nasariah in their study of Malay and non-Malay undergraduate students refusing in their native language reported that the Malays employed more indirect strategies with lengthy reasons followed by statements of *regret/apologies* and that they opted for the lesser degree of directness when using direct strategy. Although the non-Malays also used indirect strategies, they gave less *reasons/justifications* and *apologized* less. The same findings also prevailed in Nurul Chojimah's study (2015) of Indonesian students refusing to their higher status interlocutor's offer in Indonesian language.

## Methodology

Open role-plays were utilized to obtain refusal and politeness strategies based on a situation which required the participants to refuse a scholarship offer made by the higher status interlocutor. In this type of role-play, a participant is given a situation which provides details such as social distance, power status of the interlocutors and their specific roles in the situation. The participant will have to negotiate his/her refusal himself/herself spontaneously. Billmyer and Varghese maintain that equipping the participants with contextualized background information will elicit more elaborated and natural-like data. The situations is as follows15:

*You have sat for your final exam and your result is excellent. Your university human resource officer who is your former lecturer from whom you have often sought advice during our university years, has informed you that you have been offered a scholarship to pursue your MA at a University in Canada. She has asked you to see her in her office to finalize the offer. However, you do not want to study at that University and would rather study at a university that you prefer. On the appointment day, you go to her office.*

Twelve Malay undergraduate students from a law programme of a local university participated in the study. These students were selected since they obtained Malaysian University Entrance Test (MUET) Band 4 and above. This criteria is pertinent as to ensure that they would be able to participate in the role-plays in which they were to refuse in English. Analysis of data for the study involves the following four stages; i) transcribing the role-play interactions, ii) identifying and coding refusal strategies according to Beebe et.al1 classification of semantic formula (Appendix A), iii) analyzing the strategies across full refusal interactions, and iv) organizing strategies according to Brown and Levinson's types of politeness strategies. Although Brown and Levinson comprises five politeness strategies, the MSE participants only employed three; positive politeness, negative politeness and bald-on-record strategies. Table 1 presents the strategies for each of the three categories.

POSITIVE POLITENESS	BALD-ON-THE RECORD	NEGATIVE POLITENESS
Give reason Avoid disagreementby postponingSeek Agreement by giving positive opinion Preparator	Disagreement viaMitigated RefusalPerformativeFlat NoNegation of propositionStatement of AssuranceAlternativeLack of enthusiasm	ApologiseRequest for InformationHedgingState the imposition by stating principleGo on record as incurring a debt -appreciation

**Table 1.** Categorization of Refusal Strategies According to Brown & Levinson's Positive, Negative and Bald- On-Record Politeness Strategies

## Findings

As shown in Table 2, the refusal strategies were categorized into three categories; **direct**, **indirect** and **adjunct to refusal** according to Beebe et al. refusal semantic formula. The **direct strategies** consist of the following four strategies arranged from the highest to the lowest degree of directness; *performative*, *flat no*, *negation of proposition* and *mitigated refusal*. The **indirect strategies** comprise eight strategies; *give reason*, *postponement*, *statement of assurance*, *suggestion*, *apologize*, *request for information*, *hedging* and *principle*. The adjunct to refusal strategies compose of two strategies; *positive opinion*, *preparator* and *appreciation*. The strategies were then classified according to Brown and Levinso's politeness strategies as shown in Table 1. These strategies were grouped according to their employment of strategies through the full refusal interaction i.e. **pre-refusal stage** i.e. the strategies used before the actual refusal, **head act** which expresses the refusal, and post refusal stage i.e. the strategies employed after expressing the refusal. To examine politeness, the refusal strategies are further classified into the three types of politeness strategies; **positive politeness**, **negative politeness** and **bald-on-record** (Brown Levinson, 1987).

### Figure 2. MSE Politeness Strategy When Refusing aScholarship Offer by a University Human Resource Officer

Table 2 clearly shows MSE preference for **positive politeness** (17%) that is employing strategies which aim at establishing solidarity with the interlocutor. The second in rank is **bald on record** strategies (11.5%) which is the least polite strategy where the speaker employs direct, clear, unambiguous and concise strategies to convey his/her message. The **negative politeness** in which the speaker uses strategies to minimize imposition by showing deference and softening the tone, ranks last at 7.0%.

