

REFUSAL STRATEGIES USED BY MALE AND FEMALE SELLERS AT PASAR RAYA PADANG

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Abstract

This article is aimed at finding different strategies used by male and female sellers while refusing the buyers' offer. This study was done by using descriptive research design in which the data related to the object of the study were collected to answer the research question. The data of this study are refusals in the bargaining process between sellers and buyers that took place in Pasar Raya Padang. The finding of the research shows that male sellers used non performative statement strategy most frequently which implicitly indicated that they tended to refuse the buyers' offer in a direct way. Female sellers, on the other hand, used excuse, reason, and explanation strategy most frequently which indicated that they preferred to refuse their buyers' offer in an indirect way.

Key words/phrases: *refusal, refusal strategies, male and female sellers, descriptive research design*

A. INTRODUCTION

Refusal is an unpleasant response which is usually found in everybody's daily conversation because everybody always wants their statement to be accepted. However, different person has different ideas or beliefs that make them impossible to always accept other's. The more refusals given by a person the higher possibility to cause unpleasant feelings between the speakers. As a result, a good relationship between them can be broken down. To avoid such unpleasant condition, the speakers have to use certain strategy that enables them to express their refusals without hurting other's feelings. This is due to the fact that everybody wants to look nice in front of others,

Mainly, refusal is a part of discussion in speech acts, pragmatics. It belongs to pragmatic study because its uses much depend on the context of situation. Different context of situation makes refusals delivered in various ways. Context in pragmatics include place, time, distance, power, and rank of imposition. As these contexts are unable to cover all of uses of

refusals, another linguistic study that deals with refusals is sociolinguistics, a study of language in relation to society.

In sociolinguistics, the context is more widely opened. Sex, ages, social status, customs, and beliefs are contexts that contribute to the way how refusals are delivered (later in this study called refusal strategy). One of the influential context that determine different choice of refusal strategy is sex. Male and female seem to have different strategy in expressing their refusals.

The practice of refusal strategy can be found in any places, including market. A market is one of the places where communication among society takes place. In this place, the communication happens between sellers and buyers. The sellers usually offer their products to the buyers. They will do anything in order to attract the buyers' interest to buy the products. Likewise, the buyers will attempt to buy the products as cheaply as possible. To get satisfactory price, the buyers will bargain the price offered by the sellers. In one case, there is a stuck condition when the buyer's

offer is too low and the sellers think he/she will not get the profit. It is usual that some of the customers press the price much lower than normal. The sellers have their own trick to face them. Sometimes they try to persuade or make them believe that the products have good quality. In such event, the sellers are targets of requests for the buyers. The buyers will keep requesting to the sellers until they get reasonable price, and the sellers will also keep persuading the buyers. If they can reach the agreement about the price, the buyers can take the products home. In contrast, if the sellers do not agree with the buyers' request, they will refuse it.

The sellers may have different ways or strategies in expressing their refusal. The different strategies used can be influenced by a sociolinguistic context, sex. Male and female sellers may use different strategies while refusing their buyers' request. This is very interesting to be studied since all of people will face such kind of situation while doing shopping.

One of the places where this kind of interaction takes place is a traditional market, such as Pasar Raya Padang. Pasar Raya is a central market in Padang where all of citizen's needs, such as food, clothes, office tools, furniture, and even jewelry, can be found. Therefore, it is not surprising that Pasar Raya Padang is visited by thousands people everyday. They can do shopping easily in Pasar Raya Padang because they can get all of their needs only in one market. Besides, the prices of products are relatively cheaper from other markets in Padang. Most of the products sold there have no fixed price, so the buyers have a chance to do bargaining with the sellers. Some of their bargainings are accepted but some are refused. This study focuses on sellers' refusals to the buyers' offer in bargaining process. Specifically, this study is aimed at finding refusal strategies used by male and female sellers in Pasar Raya Padang.

