REFUSAL STRATEGIES ACROSS GENDERS: THE MERANAW UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

Realizations of speech acts vary from one language to another. Since refusing is a face-threatening act, speakers and interlocutors are required to at least know or to discern which strategies are widely acceptable and linguistically practiced in a specific context. The present study investigates the pattern of the speech act of refusals among Meranaw students of the Mindanao State University-Main Campus in the Islamic City of Marawi of Southern Philippines, who are adherents of Islam, by employing a descriptive qualitative research method. The study specifically aimed to illustrate the strategies employed by the respondents in realizing the speech act of refusals, as well as to explore the influence of genders in framing a refusal act. The data collected from 50 respondents (23 males and 27 females) through a modified written discourse completion task (DCT), that contains contextualized hypothetical scenarios, were coded and analyzed using the taxonomy of refusal strategies provided by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) and treated using frequency and percentage counting. Finally, the study reveals that the respondents generally and dominantly employ indirect strategies such as the use of adjuncts, excuses, explanations, and reasons in realizing the refusal speech acts. Also, it shows that gender does not necessarily play a pivotal role in framing a refusal speech act, however, it is noted that females and males differ in dealing with invitations whereas the former employs adjunct to show appreciation while the latter used statements of regret to acknowledge the face of an interlocutor.

Keywords: Speech acts, Refusal Strategies, Meranaw, Gender, Discourse Completion Task (DCT)

INTRODUCTION

With the globally dominating and overwhelming number of English speakers from a wide range of sociocultural backgrounds, English has been used as an avenue of intercultural linguistic exchanges (Sharifian, 2014; Sifakis, 2004). In fact, it is now described as an international language (Crystal, 2003; House, 2010; Jenkins, 2000; Sharifian, 2009) which a quarter of the world's population speaks (Shishavan & Sharifian, 2016). Moreover, in fully realizing and achieving an effective intercultural communication, there is a need for speakers to truly understand their own culture as well as the culture of their interlocutors.

Centered on the context of elucidating the role of culture towards effective communication, intercultural pragmatic studies with a consideration of gender dimension can play an essential

role in unearthing the differences among communicative participants who practice diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The inclusion of gender in studies is anchored on the theorized language dichotomy of men and women (Lakoff, 1973; Haas, 1979; Wardhaugh, 2006; Wahyuningsih, 2018). Hence, speech acts have been receiving a great number of interests among researchers around the world (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz's, 1990; Trosborg, 1995; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008) as the role of pragmatics and gender in communication always reflects on how a speaker realizes a certain speech act.

One speech act where the spotlight has been placed is refusal. It is generally issued in response to an initiating act (i.e., a request, a suggestion, an offer, or an invitation) to decline to engage in an activity proposed by an interlocutor (Chen, Ye, & Zhang, 1995). It is also considered to be a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) as it imposes a threat to the face of an interlocutor since a speaker does not satisfy the face-want of an addressee. Hence, refusals can be interpreted as a form of disapproval or disrespect whereas an interlocutor might take the act as a form of impoliteness.

In the study conducted by Mendoza and Berowa (2017) which examined the refusal strategies of Filipino ESL learners towards speakers with different lectal ranges (*acrolect, mesolect, and basilect*), gender and social status, it was found that only the accent variable dictates refusal strategy. However, in the study of Berowa, Ella and Lucas (2019), it maintains that gender determines the level of offensiveness which is very relevant to the refusal speech act as it is highly offensive. The act of refusing becomes more complicated when the cultural/ethnic affiliation of the interlocutor is considered.

With the offensive nature of refusal speech act and how a group of people refuses in different manners or norms, challenges and communication breakdowns are inevitable especially when a speaker lacks socio-pragmatic competence and does not possess sufficient knowledge on the culture of the other communicative participant. Hence, to accomplish effective communication and mutual understanding, it is necessary to at least discern the socio-cultural norms of those who speak the language. Apart from that, it is also important to distinguish which refusal strategy is seemed to be polite among a group of speakers in order to fulfill the face-desire of an interlocutor.

Anchored on the concerns of elevating socio-pragmatic competence, providing insights on the context of intercultural and sociolinguistic differences, as well as illustrating gender as a factor in shaping politeness, this study was conducted to know how Meranaws realize the refusal speech act and frame refusal strategies. Moreover, since there are differing findings on the relationship between refusal realizations and genders, the researchers examined such a linguistic phenomenon to better understand the complexities in performing refusal towards male and female interlocutors, and to know the different refusal markers to avoid communication gaps.

On top of that, the study is an initial response to the manifesting scarcity of research and literature as regards the mentioned speech act in the Meranaw context as the researchers objectively believe that the topic has not yet been given attention in the said context. Therefore, this study aims to demonstrate the refusal strategies of Meranaw speakers and to illustrate how gender plays a role in shaping the participants' refusal strategies

toward different initiating acts: request, invitation, suggestion, and offer.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

In order to grasp a better understanding on the notion of refusal speech act, this part introduces and examines related literature and related studies which serve as the scaffold and foundation of this study.

