

# Native and Non-Native English Refusal Strategies in Transactional Negotiation: A Pragmatic Analysis

Dewa Nyoman Ardika\*

*University of Mataram*

Mataram, Indonesia

dewanyomanardika92@gmail.com

I Irwan

*Universitas Nahdatul Wathan*

Mataram, Indonesia

irwan.cipi@gmail.com

Dewa Gede Deniyasa Ekasaputra

*University of Mataram*

Mataram, Indonesia

gededeny1@gmail.com

**Abstract**—This study is concerned with how native and non-native English use refusal strategy and explored types of refusal strategy within single transactional negotiation. This study was carried out in the diving company office. The sample of this study was 20 respondents in which 10 of whom were from native English speakers' countries such as from England, Australia, and Canada while the other 10 of whom were from Germany, French, Norwegian, Swedish, and Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, and Finlandia. The data were gathered through observation using an audio recording device. The data were analyzed through conversation analysis and refusal mapping technique. The result of the study showed that the refusal expression occurred in the last exchange of negotiation and that both respondents (Native and non-native English speakers) used the same strategy to refuse the offer made by the receptionist i.e., "Postponement with General acceptance with excuses". About 70 percent of native speakers used this strategy while 80 percent of nonnative English speakers used this strategy and the rest used pure postponement with alternative reason. Besides, it also showed that most of the strategies used by both speakers were categorized into commissive speech acts that are the promise of future acceptance.

**Keywords**—*Native and Non-Native English speakers, Refusal Strategy, Transactional Negotiation, pragmatic analysis*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Different cultures have various interactional styles, leading to different preferences for speech act behaviors. Al-Kahtani [1] pointed out that different cultures realize speech acts in different ways. For example, people from different cultural backgrounds perform speech acts differently even while using the same linguistic code (e.g., English).

Besides cultural norms, communication is also influenced by our gender differences. As Coates [2] states that women tend to be more polite than men and women talk more than men. This information simply tells us that differences in language uses and preferences are caused by sociolinguistic factors such as gender, ethnicity, education, and so forth [3]. Therefore, it should be noted that differences like these may cause misunderstanding or, to some greater effect, conflict when people from different sociolinguistic backgrounds interact with one another. As a result, lack of knowledge of

speech act realization patterns and strategies between cultures may lead to breakdowns in intercultural and interethnic communication.

Today, the most common intercultural interaction is in the area of tourism. It is rightfully so because tourism has been growing so rapidly for the last decades [3] and plausibly makes people interact with people from different backgrounds. In other words, this rapid movement of people has brought people to a different area and forced them to interact with a host community that has different backgrounds.

In the tourism sphere, Locals or foreigners during ongoing conversation may find such an ambiguous discourse and very often leads to misconception to what they are intently saying. This is sometimes caused by a lack of cross-culture pragmatics since pragmatic skills are the most challenging tasks for nonnative speakers to master as they require both linguistic abilities and communicative competence that must fit in the target culture. One of the most common expressions involving non-literal meaning is in refusing offers. For example, the clause "I think about it" very often is regarded as the act of thinking rather than a polite expression of "no thank you". This phenomenon leads to the possibility of misunderstanding and miscommunication if they are not familiar with each other's cultures.

The present study focuses on a speech act that has received little attention in interlanguage pragmatics research, namely that of refusing. This research will be in the area of tourism because, as elaborated in the background, tourism is the most common inter-cultural encounter. This research will also focus on the transactional negotiation of scuba dive programs in which the locals interact with foreigners. This site is chosen because very often refusal expressions are heard for example; when the staff of scuba offering their programs to a foreigner saying "do you want to take this diving program?" and the customer responds "I think so, but I need to discuss with my friend I'll come back once I have settled". If people don't know the expression of "I'll come back" he or she may presume that they will come back. However, that sort of expression is used to politely refuse the offer. This type of natural conversation of locals and foreigners is the core object phenomena under investigation.

