POLITENESS IN EFL REFUSALS: THE COMPARISON BETWEEN INDONESIAN AND THAI LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract-It is generally understood that when speakers use politeness, they wish to establish good relationships with the others or they use politeness to maintain social harmony. The present paper reported the application of politeness used by two groups of speakers: Indonesian learners of English (*n*=15) and Thai learners of English (*n*=15). The data of refusals were elicited through discourse completion tasks (DCT) involving six social situations. Whilst the two groups used approximately similar refusal strategies, they used different strategies of politeness.

Keywords: politeness, refusals, face threatening acts, EFL learners

I. INTRODUCTION

Brown and Levinson (1987) affirmed that every act is a face-threatening act (FTA) that intrinsically threatens positive and negative face of speakers and hearers. *Negative face* constitutesthe individual's need for privacy, personal preserves, and rights to non-distraction, for example freedom of action and freedom from imposition, and *positive face* isthe desire that one's self-image is appreciated and approved. For example complaints, disagreements, and criticisms threaten other interlocutors or hearers' positive face, while requests, orders, and commands threaten hearers' negative face. Therefore, in every interpersonal interaction,collocutors have tocooperate so as to maintain the negative and positive face, and everyone's face depends on everyone else's is being maintained. In interpersonal interactions, face can be lost, maintained, and enhanced. Due the reasons, Brown and Levinsonrecommended that people should employ politeness strategies to main both positive and negative face. Through politeness strategies people can collaborate to establish mutual understanding. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.1) averred: "politeness, like formal diplomatic protocol (for which it must surely be the model), presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties." In the same line, Leech (1983, p. 82) maintained that politeness is employed "to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place." Therefore it is generally understood that when speakers use politeness, they wish to establish good relationships with the others or they use politeness to maintain social harmony.

The speech act of refusal is the one that belongs to the category of 'commissives' in Searle's classification of illocutionary acts (1976). Commissives are types of speech acts in which speakers commit themselves to some future actions. Considered as a face-threatening act, a refusal could threaten negative face of addressees as it requests them to refrain from conducting future acts, and it may also coerce their positive face as it constitutes rejections (Barron, 2007). Although refusals are common speech acts in every culture, they are not always easy to deploy, particularly by non-native speakers or foreign language learners. Refusals are considered as "a sticking point" in cross-cultural communication (Beebe, Takahashi, &Uliss-Weltz, 1990).

The study reported here relates to the applications of politeness in EFL refusals by two groups of speakers with approximately similar cultural background: Indonesian learners of English and Thai learners of English. The two groups, belonging to the East cultural groups, are characterized as indirect and polite. The present study explores whether the two groups use similar politeness strategies when realizing refusals in EFL.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Politeness: Face Saving Strategies
As stated above that almost all speech acts are intrinsically face threating acts (FTA) that threaten positive and negative face of speaker and hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In everyday social interaction, people calibrate the strength of face threatening act (FTA) through three aspects namely; power (P), social distance (D) and degree of imposition (R). To do the FTA, people have to employ face-saving strategies that are considered as super strategies by Brown andLevinson (1987) including bald on record, positive politeness, negative politeness, off record, and don't do FTA. *Bald on record* means that speakers do the FTA with maximum efficiency more than they want to satisfy the hearers' face. Bald on record is used in urgent situations when maximum efficiency is very important (e.g., *Help!, Watch out!*); when the speakers' want to satisfy the

hearers' face is small; when speakers care about hearers (e.g., *Careful! He's dangerous men)*, and when granting permission for the hearers.