At the pre-refusal stage, **positive politeness** strategy was employed more than **negative politeness** strategy. The **positive politeness** was used to seek agreement through the employment of *positive opinion* in which they first agreed with the interlocutor's view before declining the scholarship offer by saying one of the following utterances:

"Erm.: *I'm interested in the offer but...*"

"Actually, *I know Toronto is a good university but...*"

"*I really like the scholarship but then...*"

On the other hand, the **negative politeness** was employed to show deference to the interlocutor. This can be seen from their employment of (a) gratitude/appreciation while (b) preparator was used to prepare the interlocutor for the upcoming refusal. Instances of phrases used are as follows:

a) "*Well I appreciate it but...*"

"*Thank you very much but...*"

b) "*Yeah I have looked through the offer...*"

"*Yeah I have thought it thoroughly and...*"

At the head act stage, they expressed their refusal by employing one strategy from the three politeness strategies. Among these three types of politeness strategies, majority opted for **positive politeness** (by giving *reason/excuse*) and **bald-on-record (direct strategy)** compared to **negative politeness**. The participants gave *reason* to justify their refusal. The major themes for the reasons were they had their preferred university, fear of foreign environment (problem adjusting, culture shock and no family and friends to support them), and family factors (taking care of sick mother/father, wanting to be close to family). The participants who opted for **bald-on-record** politeness strategies mostly expressed their refusal via a) mitigated refusal which is the lowest degree of directness or b) *negation of proposition* which is lesser degree of directness. The two highest degree of directness i.e. c) *performative* and d) *flat no* were employed by only two participants.

1. "I don't think it is possible for me to accept the scholarship"
2. "I can't accept the offer", "I'm not gonna accept the offer."
3. "I reject the offer."
4. "No"

Only two participants employed **negative politeness** as the head act; the first used *hedging* (a) and *apology* (b).

1. "I'm not sure because I have my own preferred university."
2. "I'm sorry but I..."

The post refusal stage is the most elaborate stage in which more strategies from all three types of politeness strategies were employed. At this stage, again the use of **positive politeness** was dominant as indicated by the participants' employment of overwhelming *reasons* to justify their rejection of the scholarship offer. The reasons were mostly elaboration of the reasons given at the head-act stage. In addition to *reason*, they also mitigated their firm tone by using *positive opinion* in which they initially agreed with interlocutor's suggestion before declining it. But at the same time they also reaffirmed their stance of not accepting the offer by being direct via the use of **bald-on-record** strategies comprising *negative willingness*, *mitigated refusal*, *flat no* and *performative*. Similar to the earlier stages, majority opted for the lesser degree of directness i.e. *negative willingness* and *mitigated refusal*. Only a few used the two higher degree of directness; the *performative* and the *flat no*. In addition, they also reaffirmed their stance by utilizing **indirect strategies** which gave clear message of rejection i.e. *statement of assurance* ("My decision is final") and *alternative* ("Why not offer the scholarship to someone deserving"). Their use of **negative politeness** at this stage was from their employment of i.e. *request for information* (a), *principle* (b) *lack of enthusiasm* (c), *hedging*, *apology* and *gratitude/appreciation*.

1. "Can I choose other university?"
2. I don't think it's a bother to me to study locally.
3. "To succeed in our studies, it's our effort that counts and not the university."

The strategies employed across the three stages illustrate that the characterization of refusals is rather complex involving multiple speech acts and reusing of strategies; refusal, request, apology, suggestion, persuasion and so forth. Since their responses via the role play are open, the length of interaction among the twelve participants itself varies depending among others on the persistence of the initiator and the recalcitrance of the participants. In the scholarship offer, the academic advisor/initiator employed three insistences; Toronto University being top university, the benefit of having a scholarship and time to rethink their decision to get the participants' responses. Most participants took effort (hence employed more strategies) while a few were either very firm or used concrete reason which the advisor was not able to rebut (hence used less strategies) to convince her to accept their refusal.