B. REVIEW OF RELATED THEORIES

1. The Concept of Refusal

Refusal can be referred to an action of not accepting someone or something because of certain reasons. The main reason of refusing is usually someone's unwillingness to accept. According to Wierzbicka (1987:94) refusal means the act of saying "no", expressing the addressee's non acceptance, declining of or disagreeing with a, invitation, request, suggestion or offer. More clearly, "refusing" means, saying "no" in response to someone else's request or order, in which he has conveyed to us that he wants us to do something and that he expects us to do it.

Nguyen (1992: 13) says refusals are often played out in lengthy sequences involving not only negotiation of a satisfactory outcome, but also face-saving maneuvers to accommodate the non-compliant nature of the act. Because of the face-threatening nature of refusals, they are often regulated by different cross-cultural face concerns. Consequently, they may be exceptionally subtle.

A refusal is generally considered a speech act by which a speaker "denies" to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor. Refusals are one of a relatively small number of speech acts which can be characterized as a response to another's act to a request, invitation, offer, suggestion, rather than as an act initiated by the speaker. Because refusals normally function as a second pair parts, they preclude extensive planning on the part of the refiner. And because extensive planning is limited, and because the possibilities for a response are broader than for an initiating act, refusals may reveal greater complexity than many other speech acts (Chen, Ye, & Zhang, 1995:121).

Furthermore, Jiayu (2004:30) says refusing is a speech act which involves the politeness principle. The studies on refusal strategies both in interpersonal communications and shopping activities display that politeness is what people in both cultures are concerned about, although the ways in which politeness is manifested are

diverse due to the differences in social cultures and language features.

A refusal refers to the situation when a speaker directly or indirectly says “no” to a request or invitation. Refusals often include explanation or reasons why such refusals are necessary. Based on a pragmatics perspective, the negotiation of a refusal may entail frequent attempts at directness or indirectness and politeness and impoliteness that are appropriate to the situation and may vary according to the social values of a particular culture (Perriman, 2007:1).

From the explanation above, it can be concluded that refusal is the act of saying “no” to other’s invitation, request, suggestion or offer. Furthermore, the way of how refusal is delivered is various depending on the context where or when the refusal takes place. The next sub chapter will talk about some strategies of refusals.

2. Refusal Strategies

As people delivered their refusals in various ways, some experts identified those ways and classified them into some refusal strategies. (See Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz's; Garcia, 1992, and Felix-Brasdefer, 2007). In accordance with the purpose of this study, the classification of refusal strategies follows Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz's (1985). They classified refusal strategies into fifteen categories under three general types: direct, indirect, and adjunct to refusals.

Direct type includes performative, non performative statement, and mitigated negative willingness. Performative is characterized by the exclusive words indicating refusals, such as refuse, disagree, etc. Non performative statement is characterized by the statement of refusals despite the absence of performative refusal words, such as no, I can't, and I don't think so.

Indirect type includes statement of regret (e.g. I'm sorry), wish (e.g. I wish I could accept), excuse, reason or explanation (e.g. I have to do such a lot of

homework), statement of alternative (e.g. This one is much better), set condition for future acceptance (e.g. You should have called me before you came), promise of future acceptance (e.g. I will certainly come next time), statement of principle (e.g. My mother never accepts gifts), threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g. If you don't want to do it, you can quit the job), criticise the requester/request (e.g. No shoes cost less than Rp 20,000), let interlocutor off the hook (e.g. its OK, I'll be alright), and self defence (e.g. I can't do it myself).

Meanwhile, adjunct to refusals is an expression that accompanies refusal but cannot be used to fulfill a refusal alone. It includes statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (I'd really like to...), pause fillers (e.g. uh..., well..., uhm..., and er...), gratitude or appreciation (e.g. Thanks), and exclamation (e.g. goodness).

3. Previous Researches on Refusals

Some researches on refusals have been done in different languages. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) did a study on the differences between Japanese ESL learners' and Americans' refusals in English. Sixty subjects participated in their study. The study revealed evidence of pragmatic transfer in the type, order, and frequency of the semantic formulae used by the Japanese speakers in the United States. In general, the Japanese were more inclined to differentiate their refusals according to whether they were addressing a higher or lower status person, whereas the Americans differentiated according to how well they knew the addressee (i.e. the level of familiarity). The Japanese were also less specific when giving excuses and they tended to sound more formal in tone.