2.1. Pragmatics, Speech Act, Politeness and Refusal

Pragmatics deals with aspects where context must be taken into account (Cruse, 2016). It is defined as the study of the use of language in communication where people try to see the relationship between language and contexts (Levinson, 1983). It is particularly concerned with how people use language in different situations. It also studies how language is employed to realize communicative intentions, which are called speech acts. Speech acts such as requesting, refusing, apologizing, greeting, commanding, thanking, and declaring among others are being performed from time to time and context to context in order to accomplish illocutionary acts. Such acts, inevitably, can cause a pragmatic failure when a speaker does not possess sufficient competence (Thomas, 1983).

Among the different types of speech acts, the act of refusing has been receiving concerns nowadays (Saud, 2019). Refusals, like any speech act, occur in all languages which further frame by cultures. However, not all languages refuse in the same manner nor do they are uniformed in responding to an invitation, request, suggestion, and offer. The speech act of refusal occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says 'no' to a person who realized an initiating act (Al-Eryani, 2007). Moreover, refusal can be a face-threatening act to interlocutors as it contradicts their initiating acts. Thus, there is a need to elevate a speaker and interlocutor's pragmatic competence in order to avoid face-challenges and also to achieve mutual understanding.

More so, such competence resides with the ability of a speaker to employ politeness strategies that satisfy the face-want of his/her interlocutor. Further, realizing politeness in a speech act is categorized into two types: negative and positive strategies. The former strategies are regarded as signs of constraint, formality, and distance, whilst the later strategies are described as expressions of solidarity, closeness, informality, and familiarity (Meier, 1995). With these types, refusal strategies might differ according to the formality of the situation, the gender of the communicative participants, and the social factors between the two interlocutors. One instance of this is refusing an offer from a friend which might be different from refusing an offer from a stranger. Noting that, Suzila and Yusri (2012) asserted that politeness is important for communication since it respects the demands of others' faces. Moreover, although politeness is very important in every cultural setting, it is still varied from context to context. Meier (1995) believes that certain cultures associate politeness with indirectness, whereas others do not. For instance, the Japanese culture is known to associate indirectness with politeness. However, in the American culture or any culture, being polite does not necessarily mean indirectness. Therefore, "politeness can only be judged relative to a particular context and particular addressees' expectations" (Meier, 1995, p. 352). Such fact corroborated the notion that since politeness is being employed in speech acts, then refusing might differ from one context to another.

Furthermore, various studies centralized on different factors affecting refusal speech act have been conducted in order to address face-challenges that impede mutual understanding, and in order to elevate the socio-pragmatic competence of the interlocutors. As a type of directive speech act anchored on the fact that speakers of diverse backgrounds realize it differently, some related studies on it are thematically demonstrated in the following paragraphs.

2.2 Refusal Strategies and Social Factors

Among the numerous studies carried out was the study of Al-Issa (1998) that investigated the refusal strategies employed by Jordanians and Americans. The data were elicited through discourse completion task. The results suggested that both groups of speakers used the indirect strategy of refusal by giving reasons or explanations.

Similarly, Al-Eryani (2007) compared the refusal strategies used by Yemeni EFL learners and American native speakers of English via employing discourse completion task. The findings demonstrated that Yemenis used indirect strategies of refusal by giving reasons or explanations. Meanwhile, Americans frequently used regret as an indirect refusal strategy.

Moreover, Boonkongsaen (2013) cross-culturally studied the refusal strategies employed by Thais and Filipinos. The findings illustrated that, although both groups chose indirect strategies over direct ones, Filipinos were more direct than Thais. The results demonstrated that some cultural values could explain the differences. Hence, the study concluded that Filipinos value equality while Thais value social hierarchy.

Another study was conducted by Kathir (2015). The researcher investigated the patterns of refusal in English used by language academicians at public universities in Malaysia. Fifty academic staff from various educational backgrounds responded a discourse completion test (DCT) and participated interview sessions which were categorized via the taxonomy of refusal provided by Beebe et al. (1990). The findings demonstrated that when it comes to declining an invitation or a request, the participants employ a variety of strategies. Hence, there is a high tendency of participants to conform to indirect manner of refusing while providing their reasons and explanations. Also, it is worth noting that some participants appear to use polite strategies, while others use a more diplomatic approach.

Furthermore, Shishavan and Sharifian (2016) investigated the refusal strategies of Iranian English language learners and Anglo-Australian students to shed light on possible areas of cross-cultural miscommunication. Like the previous studies, the data were gathered via discourse completion test. Focus group interviews were also used to look at the socio-cultural norms that underpin Iranian students' refusals. Both sets of participants utilized more indirect methods when interacting with greater social power addressees. The findings demonstrated that the Iranian students' refusals were heavily influenced by their native language culture.

2.3 Refusal Strategies and Gender

Centered on the relationship of refusal speech act and gender, several studies have been conducted to compare and contrast the employed strategies of male and female speakers.