The analysis of politeness strategies in the refusal interactions by MSE were based on Brown and Levinson's theory. The results revealed the MSE's preference for **positive politeness strategies** which were employed throughout all three stages of the interactions; the pre-refusal, head-act and post-refusal stages. Strategies categorized under **bald-on-record politeness** ranked second while **negative politeness** were employed minimally. The finding corresponds to the study by Sattar and Farnia, Al-Shboul et. al.<sup>16</sup> Farnia and Wu, Sattar et. al, Nur Asyarani, Yasniza et. al and Nurul Chojimah. These studies found that participants preferred **positive politeness** strategies as revealed by their use of ample reasons. This strategy was oriented towards the positive needs of an individual aiming at creating solidarity with the hearer and expressing that speaker wants the hearer's wishes and wants to be fulfilled. Under this types of politeness, the participants of the present study; the MSE only employed two strategies. The first, *reason/excuse* was employed overwhelmingly. By using this strategy the refuser sent an implied message that he/she had to commit the face threatening act but the act was actually justified and reasonable. The second, *positive opinion* was employed to appease the interlocutor before stating their rejection. Thus, they concurred with the interlocutor's opinion that Toronto being a top university, that the offer was good and that it would be useful to have scholarship and then only negated the ideas.

The second dominant strategy, **bald-on-record** politeness was employed by MSE to convey their refusal message in a direct and clear approach. This type of politeness shows two important features of Brown and Levinson's **bald-on-record** politeness strategy; non-minimization of face threat and power difference between the speaker and the hearer. The participants wanted to commit the FTA with maximum efficiency more than their want to save the officer's face. Nevertheless their preference for the two low degree of directness; *negation of proposition* and *mitigated refusal* rather than using the two high degree of directness; *performative* and *flat no*, indicates their awareness of the status of the interlocutor and the fact she was their former lecturer. Their use of *statement of assurance* ("my decision is final") was firm and was followed by *reasons*. Using ample reasons also helps to let to "the hearer know why he/she wants what he/she wants, so that the hearer can see that potentially face threatening act is actually reasonable". This reflects their effort to redress the impact of the rejection. Their employment of the direct strategies are congruent with Brown and Levinson's on-record strategy with respect to the precision and clarity of communicative intention and Grice's maxim of manner in which messages should be conveyed without obscurity and also maxim of quality i.e. do not say what you believe to be false. By being direct, the participants can avoid misunderstanding or being seen as manipulators and their refusal is clearly conveyed. The prominent use of **bald-on-record** in the present study, however, contradicts the studies by Sattar and Farnia, Al-Shboul et. al. Farnia and Wu, Raja Rozina et. al. Yasniza et. al and Nurul Chojimah. Their studies revealed a prominent use of indirect strategies (**positive** and **negative politeness**) while **bald-on-record** i.e. direct strategies, which were categorized as the least politeness category, were minimal.

The difference in findings may be due to the different contexts and different methods of collecting data. In the present study, the participants had to refuse a scholarship offer whereas previous studies reviewed had given different situations. The use of open role-play to obtain data generated a richer use of strategies. Participants in studies employing DCT used 3 to 5 strategies whereas MSE participants in the present study employed a range of 5 strategies to 14 strategies. The officer who offered the scholarship on behalf of the university used three insinuations to persuade the participants to accept the scholarship. These may result in the participants to employ more **bald-on-record**. In the case of refusal, the participants were the one being imposed. This situation was challenging as the role-play required the participants to respond immediately where the interactions were conducted from the initial until the concluding stage whereas the DCT only required participants to state in written form/writing how they would refuse in a given situation.

The findings of the present study showed the politeness strategies of the MSE varies from less polite to more polite. Two transcripts of role-play interactions by participant 8 (P8) (Appendix B) and participant 12 (P12) (Appendix C) show the different strategies taken by these participants in navigating their refusal interaction. Participant 8 employed 14 refusal strategies and his repertoire of refusal strategies reflects that P8 treaded cautiously by switching back and forth from face saving strategies to face threatening strategies and back to face saving strategies. Starting with **negative politeness** by *apologizing*, P8 moved to **positive politeness** via *positive opinion* i.e. agreeing with the officer idea followed by giving *reason* then turning to **bald-on-record** via *negative willingness* to state clearly his refusal, back to **positive politeness** by elaborating and recycling *reasons* to persuade the officer. When the officer persisted, the participant employed **negative politeness** i.e. *apologizing* then turned to a more assertive strategy to state his stance via **bald-on-record** i.e. *performative* which is the highest degree of directness and finally end with **positive politeness** by *thanking* the officer. In contrast, P12 used only 5 refusal strategies and the strategies employed were under **positive politeness** and **bald-on-record** strategies. Initially when the offer was made, P12 used **bald-on-record** i.e. using *negative willingness* to decline followed by **positive politeness** that is giving *reason* and recycling the *reason*. The officer then reminded P12 that the scholarship was offer to study at a top university, P12 returned to **bald-on-record**, replying curtly using *negative willingness* and when given time to rethink, p 12 once again replied bluntly via **bald-on-record**.