Another study on refusals was carried out by Kartomiharjo (1990) in the East Java province. The study entitled '*Bentuk Bahasa Penolakan*' (the linguistic form of refusal utterances) analysed refusals to invitation, offers and requests. Social factors were analysed in the

categories of age, gender, ethnicity (Javanese and non- Javanese), social status, closeness of the relationship, environments, mood, topic of the exchange and performance. The subjects in the study were 42 male and 11 female Javanese, and 36 male and 9 female non-Javanese. The results revealed that people from East Java were inclined to use 'hint', a slight or indirect indication or suggestion.

Furthermore, Chen, Ye and Zhang (1995) enquired into the refusal behaviour of NSs of Mandarin Chinese in the United States. It was revealed that Lower status refusers frequently used excuses, while higher status refusers made less use of excuses compared to lower status interlocutors. It was found that the sequential pattern of exchange was structured and conventionalised according to a common script of verbal interaction.

In addition, Dung (1995) analysed the interlanguage refusal behaviour of Vietnamese speaking Vietnamese (W), Vietnamese speaking English (VE) and Australian native speakers of English (AE). The results showed that Australians spoke less and used more straightforward responses, e.g. no + reason . W refusals tended to be more elaborate than those of AEs. Pragmatic transfer was also reported in this study, as occurring in the distribution and discourse organizations of the RSs.

The other research on refusals was done by Nelson, Al Batal, and El Bakary (2002). This study investigated the similarities and differences between Egyptian Arabic and US English communication style by focusing on the speech act of making refusals. A modified version of the 12-item discourse completion test (DCT) developed by

Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz was used to elicit data. The finding of this research shows that both groups use similar strategies with similar frequency in making refusals. They differ, however, in the frequency of indirect strategies with Egyptian males using less indirection than Americans.

C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study was done by using descriptive design in which the data related to the object of the study were collected to answer the research question. The data of this study were refusals delivered by the male and female sellers to their buyers. The data were taken by recording the conversation between sellers and buyers that took place in Pasar Raya Padang. Only the conversations containing refusals were taken as the source of data in this study. The data were analyzed by using classification of refusal strategy proposed by Beebe, Takashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1985).

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study is aimed at finding the differences between male sellers and female sellers in using strategies while refusing the buyers' request. In order to meet this purpose, 30 conversations between sellers and buyers that took place in Pasar Raya Padang were collected. From these conversations, 53 refusals involving male sellers (26 refusals) and female sellers (27 refusals) were found. The refusals were delivered in different strategies which were all aimed at maintaining a good relationship between the sellers and the buyers. The distribution of using refusal strategy by the male and female buyers at Pasar Raya Padang is summarized in the following table.

Table 1. Refusal Strategies Used by Male and Female Sellers

Types of Refusals	Sub-Category	Frequency		Percentage	
		M	F	M	F
Direct	Performative	-	-	0%	0%
	Non performative Statement	7	3	27%	11%
	Mitigated negative willingness	-	1	0%	4%

Indirect	Statement of regret	1	1	4%	4%
	Wish	-	-	0%	0%
	Excuse, reason or explanation	5	7	20%	26%
	Statement of alternative	4	-	15%	0%
	Set condition for future acceptance	1	5	4%	18%
	Promise of future acceptance	-	-	0%	0%
	Statement of principle	4	3	15%	11%
	Attempt to dissuade interlocutor				
	a. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester	-	-	0%	0%
	h. Criticise the requester/request	-	4	0%	15%
	c. Let interlocutor off the hook	-	-	0%	0%
	d. Self defence	-	-	0%	0%
Adjuncts to Refusals	Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement	4	3	15%	11%
	Pause fillers	-	-	0%	0%
	Gratitude or appreciation	-	-	0%	0%
	Exclamation	-	-	0%	0%
Total		26	27	100%	100%

The findings show that male sellers tended to use different refusal strategies from the ones used by female sellers. The most frequent refusal strategy used by male sellers was “Non-performative statement” that belongs to direct strategy. Male sellers characterized themselves as the ones who behave more direct in refusing the buyers’ request. They preferred to directly say “no” when the offer made by the buyers was not possible to be accepted; instead of saying “yes” that, in fact, means “no”. Meanwhile, female sellers showed that they are more indirect in refusing the buyers’ request. Generally, women are more sensitive than men. This drives them to think more carefully to deliver their responses in order not to hurt other’s feelings. Instead of directly saying “no” to the buyers, they tried to indirectly refuse the buyers’ request by creating a situation in which the buyers can understand why their offers or requests were refused.