In 2013, Mohammad, Alizera, and Shirin investigated the refusal strategies of native Persian and English speakers. The study revealed that females were inclined to guilt-trip statements while males used

non-performative statements. The findings indicated that males employed direct strategies when refusing while females utilized those indirect. Moreover, they discovered that there were significant differences in refusing among the participants. Male speakers had more preference to use formulas that relates to unspecific reply and excuse while females used excuse, reason and explanation.

More so, the study conducted by Moaveni (2014) explored the refusal strategies employed by the Americans and international college students as well as gender variations in an American university. The results revealed that all groups tend to employ direct refusal strategies. Moreover, American females preferred expressions of gratitude and stating positive opinions, whereas American males provided reasons and alternatives.

Similarly, in delving into the Iranian EFL intermediate learners' refusal realizations, Hedayatnejad, Malekiand, and Mehrizi (2016) took gender into account. In terms of social factors, they discovered no significant differences between male and female refusal realizations.

Moreover, in the study of Mendoza and Berowa (2017), they investigated the different refusal strategies employed by Filipino ESL learners toward speakers with different accents. They looked into the aspects of social status and gender to determine their influence on the participants' choice of direct and indirect refusal. They found that regardless of gender, most of the participants generally prefer indirect refusal strategies.

In addition, Liu and Qian (2017) investigated the gender differences in the speech act of refusal among Chinese college students. The study aimed to illustrate the refusal strategies preferred by male and female participants and to demonstrate the overall differences between male and female college students when using refusal strategies. The study adopted methods of questionnaire and interview which are patterned with some external factors that influence male and female students' refusal strategy. The findings implicated that both male and female students utilize indirect refusal strategies. Also, they used different refusal strategies when they face different initiating acts. However, female students appeared to be more indirect and polite in a general sense.

Lastly, Balan, Lucero, Salinas, and Quinto (2020) examined the difference between male and female Filipinos' refusal strategies, including a comparison between same-sex and opposite-sex refusals. A total of 150 students from a university in Manila, Philippines, took part in the study by completing an online written discourse completion exam that had been adapted and modified from earlier research. The DCT consists of ten hypothetical scenarios separated into same-sex refusals and opposite-sex refusals. The data were analyzed using a coding system derived from Beebe et al. (1990), which generated keywords for several refusal strategies. The prevalent refusal strategies, regardless of gender, were declaration of remorse, followed by justification, reason, explanation, negative willingness, appreciation, gratitude, and appreciation. Additionally, rather than being blatantly dismissive in refusing, most college students appear to be regretful as well as sympathetic to the inviter or person being interacted with. Female students emphasize politeness which appear less face-threatening while rejecting to communicate successfully, but male college students prefer to be clearer and more straightforward in expressing their rejection as a means of communication.

To generalize the presented related literature and studies, many of those are attempts conducted by foreign researchers that focus on the context of their own culture and language (Beebe et al., 1990; Al-Issa, 1998; Al-Eryani, 2007; etc.). However, in the context of the Philippines, very limited studies have been found (Boonkongsaen, 2013; Mendoza & Berowa, 2017; Balan, et. al., 2020). Such literature scarcity prompted the researchers to initiate this study with a focus on the gender dimension of refusals in the Meranaw context. This motivation is further corroborated by the fact that like in any speech act, the deployment of politeness varies culturally and linguistically. Hence, investigating its patterns among Meranaw university students will fill the apparent scarce of research on refusal speech act in the area of language and gender as well as pragmatics in the Philippines. Also, the study will provide vivid literature of the refusal strategies among Meranaw speakers as there is no existing study, as far as the knowledge of the researchers is concerned, on this context. Lastly, in essence, this study aims to delve into the refusal strategies of the Meranaw speakers and how gender plays a role in deploying those strategies.

METHODS

This section describes and discusses the research design and methodology that the researchers used to accomplish the objectives of this study. This includes the research setting, research participants, instrument of the study, procedure, and methods of data analysis.

Research Design

This investigation is centered on delving into the refusal strategies and the genders' influence in performing refusals. It seeks to demonstrate the patterns of the refusal speech act in the Meranaw context. Hence, this investigation employs a descriptive qualitative research method as it focuses on describing, demonstrating, and substantiating the patterns of the respondents' realizations on the speech act of refusal. Furthermore, the data were collected through a modified written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) patterned from the study of Saud (2019) which is tabulated using frequency and percentage counting.

Research Setting

In this study, the data collection was conducted at a university that is situated in the Islamic City of Marawi, Lanao del Sur. The data elicitation was primarily done through Google Form, Facebook, and Messenger platforms. This method is supported by the Social Media Research Group (2016) which argues that social networking sites' proliferation makes the data easily and quickly accessible which has been considered by analysts and policymakers.

Moreover, the research locale of this study is an academic territory mostly dominated by Muslims particularly Meranaw learners. The university is also known as a home to different learners in Mindanao for its commitment to the integration of Muslims which includes most especially the Meranaw-Muslim and Non-Muslims into mainstream society. Hence, with the prevailing number of Meranaw learners in the university, the researchers believes that this school is a suitable locale for this study.