The evaluation of the degree politeness of the two MSE participants is based on their consideration of the contexts of the situation. P 8 seems to be more polite than P12 not because P8 employs more strategies but the strategies employed by P 8 indicate better face management and consideration of variables involved. P8 was cautious and discreet towards a person whose position is higher and older in age. The officer was actually his former lecturer meaning they were close and in the case of refusal, the participants are the one being imposed by the persistence persuasion from the officer. Hence P8 expressed his stance forthrightly using more **bald-on-record** strategies than P12. In fact P8 employed the lesser degree of directness and well as the highest degree of directness compared to P12 who only used negative willingness. However, P8 mitigated the strong illocutionary force of the face threatening act by interweaving the strategies with face saving strategies i.e. positive politeness and negative politeness. Hence, P8 is able to adhere to social rules of displaying proper conduct and maintaining harmony in terms of interpersonal relationship. In contrast, P12 did not take much effort to mitigate the force of the **bald-on-record strategy**. P12 responses were short and two *reasons* (**positive politeness**) were also brief resulted in P12's refusal sounded brusque and impatient.

## Appendix A: Classification of Refusal Semantic Formulas

### I Direct Refusal

1. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")
2. Non performative statement

#### 1. "No"

#### 2. Negation of Proposition or Negative willingness/ability

#### 3. Mitigated Refusal

1. Indirect Refusals

#### A. Statement of regret/ apology

(e.g., "I'm sorry...", "Excuse me")

#### B. Excuse, reason, explanation, justification

#### C. Statement of alternatives

1. I can't do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather...",

"I'd prefer..."

1. Why don't you do X instead of (e.g., Why don't you ask someone else?"

1. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g.,

"If you had asked me earlier, I would have..."")

1. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll give you a pay raise as soon as I can")

1. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business in restaurant")

1. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "Such things can happen to anyone")

1. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "You won't be able to understand my handwriting" for refusing to lend class notes)

2. Statement of negative feeling:

Criticism of the request/requester, guilt trip (e.g., "You are lazy")

1. Criticized the request/requester / negative feeling Opinion/insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?", "That's terrible idea!")

1. Request for help, empathy, and assistance (e.g., "I hope you can understand my situation")

1. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't Worry about it", "that's is okay", "you don't have to")

1. Self defense (e.g., "I'm just following the course program", "I'm doing my best", "I'm doing all I can do")

Statement of assurance (e.g., "I like it the way it is")

I Avoidance

1. Verbal

a. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Did you say Monday?")

b. Request for information

c. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it")

d. Wish

e. Hedging (e.g., "I'll don't know", "I'm not sure")

**f. Compromise**

1. Adjuncts to Refusals (preliminary remarks that cannot stand alone to function as refusals/disagreement.)

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement

(e.g., "good idea", "I'd love to..."), compliment (e.g., "The cake was very good").

2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you're very good in a difficult situation")

3. Support

4. Gratitude/Appreciation (e.g., "Thank you very much")

5. "Exclamation of disappointment, surprise (e.g., "What a pity!", "What a coincidence!")

**6. Preparator**

**7. Disclaimer**

(Source: Al Issa<sup>17</sup> and Felix-Brasdefer)

Appendix B: Analysis of P8 Refusal of Scholarship Offer

Participant 8(P8) Scholarship offer to Study At Toronto University		Analysis of strategies
Initiator:	Hello P8::	The interaction began with small talk between the advisor and P8.
P8	Hello.	
Initiator:	Congratulation ah.	
P8	Oh. Thank You.	
Initiator:	It's great that you've got this scholarship and I think you deserve it because you've worked hard for it. This scholarship is for Toronto University, one of the top universities in Canada and it's a great offer I think you should accept this offer.	The advisor urged P8 to accept the offer.
P8	Oh sorry(1)madam, yeah I really would like that scholarship (2) but to Canada is not a so good place to study (3).	Head-act: Refusal via apology (1).Post-refusal: P8 shows her interest in the scholarship (positive opinion) (2) and went on to give reason(3) to justify her refusal.
Initiator:	Erm::	
P8	Ah:: I think I have think (sic) so much about this and mmm:: I don't want(4) to go there. I have my own thing that I want to do from (..) you know I have to think about that. I want to further(5) (sic) to go there.	P8 reaffirmed her refusal via negative willingness (4), elaborated her reason (5).
Initiator:	Not not Canada. Not Toronto University=	The initiator asked for clarification and when P8 confirmed her refusal, she then stressed on Toronto University being top university.
P8	=Yeah.	
Initiator:	Oh:: but Toronto University is one of the top universities in Canada.	
P8	I know about that (6) but I don't don't want (sic) (7) to go there. Because I don't really want to go (8) ah:: abroad. I want to further my studies in local university that I really want	P8 acknowledged Toronto University being top university (positive opinion/feeling of agreement - 6) but stood by her rejection (7 & 8) using negation of proposition and recycled