In other words, this research will primarily focus on the transactional interaction in which the staff of the scuba diving company offers a dive program to overseas visitors in Senggigi. This research tries to Investigate (1) the ways native and non-native English speakers express refusal

strategy during the negotiation and (2) describe what types of refusal act are used during negotiation. This is done to identify cross-linguistic and cross-cultural influences on the use of various speech act realization strategies that will significantly contribute to understanding the culture of the speech community.

## II. METHODS

This research used descriptive qualitative to understand the phenomena being investigated. The respondents of this

study were chosen purposively because of the arbitrated number of respondents; 10 for native English speakers who are from English, America, Australia, South Africa, Canada, and some commonwealth countries and 10 nonnative speakers who are from other than those of mentioned countries.

The data were collected through observation where each transactional negotiation was audio-recorded and the recorded data were transcribed into the computer.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TABLE I. NATIVE ENGLISH REFUSAL STRATEGY

No	Name/ country	Refusal Behaviour	Refusal Strategy	Cut out Evidence from Conversational Negotiation
1	DN/Australia	Pure Postponement	Excuse	....(discus with friends), oke. We need think about it
2	FL/ Australia	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>It sounds great, I will call you later, thank you</i>
3	SB/England	Postponement	Excuse	Oke, we will see later. Thank you
4	TD/Australia	Postponement	The promise of future acceptance	<i>well thanks for your information, I need to inform my friend, I will come back later, thank you</i>
5	SR/England	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>okay, I will discuss it with my husband, <u>we will come back later</u> thank you</i>
6	CR/England	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>well that sounds good, we need to think about it and <u>will come back later</u></i>
7	JT/Canada	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>I think should think about it, and I call you later <u>I will call this number</u> thanks anyway</i>
8	GR/Australia	Postponement	Excuse and reason	<i>I see, well, we need to think about it, <u>do you have a phone number I can call?</u></i>
9	ST/England	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>I see we would like to dive on 23 Sept, <u>I think I will come back to find more information later</u> thank you</i>
10	OS/Australia	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>oh okay (thinking) <u>well I will come back because I don't bring my card and o don't have cash on me do you have a phone number or something?</u></i>

TABLE II. NON-NATIVE ENGLISH REFUSAL STRATEGY

No	Name/ country	Ways of refusing	Refusal Strategy	Cut-out Evidence from Conversational Negotiation
1	FR/French	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	oke, <i>can I take this browser</i> and <u>I will tell you later</u>
2	SS/Germany	Postponement	Excuse, reason, explanation	well I need to discuss it with my friend because he dives here two months ago I want to know how much he paid for it
3	SV/Swedia	Postponement	Excuse, reason, explanation	<i>well I think about it, <u>I have to call my friend</u> but thank you</i>
4	DR/Switzerland	Postponement	The promise of future acceptance	<i>well it sounds great but I need to go hotel to negotiate with my friend and <u>come back later</u></i>
5	GR/Belgium	Postponement which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	Excuse, reason, explanation, and Promise of future acceptance	<i>well I need to discuss it because my friend has dived in Lombok and <u>come back later</u></i>
6	Er/Finlandia	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>oke can I take a number of your office and <u>we call you later</u></i>
7	Gr/Belgium	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>We need to think about and <u>inform you later</u></i>
8	Ws/ Spain	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>I see, I need to discuss it with my girl and <u>come back later</u></i>
9	FR/German	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>well that sounds good we need to think about it and <u>will come later</u></i>
10	Tn/Italia	Postponement in which the customer shows General acceptance with excuses	The promise of future acceptance	<i>Well, it sounds great but I need to make sure with my partner and <u>come back later</u></i>

The finding shows that most of the refusal strategies used by foreigners either English native or nonnative English speakers within a single conversation in transactional negotiation are indirect refusal which is subsumed over Postponement with General acceptance with excuses which received 80% of respondents. These strategies are used to be polite to the receptionist because they are naturally foreigners in essence. This can be seen in the following conversation between English native speaker and the dive programmer:

- 1A : good morning, what can i do for you sir?  
 2B : morning, we....looking for programs for diving around Gilis?  
 3A :sure, let me explain you about what we have to offer  
 4B : sure  
 5A :here, we have four diving programs from begginer course to open water dive certification, but the most faveorite one is open water dive in three gilis  
 6B : i'd love to dive in Gilis  
 7A :do you have license?  
 8B : yes we do, but my son is gonna take course if the price is affordable here  
 9A : here is the price for every course including course (i handed the leaflets)  
 10B :hmmmmmm sure (discussion)  
 11A :what do you think sir? Do you wanna take the course  
 12B :we'd love to but .... give me a moment ..... what is included in each dive program  
 13A :well, we provide late breakfast in board, two mineral water and snakes and some lemon juice afterdiving  
 14B : I see, how long does it take for one dive?  
 15A : approxamitely one hour, two dives for a day  
 16B :okay,,,, i will discuss it with my husband, we will come back later thank you  
 17A : sure, see you later

In nature, the conversation went on the question-and-answer milieu between receptionist and customer. As you can see in the exchange, the refusal occurs in exchange 16. It clearly shows that the customer in this case native English expresses the refusal through indirect ways that are "Postponement with General acceptance with excuses". Broadly speaking, it shows that the refusal comes after hesitation about the dive program offered by the receptionist i.e.aproxamitely one hour, two dives for a day. Then the customer responded "I will discuss it with husband" this expression is a rhetoric statement in which to politely refuse the offer and the statement "we will come back later thank you" is intentionally used to soothe the refusal expression used earlier within the same exchange.

As mapped in Table II where the majority of refusal strategies are postponement. The finding proved that most of the refusal strategies used by foreigners of non-native English speakers within a single conversation in transactional negotiation are indirect refusal which is subsumed over Postponement with General acceptance with excuses which

received 80% of respondents. These strategies are used to be polite to the receptionist because they are naturally foreigners in essence. This can be seen in the following conversation between a non-native English speaker and the dive officer.

- 1A : hallo good morning  
 2B : good morning, im looking for dive around lombok?  
 3A : yes sir, do have license?  
 4B : yes i take my license in malaysia but i just did it once and i wanna dive more if the price is okay  
 5A : in here, we offer fun dive and daily dive if you have license, every dive is two dive a day  
 6B :where is the place?  
 7A : you can choose the place in three gilis in the north  
 8B :but tell me the price for one dive  
 9A : its one million for two dives  
 10B :if i take for dives is it possible to have discounts  
 11A : i guess so, if you take four dives it costs you 850 for one dive  
 12B :well i need to disscuss about it with my friend because he dive here two months age i want to know how much he paid for it  
 13A : if you book in advance that would be better for you sir  
 14B :i have think about it, i will come back later, thank you  
 15A : okay

In the preceding conversational exchange, we can see that the refusal is indirect. The flows of the conversation went on about question and answer between receptionist and customer from German. As we can see in the exchange above, the refusal occurs for the sake of polite ignorant though there is an expression which goes to return to the place "well I need to discuss it with my friend" however, this expression is merely used to refuse the offer of the customer which is perhaps not likely what he intended to be offered. Furthermore, it clearly shows that the customer expressed the refusal by adding excuses "because he dives here two months ago and I want to know how much he paid for it". This strategy is used to sound less impolite " or in other words "Postponement with General acceptance with excuses"

In nature, the refusal occurred after the receptionist offered the price of dive where the customer starts thinking and murmuring. The customer's murmur signals unsatisfied and respond by saying "well I need to discuss it with my friend because he dives here two months ago I want to know how much he paid for it". The first part of the refusal "well I need to discuss it with my friend belongs to what Beebes et al [4] called postponement, additionally, the customer gives more information why he didn't satisfy with the price by saying because he dives here two months ago I want to know how much he paid for it. This expression is subsumed as an excuse [4].In other words, this full part of refusal expression is categorized as "Postponement with General acceptance with excuses". As explained earlier, this refusal strategy and behavior of this type of refusal is coincided with what Ullis-

Weltz (1990) mapped on refusal study and some cross-cultural refusal act within transactional negotiation. Beebe, (1990) further states that this heuristic of refusing an offer is for polite manner and face preservation.