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study were Meranaw speakers who are students and enrolled in the second semester of the

academic year 2020-2021 at the Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City. The selection was not confined to year level, age, among others, yet as long as the student is speaking the Meranaw language as his/her first language and practicing the Meranaw culture. Hence, these participants may come from the seventeen (17) colleges of the university. Moreover, the Meranaw tribal belongingness of these participants is a cultural minority group of the Philippines that mainly resides in the provinces of Lanao del Sur, Lanao del Norte, and some provinces or big cities in the Philippines (Disoma, 1999; Ulla, 2014).

Instrument of the Study

In this study, a survey questionnaire particularly a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used as the main instrument for the data solicitation. This included pre-written scenarios with a specified context in order to achieve the desired speech act. More so, DCT is a useful data elicitation tool in studies carried out in pragmatics (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Nurani, 2009; Berowa & Mendoza, 2017) as they are easy to administer (Varghese & Billmyer, 1996) and allow the researcher to acquire a large amount of data in a short time (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Berowa, 2020).

This investigation utilized the DCT from the study of Saud (2019) that contains situations that ask respondents to refuse a certain initiating act. Please see *Appendix* for the sample accomplished DCT.

Method of Analysis

To analyze the gathered data, the theoretical frameworks of this study were applied. Firstly, to establish the refusal strategies employed by the participants, the semantic criterion provided by Beebe et al., (1990) was the basis in encoding and classifying the data. Frequency and percentage counting was utilized in presenting and tabulating the results that is detailed below.

P=F/N x 100 where:
P= Percentage
N= Total of Respondents
100= Constant
F= Total Answer

More so, the strategy that got the highest frequency and percentage is inferred as participants' general strategy in realizing the speech act of refusal. Furthermore, in order to identify and to distinguish the refusal strategies employed by the male and female participants, the data were categorized according to the participants' gender using the given taxonomy along with frequency and percentage counting. The analysis is done using the Speech Act Theory as the categorized data have been analyzed into Austin's (1962) three layers of Speech Act and Searle's (1969) Classification of Speech Act. Therewithal, using the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987), the researchers determined which strategies of male and female participants is/are polite/impolite, and which is/are conformed to the theory.

Lastly, after classifying and examining the refusal strategies anchored on the research questions, the data were then descriptively discussed and substantiated in order to draw conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Refusal Strategies

The result shows that respondents employ various strategies as well as combinations of strategies in realizing the speech act of refusals which are detailed and illustrated below.

Table 1

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	f	%
Performatives	0	0
Nonperformatives (NP)	6	1
Statement of Regret (SOR)	0	0
Excuse, Reason, Explanation (ERE)	75	12.5
Statement of Alternative (SOA)	1	0.16
Promise of future acceptance (PFA)	3	0.50
Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (ADI)	33	5.5
Acceptance that functions as a refusal	3	0.50
Adjuncts	2	0.33
Adjuncts + Performative	2	0.33
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE	2	0.33
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE + PFA	2	0.33
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE	1	0.16
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE + PFA	2	0.33
Adjuncts + NP	9	1.50
Adjuncts + NP + SOR	3	0.50
Adjuncts + NP + SOR + ERE	12	2.00
Adjuncts + NP + ERE	14	2.33
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + SOA	1	0.16
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + FPA	3	0.50
Adjuncts + NP + ADI	1	0.16
Adjuncts + NP + PFA	1	0.16
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE	26	4.33
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE + PFA	1	0.16
Adjuncts + Wish + ERE	2	0.33
Adjuncts + ERE	147	24.50
Adjuncts + ERE + PFA	3	0.50
Adjuncts + PFA	3	0.50
Adjuncts + ADI	3	0.50
Perfrormative + ERE	3	0.50
Performative + ADI	2	0.33
Performative + SOR + ERE	1	0.16
NP + SOR	5	0.83
NP + SOR + ERE	25	4.16
NP + ERE	47	7.80

NP + ERE + ADI	1	0.16
NP + ADI	6	1.00
SOR + ERE	137	22.83
SOR + ERE + SOA	1	0.16
SOR + PFA	1	0.16
ERE + PFA	7	1.16
ERE + ADI	3	0.50
TOTAL	**600**	**100**

As evident in the table above, there is an overwhelming and strong preference among Meranaw students toward the use of indirect strategies such as the use of adjuncts, excuses, explanations, and reasons in realizing the refusal speech act. Specifically, 24.50% of them employ excuse, reason, and explanation with adjuncts when they refuse initiating acts. Also, 22.83% of them employ statements of regret such as "I am sorry" and excuse, reason, and explanation when they refuse initiating acts. Further, 12.5% of them also employ excuse, reason, and explanation alone when they refuse initiating acts.

Such results clearly indicate that Meranaw speakers utilize adjuncts, excuses, reasons, and explanations which indirectly refuse an interlocutor that mitigate the impositions and face risk coming from them and save their faces as well. Other than adjuncts and explanations or reasons, they also show their regrets in refusing an act by directly uttering apologizing words. More so, with the overwhelming number of strategies employed by the Meranaw speakers, it can be safely assumed that more deployment of strategies in a linguistic exchange is a manifestation of politeness as they further strengthen their locutionary acts with adjuncts, excuses, explanations, reasons, statements of regret, and dissuading utterances.