	to go there(9). Maybe next next year, I will go there.	her reason (9).
Initiator:	But P8 if you refuse this offer, meaning that you won't get a scholarship.	The advisor reminded P8 the rules to secure the scholarship.
P8	Oh. Maybe ah:: I'll ah:: that is the difficulty that I have to think about. But I think ah:: I have my own I have my own ah:: mmm:: I have my own money to make sure I can further my study in local university (10) I want. I really want to go there but (...) I think, its ok, I'll reject (11) that university that scholarship.	P8 reasoned that she had her own financial support (10) and again expressed her rejection firmly via the highest degree of directness i.e. performative verb "reject" (11).
Initiator:	Ok. Ok I understand. Meaning that you're going to support yourself to further your study. You don't really need that [scholarship]. Look like ahh the decision is final, don't you want to take a few days to think about this?	The advisor relented but gave time for P8 to think over the decision.
P8	Mmm:: of course, I really don't want to go (12) there and I'm sorry (13) I have to decline this offer (14).	P8 declined and used the adverb "really" which preceded her negative willingness (12), apologised and finally used performative verb "decline" (13) to reinforce her rejection.
Initiator:	I understand. You're so sure that you want to go to this local university then and I I wish you the best in your future, P8.	Resolution: The advisor accepted P8 decision
P8	Thank you.	

**Table 2.** Appendix B: Analysis of P8 Refusal of Scholarship Offer

### Appendix C: Analysis of P12 Refusal of Scholarship Offer

Participant 12 Scholarship offer to Study At Toronto University		Analysis of Strategies	
Initiator:	Hello, P12!	The interaction began by a small talk i.e. an informal greeting. The offer was extended.	
P12:	°Hi:°		
Initiator:	Congratulations! ° Ah:: ° It's a good offer that you receive that actually, and that offer come from a:: top(.) university one of the top universities in Canada! Isn't it a very good offer:: and I think you should accept that offer.		
P12:	(...) yes, but (...) I think (...) I'm not gonna accept (1) that offer. I'm going to set it:: cause(.) I have a: (.) I have dreams(.) situated (sic) to the university that I like, which I prefer to go to the local university (2).	Head-act: Refusal of the offer via negative willingness (1). Post-refusal: P12 elaborated her reason (2) i.e. preferring local university. The advisor stressed on Toronto University being top university and the rules	

Initiator:	But P12, this is Toronto, the offer comes from the Toronto University. Toronto University is one of the best universities in Canada. You you:: Your result is excellent, that's why:: you are getting this offer:: and:: (..) if you decide not to go to the Toronto university then:: (..) this scholarship will be off.	stipulated to secure the scholarship. P12 indicated she fully understood the rules but gave another reason(3) i.e. problem and reaffirmed her refusal via negative willingness (4)The advisor pressed on by highlighting the scholarship.P12 reaffirmed her stand firmly.When advisor gave time for her to think over her decision, P12 confirmed her refusal curtly just via negative willingness (5) Resolution: The initiator relented also with a brief parting.	
P12:	Ehm, I know about that, but(..) I have another probs:: (sic) (3) so:: I can't. I just can't (4)Cause a:: (..) you know I (...) I just don't want. I have a lot of prob which I don't think it can be settled in a:: (..)		
Initiator:	Within a short period? (..) so you wanna settle your problem first? And then you wanna let go this scholarship?		
P12:	Yes.		
Initiator:	Ah:: you want to have:: more time to think about it? Perhaps you want to take one or two more days to think about it because it's such a (..) good offer to let go		
P12:	(..) I don't want (5)		
Initiator:	Ok:: then.		

Table 3. Appendix C: Analysis of P12 Refusal of Scholarship Offer

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