The strategy of refusal which is dominantly used by female sellers at Pasar Raya Padang is “Excuse, reason or explanation”. By employing this strategy, they tried to generate the buyer’s understanding of some conditions that lead to refusal. This belongs to indirect refusal because the refusal took place because of unavoidable conditions. Explanation could give feeling of satisfaction to the buyers as well as answer their curiosity of why the sellers refused their offer. Male sellers also used this strategy while refusing the buyers’ request, but not as frequently as female sellers did. From 26 refusals made by male sellers, they used this strategy five times (20%); meanwhile, female used this strategy seven times (26%) from 27 refusals. (See table 1). This finding shows there is no significant difference in the frequency of using this strategy between male and female sellers at Pasar Raya Padang. This finding also indicates that both male and female sellers at Pasar Raya

Padang, while refusing their buyers' request, prefer to use this strategy.

A very obvious difference between male and female sellers in refusing the buyers' offer/request is the use of the strategy of "Set condition for future acceptance". The findings show that female sellers used this strategy five times (18%), while male sellers only used it once (4%). This strategy belongs to indirect refusal because the sellers did not completely refuse their buyers' request; rather they opened the opportunity for the acceptance in the future after some conditions are fulfilled by the buyers. Female sellers at Pasar Raya Padang used this strategy especially in the process of bargaining. They used it to increase the price offered by the buyers because, in the bargaining process, the buyers liked offering the price as low as possible. To avoid of a great loss and unfriendly impression with the buyers, they offered a condition (a limit of the lowest price of their product). They promised to accept the request when the buyers met the condition. What follows is an example from the data that shows how this strategy was used by female sellers at Pasar raya Padang.

Source of Data 1

Setting : Bag Store at Pasar Raya Padang

Participants : Female Seller and Female Buyer

B: *Tas canel hijau tu bara hargonyo Ni?*

(How much does this channel bag cost?)

S: *Rp.150.000.*

(Rp.150,000)

B: *Ndak kurang lai, Ni?*

(May I have it cheaper?)

S: *Bara? Kalau ndak berbandrol ko bisa kurang.*

(How much? If there's no price label, this product can cost lower.)

B: *Rp.80.000.*

(Rp.80,000)

S: *Labiah Rp.100.000 la.*

(More than Rp.100,000, please.)

B: *Ndak bisa di bawah Rp.100.000, Ni?*

(How about under Rp.100,000?)

S: *Labiah Rp.100.000 la.*

(More than Rp.100,000, please.)

In this source of data, the female seller refused the buyer's request two times (written in underlined words). Nevertheless, the refusals were delivered in the exactly similar words and similar strategy. The refusal strategy performed by the seller in this source of data is known as "Set condition for future acceptance". By saying "More than Rp. 100,000, please. (*Labiah Rp.100.000 la.*)", the speaker indicated that she refused the request; nevertheless, she promised to accept it if, in the next bargaining, the buyer wanted to pay for the bag more than Rp.100,000. The next bargaining in the previous sentence means the future acceptance.

Another obvious difference is female sellers at Pasar Raya Padang used the strategy of "Criticism the requester/request" four times (15%), but male sellers did not use it at all. Female sellers used this strategy to implicitly show that their buyers' request was illogical as well as impossible to accept. Women are usually so sensitive that makes them easily annoyed. Therefore, when the price offered by the buyers was too low, female sellers felt bad and annoyed, but, at the same time, they also had to serve their buyers firmly. Instead of giving bad words to the buyers, they preferred to criticize their request by giving examples or comparing the sale price of the same product in other stores. At this point, they can reveal what they felt, and buyers were not badly hurt. Here is an example from the data.