Moreover, these findings coincide with the study of Al-Issa (1998), Al-Eryani (2007), Boonkongsaen (2013), Mohammad et al. (2013), AKathir (2015),

Shishavan and Sharifian (2016), Liu and Qian (2017), Mendoza and Berowa (2017), and Balan et al. (2020) where indirect strategies are found to be the prevailing strategies in their own culture and language, and consequently contradicts Moaveni's (2014) findings which confirms that, indeed, strategies are framed context to context. As such, with the support of these studies, the results may imply that what is polite in the Meranaw culture with regards refusing is to be indirect and to utilize many strategies in a communicative event. Hence, the more indirect speakers toward refusing, the more they value the reaction and acceptance of their interlocutor which is a manifestation of preserving an interlocutor's face.

Furthermore, the result is also conformed to the three facets of speech act theorized by Austin (1962). The utterances of refusal is the production of the speech act known as the locutionary act while the act performed in refusing with the intention of expressing declination to an initiating act makes the illocutionary act. Finally, the effect of the action realized by the speakers who refuse an initiating act makes the perlocutionary act. Thus, the speech act of refusals among Meranaw university students corroborates the notion that this type of speech act is mainly composed of the three facets. More so, the findings also provide more elaboration on the notion that the speech act of refusals falls on the directive anchored on the theory of illocutionary classification provided by Searle (1969). This is

directive because the speakers utter refusals to express their declination or unwillingness to an initiating act that can potentially damage the face of an interlocutor or severe their faces as well.

The Differences between Male and Female Participants in Refusing:
Requests

The frequencies and percentages of the refusal strategies employed by the male and female respondents toward requests were presented and computed as reflected below.

Table 2

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	F		M	
	f	**%**	**f**	**%**
Performatives	0	0	0	0
Nonperformatives (NP)	1	1.28	1	1.38
Statement of Regret (SOR)	0	0	0	0
Excuse, Reason, Explanation (ERE)	15	19.2	14	19.44
Statement of Alternative (SOA)	0	0	0	0
Promise of future acceptance (PFA)	0	0	1	1.38
Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (ADI)	0	0	0	0
Acceptance that functions as a refusal	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE + PFA	0	0	5	6.94
Adjuncts + NP	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + SOR	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + SOR + ERE	2	2.56	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + SOA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + FPA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ADI	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE	2	2.56	0	0
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Wish + ERE	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + ERE	2	2.56	4	5.55
Adjuncts + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + ADI	0	0	0	0
Perfrormative + ERE	1	1.28	0	0
Performative + ADI	0	0	0	0
Performative + SOR + ERE	1	1.28	0	0
NP + SOR	1	1.28	0	0

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	f	%	f	%
NP + SOR + ERE	12	15.38	0	0
NP + ERE	13	16.66	4	5.55
NP + ERE + ADI	0	0	0	0
NP + ADI	0	0	0	0
SOR + ERE	26	33.33	43	59.72
SOR + ERE + SOA	0	0	0	0
SOR + PFA	0	0	0	0
ERE + PFA	1	1.28	0	0
ERE + ADI	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**78**	**100**	**72**	**100**

As evident in the table above, there is an overwhelming and strong preference among male and female Meranaw university students toward the use of statements of regrets plus excuses, explanations, and reasons which are fallen to indirect strategies. Specifically, 33.33% of the females and 59.72% of the males employ the said strategies in refusing a request act which may imply that males are a little bit more apologetic than females. Moreover, males and females similarly employ excuse, reason, explanation strategy in refusing a request which may imply that Meranaw people tend to explain and defend themselves why they had to refuse a request from an interlocutor. Hence, explaining one's action or decision toward an act is one way to save one's face or the face of an interlocutor.

Furthermore, these results coincide with the findings of Mendoza and Berowa (2017) in which regardless of gender, Filipino students prefer indirect refusal strategies. Also, the findings corroborate the study of Mohammad et al. (2013) who found out that both genders employ excuses, reasons, and explanations in framing their refusal strategies. With that, this study further strengthen the notion that gender is not really a confining factor in order to be polite in refusing a request as everyone can resort to any politeness strategies in dealing with face-threatening speech acts.

Invitations

The frequencies and percentages of the refusal strategies employed by the male and female respondents toward invitations were presented and computed as reflected below.