Table III. Extract of Refusal Strategy

No	Refusal behavior	Frequency		Percentage	
		Native	Nonnative		
1	Postponement	3	2	30%	20%
2	Postponement with General acceptance with excuses	7	8	7%	80%

The findings show that native and nonnative English speakers tended to use almost the same ways of refusal behavior. The most frequent refusal behavior used by native speakers was postponement with general acceptance with excuses. The table shows that 70% of them expressed their refusal through postponement with general acceptance such as the expression of “I need to discuss it with my friend and I will come back later” while 30 % of them used pure postponement such as “ I think about it” and leave. At the same time, nonnative speakers were quite the same as native speakers’ behavior in which 80% of them used postponement with general acceptance and the rest 20 % of them expressed their refusal through postponement. Thus, it can be said that both native and native speakers’ refusal behavior dominantly used “postponement with general acceptance with excuses”

**IV. CONCLUSION**

This study is indeed the cross-culture-refusal act in which the customers are from different countries, mainly Europe and Australia and the receptionist are from Indonesia. Both participants are conspicuously from different social and cultural backgrounds whose propensities of using indirect refusal strategies are a must. Also, the reason for using indirect refusal study is for face-preservation. This preservation has something to do with avoiding negative perspectives or being embarrassed by each participant or interlocutor. Therefore, this type of refusal act is used to excuse several reasons; polite, face preservation, and less likely to be offended.

The previous chapter showed that both native and non-native English speakers used indirect refusal that is the postponement of general acceptance with an excuse. This stands for the act of refusal consist of two parts in which postponement and general excuse. This type of refusal strategy is described by Beebe, (1990) and Uliss-Weltz (1990) where they mapped that there are three types of refusal: direct, indirect, and adjunct. Each type is bound with an explanation (see, Chapter II). In other words, the data showed that the refusal acts were mainly concerned with the commission act which is the promise of future acceptance.

The reason for using this particular refusal act is due to the polite reason in which both participants (customers and

receptionists) are from different cultures and social backgrounds. Therefore, to avoid impoliteness, the customers tended to use indirect refusal by adding future acceptance or promise for future acceptance. In addition, the previous researches on the cross-culture refusal act suggested that in a single conversation or encounter by two different cultures or social people, they preferably used indirect rejection or refusal on any types of offers (Moaveni, 2014).

Besides, the use of the same strategies from both respondents (native and non-native English speakers) is that the NNSs belong to extended speakers and come from the same culture as native speakers. In this regard, they refused the offer in transactional negotiation is quite the same irrespective of their language use which varies from native speakers.

This research has brought about intercultural communication which focused on intercultural refusal strategies between native and non-native English speakers and receptionists of the dive program. This study has limited in certain numbers: lack of deep study between both participants in term of cultural preclusion; lack of non-verbal code from both participants; lack of meeting for participants under investigation; only investigate one side of the conversation; and lack of Cross-gender investigation; contextual variables of power and distance; lack frequency form participants under investigation: lack of difference in the way participants use semantic formulas. Therefore, any further researches on the refusal act should be carried out to include the aspects mentioned above to do comprehensive research that leads to a broader perspective on the cross-cultural study.

In other words, Due to the relatively small sample size, this study should be considered preliminary. Lastly, it should be noted again that because of the technological changes of the past few decades it is even more imperative today to conduct pragmatic studies that examine not only the role of culture and gender but also the role of technology in the way we communicate.

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