Source of Data 8

Setting : Clothes Store at Pasar Raya Padang

Participants : Female Seller and Female Buyer

B: *Baju lalok iko bara Ni?*

(How much is this pajama?)
 S: *Yang ma? Kalau yang bahan kaus Rp.55.000, bisa kurang, dingin kausnyo.*
 (Which one? If made of cotton, it's Rp. 55,000, you may bargain, the cloth is cool.)
 B: *Rp.55.000? Ndak kurang Ni?*
 (Rp. 55,000? May I have it cheaper?)
 S: *Kurang saketek*
 (Just a bit.)
 B: *Rp.20.000?*
 (How about Rp. 20,000?)
 S: *Rp.20.000? Ma ado daster kini! Labiah Rp.30.000 lah. Kalau daster Rp.20.000 ndak ado.*
 (Today no pajama costs Rp.20,000! More than Rp.30,000 please? No pajama costs Rp.20,000)

The refusal strategy used by the female seller in this source of data is known as "Criticise the requester/request". promise of future acceptance. The seller delivered her refusal by saying "Today, no pajama costs Rp.20,000 (*Rp.20.000? Ma ado daster kini*)". This statement means that she criticised the buyer because her request was too low (Rp.20,000 for a pajama), and she would never get a pajama in any other stores with Rp.20,000.

Still an obvious difference between male and female sellers, the strategy of "Statement of alternative" was not used at all by female sellers, but was used by male sellers four times (15%). Male sellers at Pasar Raya Padang would like to give an alternative to the buyers when their offer were refused rather than set condition for future acceptance or criticise the buyers' offer. Male sellers tried to match the buyers' offer by offering another similar product with lower quality. It means that the buyers' offers would be accepted if they were addressed to another product. The example can be seen in the following data.

Source of Data 19

Setting : Bag Store at Pasar Raya Padang

Participants : Male Seller and Female Buyer

B: *Caliak tas tu Da?*
 (May I see that bag?)
 S: *Yang ma? Ko?*
 (Which one? This one?)
 B: *Ndak, yang merah tu Da.*
 (No, that red one)
 S: *Yang iko?*
 (This one?)
 B: *Yo Da. Bara tu Da?*
 (Exactly, how much is it?)
 S: *Rp.150.000.*
 (Rp.150,000)
 B: *Maha bana ma Da. Rp. 80.000 se yo Da?*
 (How expensive! How about Rp. 80,000?)
 S: *Yang hitam ko ndak baa do, kalau yang merah ko, ndak dapek do, Diak.*
 (You can only buy this black one with that price, but not for the red one.)

In this source of data, the male seller used the strategy of "Statement of alternative" to refuse his buyer's offer. His statement "You can only buy this black one with that price, but not for the red one. (*Yang hitam ko ndak baa do, kalau yang merah ko, ndak dapek do, Diak.*)" means he would like to accept the buyer's offer if the price was addressed to the black bag. This strategy contains the idea "Everything has a price, and only the right price for the right thing".

This study also found that refusals may take place four times in one transaction. The buyers kept on delivering their offer despite having been refused for more than once. In this occasion, the sellers had to use various strategies in order that they did not dissappoint the buyers. This situation happened in the following data.

Source of Data 5

Setting : Clothes Store at Pasar Raya Padang
Participants : Female Seller and Female Buyer