Table 3

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	F		M	
	f	%	f	%
Performatives	0	0	0	0
Nonperformatives (NP)	1	1.28	1	1.38
Statement of Regret (SOR)	0	0	0	0
Excuse, Reason, Explanation (ERE)	4	5.12	7	9.72
Statement of Alternative (SOA)	0	0	0	0
Promise of future acceptance (PFA)	0	0	2	2.77

Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (ADI)	0	0	0	0
Acceptance that functions as a refusal	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE + PFA	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE + PFA	2	2.56	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP	2	2.56	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP + SOR	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + SOR + ERE	7	8.97	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + SOA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + FPA	2	2.56	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ADI	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + PFA	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE	3	3.84	5	6.94
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE + PFA	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + Wish + ERE	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + ERE	15	19.23	18	25
Adjuncts + ERE + PFA	2	2.56	1	1.38
Adjuncts + PFA	1	1.28	1	1.38
Adjuncts + ADI	0	0	0	0
Perfrormative + ERE	0	0	0	0
Performative + ADI	0	0	0	0
Performative + SOR + ERE	0	0	0	0
NP + SOR	2	2.56	1	1.38
NP + SOR + ERE	7	8.97	0	0
NP + ERE	6	7.69	2	2.77
NP + ERE + ADI	0	0	0	0
NP + ADI	0	0	0	0
SOR + ERE	14	17.94	29	40.27
SOR + ERE + SOA	1	1.28	0	0
SOR + PFA	0	0	1	1.38
ERE + PFA	3	3.84	1	1.38
ERE + ADI	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**78**	**100**	**72**	**100**

As evident in the table above, there is an overwhelming and strong preference among male respondents toward the use of statements of regret plus excuses, explanations, and reasons with a percentage of 40.27; while females mostly used adjuncts plus excuses, reasons, and explanations with a percentage of 19.23. Such diverse and dominant strategies employed by the two genders tend to suggest that males express their regrets why they had to refuse an invitation and substantiate it with an explanation, or an excuse, or a reason which may imply that

they are more apologetic than females. Females, on the other hand, tend to use adjuncts, explanation, excuse, and reason in framing a refusal act toward an invitation which may suggest that they are more appreciative than men. This means that females recognize the essence of invitation before giving out a reason, or an explanation, or an excuse; while males tend to acknowledge first the face of an interlocutor that may demand an apology.

Moreover, with these results, the study conforms to Balan et al. (2020)

findings. This suggests that Filipino people, including Meranaws, are mostly indirect in dealing with invitations regardless of their gender. This also implies that being indirect during a communicative event is being polite to your interlocutor. Lastly, with the emphasis of statements of regret for males and adjuncts for females, Meranaw speakers of both genders also utilize the combinations of them which suggest that there is no strong dichotomy of language and gender in framing a refusal act.

Offers

The frequencies and percentages of the refusal strategies employed by the male and female respondents toward offers were

presented and computed as reflected below.

Table 4

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	F		M	
	f	%	f	%
Performatives	0	0	0	0
Nonperformatives (NP)	0	0	0	0
Statement of Regret (SOR)	0	0	0	0
Excuse, Reason, Explanation (ERE)	3	3.84	7	9.72
Statement of Alternative (SOA)	0	0	1	1.38
Promise of future acceptance (PFA)	0	0	0	0
Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (ADI)	15	19.23	16	22.22
Acceptance that functions as a refusal	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + Performative	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE + PFA	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP	0	0	5	6.94
Adjuncts + NP + SOR	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + SOR + ERE	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP + ERE	8	10.25	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + SOA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + FPA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ADI	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE	4	5.12	3	4.16
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Wish + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + ERE	22	28.20	28	38.88

Adjuncts + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + ADI	2	2.56	0	0
Perfrormative + ERE	2	2.56	0	0
Performative + ADI	1	1.28	0	0
Performative + SOR + ERE	0	0	0	0
NP + SOR	1	1.28	0	0
NP + SOR + ERE	0	0	0	0
NP + ERE	5	6.41	3	4.16
NP + ERE + ADI	1	1.28	0	0
NP + ADI	1	1.28	0	0
SOR + ERE	7	8.97	4	5.55
SOR + ERE + SOA	0	0	0	0
SOR + PFA	0	0	0	0
ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
ERE + ADI	2	2.56	0	0
TOTAL	**78**	**100**	**72**	**100**

As evident in the table above, there is an overwhelming and strong preference among male and female Meranaw students toward the use of adjuncts plus excuses, explanations, and reasons which are fallen to indirect strategies. Specifically, 28.20% of the females and 38.88% of the males employ the said strategies in refusing an offer which may imply that Meranaw males and females tend to primarily express gratitude and appreciation than to apologize for their declination to offers coming from their interlocutors. Moreover, males and females similarly employ attempt to dissuade interlocutor strategy in refusing an offer which may suggest that such strategy is a form of politeness.

Further, the result of the use of adjuncts suggests that some of the participants are fair enough communicative competent as they are able to utilize their resources in both showing appreciation and declination to an interlocutor. Also, the overwhelming number of adjuncts in the combined strategies implies that Meranaw people use many resources in expressing politeness.

Suggestions

The frequencies and percentages of the refusal strategies employed by the male and female respondents toward suggestions were presented and computed as reflected below.

Table 5

REFUSAL STRATEGIES	F		M	
	f	%	f	%
Performatives	0	0	0	0
Nonperformatives (NP)	2	2.56	0	0
Statement of Regret (SOR)	0	0	0	0

Excuse, Reason, Explanation (ERE)	6	7.69	19	26.38
Statement of Alternative (SOA)	0	0	0	0
Promise of future acceptance (PFA)	0	0	0	0
Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (ADI)	2	2.56	0	0
Acceptance that functions as a refusal	2	2.56	0	0
Adjuncts	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + Performative	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + ERE + PFA	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Performative + SOR + ERE + PFA	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + SOR	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + SOR + ERE	0	0	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP + ERE	5	6.41	1	1.38
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + SOA	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ERE + FPA	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + ADI	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + NP + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE	5	6.41	4	5.55
Adjuncts + SOR + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + Wish + ERE	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + ERE	27	34.61	31	43.05
Adjuncts + ERE + PFA	0	0	0	0
Adjuncts + PFA	1	1.28	0	0
Adjuncts + ADI	1	1.28	0	0
Perfrormative + ERE	0	0	0	0
Performative + ADI	1	1.28	0	0
Performative + SOR + ERE	0	0	0	0
NP + SOR	0	0	0	0
NP + SOR + ERE	5	6.41	1	1.38
NP + ERE	4	5.12	7	9.72
NP + ERE + ADI	0	0	0	0
NP + ADI	0	0	0	0
SOR + ERE	10	12.82	4	5.55
SOR + ERE + SOA	0	0	0	0
SOR + PFA	0	0	0	0
ERE + PFA	1	1.28	1	1.38
ERE + ADI	1	1.28	0	0
TOTAL	**78**	**100**	**72**	**100**

As evident in the table above, there is a strong preference among male and female Meranaw students toward the use of adjuncts plus excuses, explanations, and reasons which are fallen to indirect strategies. Specifically, 34.61% of the females and 43.05% of the males employ the said strategies in refusing a suggestion

which may imply that Meranaw males and females tend to recognize the worth of a suggestion before declining it. Moreover, some male participants tend also to give explanations, reasons, and excuses alone when they refuse a suggestion that may imply that they had to defend themselves first why they had to refuse such initiating act which is a strategy to maintain their faces.

Furthermore, these results suggest that there are no strong pieces of evidence that prove the language dichotomy of males and females in terms of refusing suggestions which may entail that such concept is not really occurring. This strongly coincides with the findings of Hedayatnejad et al. (2016) who discovered that male and female communicative participants do not realize refusals differently. Therefore, the findings of this study stand with the notion that gender is not a factor to be polite in framing refusals to a certain group of people such as among Meranaws.

CONCLUSIONS

This study illustrates the patterns of refusal speech act among Meranaw students in Southern Philippines. It argues that gender does not necessarily play a pivotal role in shaping a refusal speech act, however, it is noted that females and males differ in dealing with invitations whereas the former use adjuncts to show appreciation while the latter employ statement of regrets to solely protect the face. These strategies are very indirect that tend to preserve and maintain the faces of the communicative participants. Such a behavior suggests that Meranaw people seem to acknowledge the universal notion of face in human society which is the need to protect and to maintain the face of speakers and interlocutors in any linguistic interactions.

Thus, the refusal strategy they employed reveals the importance in understanding the socially and widely accepted norm of a group of people in order to establish a harmonious relationship regardless of gender. The preservation of one's *face*, or what Meranaws in the Philippines consider as *Maratabat*, is greatly desired. The findings of this study can provide a baseline or reference in evaluating good redesigned reading and learning materials by taking all of the new findings into account such as incorporate them into the Philippines' curriculum or educational system in order to elevate learners' communicative and socio-pragmatic competence and to achieve intercultural understanding.

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APPENDIX
Samples of Accomplished DCT

Speech Act of Refusal

Dear Respondent,

Assalaamu' Alaykom Warahmatullahi Wa Barakatoho!
Warmest greetings of peace and prosperity!

I, the undersigned name, is specializing BA English Language Studies at the Mindanao State University Main Campus. I am presently conducting a study about the speech act of refusal as a partial fulfillment of our requirements in ENG 128 (Language and Gender).

Anent to that, I would like to invite you to answer my survey questionnaire at your most convenient time. I believe that all your knowledge about the subject matter is beneficial for the completion of this endeavor.

Rest assured that the information gathered will be held in strict confidentiality.

Thank you.

Respectfully yours,

Juhaid H. H.Abbas
Researcher

Noted by:

Dr. Annie Mae M. Berowa
Research Instructor

Personal Information

Sex *

◯ Male

◉ Female

Ethnicity *

Meranao

First Language *

Meranao

Speech Act of Refusal

Instruction: The following is a questionnaire about refusal strategies. Please provide as much information as possible based on your experiences in daily life. Imagine yourself in the situations given and write in the space provided exactly what you would say in real life.

1. You are a university student. Your friend needs to do a presentation using his/her laptop. He/she accidently drops it and needs to borrow one. She/he comes to you asking to borrow yours. You refuse his/her request by saying: *

I'm so sorry, I'm doing my homework now but don't worry, you can borrow it later once I'm done.