- B: *Caliak mukena Ni.*
(A veil, please)
- S: *Yang ma mukenanyo? Katun jepang, katun silki, organdi?*
(Which one? Japanese cotton, silk, or organdy?)
- B: *Kalau yang biru tu?*
(How about the blue one?)
- S: *Yang biru tu Rp.350.000.*
(The blue one costs Rp. 350,000.)
- B: *Rp.350.000? ndak kurang lai Ni?*
(Rp. 350,000? A bit lower, please?)
- S: *Bisa, ko katun jepang kainnyo, dingin kainyo, memang maha kainnyo.*
(Yes you can, the material is Japanese cotton, it's cool, but expensive.)
- B: *Di bawah Rp.100.000 ndak nio ni?*
(How about lower than Rp.100,000? May I?)
- S: *Di bawah Rp.100.000 ndak amuah do, diateh Rp.200.000 lah.*
(Less than Rp. 100,000 is not acceptable, more than Rp. 200,000, please.)
- B: *Di ateh Rp.200.000? ndak kurang Ni?*
(More than Rp. 200,000? Lower down please?)
- S: *Bara kecek adiak bara? Cubo uni danga. Itu ancak kainnyo katun jepang*
(How much did you say? Let me hear you. The cotton is good, Japanese cotton)
- B: *Rp.80.000 ndak nio?*
(How about Rp. 80,000?)
- S: *Rp.80.000 ndak bisa do, diateh Rp.200.000 lah.*
(Rp.80,000 is not deal, more than Rp. 200,000 please.)

In this source of data, there are four refusals (written in underlined words) performed by the speakers: the female seller and the female buyer. The first strategy performed by the seller is known as “statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement”. In that refusal, the seller indirectly expressed her refusal by giving a statement of positive opinion or agreement to the offer eventhough the situation called for refusal. She began her refusal by saying “Yes” which carries positive meaning and indicates that the offer will

be accepted. However, the following words “the material is Japanese cotton (*ko katun jepang kainnyo*), it's cool (*dingin kainnyo*), and expensive (*memang maha kainnyo*)” formulated some conditions that need to be fulfilled if the price is lowered. By using this strategy, the seller expected that the buyer would not be hurt because of her refusal which, therefore, can establish a good relationship between them..

The second and fourth refusals were delivered in the same strategy, known as promise of future acceptance. By saying “Less than Rp.100,000 is not acceptable (*dibawah Rp.100.000 ndak amuah do*), more than Rp.200,000, please (*labiah Rp.200.000 lah*)”, the seller indicated that she refused the buyer's offer which was less than Rp. 100,000, but, at the same time, she promised to accept it if, in the next offer, the buyer wants to pay more than Rp.200,000.

The third refusal, the seller used the strategy of “excuse, reason or explanation” to show her refusal. By saying “How much did you say? (*bara kecek adiak?*)” and “let me hear you (*cubo uni danga*)”, the seller showed her refusal. In order to strengthen her refusal (why she refused the buyer's offer), she gave reasons as well as explanations about the quality of the product by saying “the cotton is good; Japanese cotton (*itu ancak kainnyo katun jepang*)”. This explanation encouraged the buyer's understanding of the reason of refusal; therefore, the refusal did not take place because of profit matter, but as a result of the quality of the veil.

For the general finding, at Pasar Raya Padang, female sellers used more indirect strategies than male sellers in refusing the buyers' requests. 20 (74%) out of 27 refusals performed by female sellers were delivered through indirect strategy, meanwhile, male sellers expressed their 15 (58%) out of 26 refusals through indirect strategy. This statistic can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The general use of refusal strategies

Types of Refusals	Male Sellers		Female Sellers	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Direct	7	27%	4	15%
Indirect	15	58%	20	74%
Adjunct to Refusals	4	15%	3	11%
Total	26	100%	27	100%

The table also shows that male sellers used more direct strategies than male sellers. The other strategy, adjunct to refusals, is less used by both male and female sellers because it employs vague information that will possibly lead to misunderstanding between the sellers and the buyers.

E. CONCLUSION

Male and female sellers at Pasar Raya Padang used a slightly different strategy of refusing their buyers' offer. Non performative statement that belongs to direct refusal strategy is used more frequently by male sellers. Meanwhile, female sellers often look more indirect in refusing their buyers' offer, they use the strategy of "excuse, reason or explanation" most often. However, some of strategies are not used by both male and female sellers in their refusals. This includes "performative", "threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester", "let interlocutor off the hook", "self defence", "pause fillers", "gratitude or appreciation", and "exclamation". These strategies are not used because of the place of the study, Pasar Raya Padang. In the market, sellers usually want to look nice in front of their buyers eventhough they express their refusals to the buyers' offer. They always want to establish a good relationship with their buyers.

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