2. You are a university lecturer and the head of your department requests you to stay late at the office and finish your work before leaving. You refuse his/her request by saying: *

I may not be able to stay late because of some important matters at home.

3. You are a lecturer at the university. You have some useful books that can help your students finish their projects. One of them requests borrowing one of the books. You refuse his/her request by saying: *

I cannot lend you this but you can buy this one at the bookstore.

4. Your friend invites you and his/her other old friends to his/her house for dinner. You refuse his/her invitation by saying: *

My apologies, but my mom won't allow me to stay late in other houses.

5. You are a lecturer at a college. Your dean invites all of the faculty members for lunch. You refuse his/her invitation by saying: *

I can't because I still need to finish my works. You can eat your lunch without me.

6. You are the manager of a store. One of your employees invites you to his/her wedding party. You refuse his/her invitation by saying: *

I'm sorry, I have an important errand to attend on the same date but advance congratulation on your wedding day.

7. You are at a friend's house for dinner. Your friend offers you a pie. You refuse his/her offer by saying: *

I don't eat pie but drinks will do

8. You work at a company and your manager offers you to work overtime for good pay. You refuse his/her offer by saying: *

I can't do it today but if there will be another opportunity comes, I'll take the offer.

9. Your cottage mate damaged one of your expensive dresses. He/she insists on paying for it. You refuse his/her offer by saying: *

No need, I still have an extra clothes here. I know that you have no intention of damaging it so no need to pay for it .

10. You are a college student. You live far away from your college and every day you miss the first lecture. Your friend suggests to you to move near to the college. You refuse his/her suggestion by saying: *

that's a very good suggestion but I can't do it. I have my reason why I can't move near the college.

11. You are a good at writing poems. Your teacher suggests to you to specialize in English literature. You refuse his/her suggestion by saying: *

I can't because I have no interest in that field.

12. You are a university lecturer. You call the secretary to make an appointment to meet the dean tomorrow. He/she suggests coming and meeting the dean now because of his/her busy schedule tomorrow. You refuse his/her suggestion by saying: *

I'm so sorry ma'am but I have so much work to do but we can move our meeting the next day if you have a busy schedule tomorrow.

This form was created inside of Mindanao State University - Main Campus.

Ethnicity *

Meranao

First Language *

maranao

Speech Act of Refusal

Instruction: The following is a questionnaire about refusal strategies. Please provide as much information as possible based on your experiences in daily life. Imagine yourself in the situations given and write in the space provided exactly what you would say in real life.

1. You are a university student. Your friend needs to do a presentation using his/her laptop. He/she accidently drops it and needs to borrow one. She/he comes to you asking to borrow yours. You refuse his/her request by saying: *

I'm sorry. I'll use it later, I'm saving a battery for my next presentation.

2. You are a university lecturer and the head of your department requests you to stay late at the office and finish your work before leaving. You refuse his/her request by saying: *

sorry ma'am, I refused your request, I'll just do my paper works at home.

3. You are a lecturer at the university. You have some useful books that can help your students finish their projects. One of them requests borrowing one of the books. You refuse his/her request by saying: *

Sorry, I can't lend you a book. you need to do research so you can learn more about your project.

4. Your friend invites you and his/her other old friends to his/her house for dinner. You refuse his/her invitation by saying: *

I'm sorry because I have a lot of paperwork, and I'm not very close to those with you.

5. You are a lecturer at a college. Your dean invites all of the faculty members for lunch. You refuse his/her invitation by saying: *

I'm sorry because I have a lot of paperwork, and I have a class.

6. You are the manager of a store. One of your employees invites you to his/her wedding party. You refuse his/her invitation by saying: *

I'm sorry I can't go. I need to be in the store, I need to monitor our sales because the income has dropped a bit.

7. You are at a friend's house for dinner. Your friend offers you a pie. You refuse his/her offer by saying: *

Thank you, im still full.

8. You work at a company and your manager offers you to work overtime for good pay. You refuse his/her offer by saying: *

I'm sorry, my health is more important. I am satisfied with the salary you are giving me.

9. Your cottage mate damaged one of your expensive dresses. He/she insists on paying for it. You refuse his/her offer by saying: *

It's okay, it's just a dress. I can still buy clothes like that, you need that money more. just be careful next time.

10. You are a college student. You live far away from your college and every day you miss the first lecture. Your friend suggests to you to move near to the college. You refuse his/her suggestion by saying: *

Thanks for your suggestion but i think can save more if I live safer with my parents.

11. You are a good at writing poems. Your teacher suggests to you to specialize in English literature. You refuse his/her suggestion by saying: *

thank you maam. I appreciate it. I'm just writing a poem but I'm not very interested in English literature.

12. You are a university lecturer. You call the secretary to make an appointment to meet the dean tomorrow. He/she suggests coming and meeting the dean now because of his/her busy schedule tomorrow. You refuse his/her suggestion by saying: *

thank you for your suggestion, but we'll just meet when he's not busy anymore. I have a class tomorrow.

This form was created inside of Mindanao State University - Main Campus.