Positive politeness is directed to redress the addressees' positive face. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed the following strategies to maintain positive face. (1)Noticing/attending to the hearers' want. Through this strategy the speaker gives attentions/care/need to the hearers. (2) Exaggerating interest/approval: speakers use utterances by exaggerating interest/approvals to make the hearers feel good. (3) Intensify interest. (4) Using in group identity markers, for example luv, babe, buddy, honey, dear, sister, sweetheart, guys, etc. (5) Seekingagreements that is, agreeing with the addressees' statements. (6) Avoiding disagreements by which thespeakers give signalling agreementsto the hearers, such as say 'yes', 'it's okay', 'I think so'. (7) Presupposing/asserting common ground. (8) Making jokes. (9) Asserting knowledge of the hearers' wants. (10) Offering/promising.(11)Showing optimism. (12) Including speakers and hearers in the activity. Through this strategy speakers use the pronoun 'we' or 'our' and avoid pronoun 'you' or 'I'. (13) Giving reasons. By giving reasons, hearers can understand speakers' position or reasons why they do FTA. (14) Assuming or asserting reciprocity in which speakers exchangetheir needs with the hearers' wants. (15) Giving gifts to hearers, that is giving hearers sympathy, gratitude, understanding and cooperation.

*Negative politeness*constitutes communicative strategies to maintain the negative face of other collocutors. The following are Brown and Levinson's (1987) strategies. (1) Being conventionally indirect. (2) Questioning, hedging. The speakers assume that the hearers cannot always comply with the speakers' wants. (3)Showing pessimismby which speakers assume that the hearers are unlikely to be willing/ able to do any act. (4) Minimizing imposition in which the speakers try to minimize the imposition to the hearers. (5)Giving deferenceby whichspeakers acknowledge the social status of the hearers. This can be achievedthrough the use of address terms, for example <u>Sir</u>, madam, <u>Mr,</u> and the like. (6) Apologizing. The speakers use apologies such as admitting impingements, indicating reluctance or begging for forgiveness. (7) Impersonalizing, that is the speakersdo not mention the hearers' names/ identity. For example the speakers can use the word 'it' or not mentioning the hearers. (8) Stating the imposition as a general rule regulation or obligation. (9) Nominalizing the expression: the speakers produce FTAsin the form of nominal phrases. (10)Going on record as incurring a debt or as not indebting hearer.

*Off record politeness*that is communicative strategies in which the speakersdonot directly express intentions. Off record include the following strategies: giving hints and association clues, presupposing, understating and overstating, using tautologies,

contradicting facts, being ironic, using metaphors, using rhetorical questions, being ambiguous or vague, overgeneralizing, displacing hearers, being incomplete, and using ellipsis. When FTA is very great, the speakers are recommended not to do it, or don't do FTA.

B. Refusal Responses

Refusals commonly come as the second pair of conversation turns in response to initiating acts such as a request, invitation, offer, or suggestion. As planning in the second pair part is usually limited and the possible responses are varied, refusals are more challenging than acts which initiate interactional structure (Gass&Houck, 1999, p.2). Barron (2007, p.130) averred that a refusal threatens negative face wants since it requests addressees to refrain from doing a future act and it also coerces positive face as it may be taken as a rejection. It is considered as "ungenerous" act (Leech, 1983), since it maximizes the benefit of self rather than others. Brown and Levinson (1987, p.66) claimed that refusal is an act which disregards the positive face of addressees.

Rubin (1983, p.12-13) classified refusal responses which were proposed as universal strategies, for example (1) be silent, hesitate, show a lack of enthusiasm, (2) offer an alternative, (3) postponement, (4) put the blame on a third party or something over which you have no control, (5) avoidance, (6) general acceptance of an offer but giving no details, (7) divert and distract the addressee, (8) general acceptance with excuses, and (9) say what is offered is inappropriate. Rubin's (1983) taxonomy has provided a fundamental concept for the most seminal refusal strategies proposed by Bebee, et al. (1990). Beebe et al. categorize refusal strategies regarding the degree of directness of refusals, which are based mainly on a cross-cultural study of refusal strategies employed by native speakers of Japanese, Japanese speakers of English and Americans as native speakers of English. The strategies include two broad categories: direct and indirect in which refusal responses are segmented into *semantic formulae*: utterances to perform refusals and *adjuncts* to refusals: remarks which by themselves do not express refusals but they go with semantic formulae to provide particular effects to the given refusals. A direct strategy consists of either:

(1) A performative refusal (e.g. 'I refuse')
(2) A non-performative statement expressing negative willingness or inability and No directly (e.g. 'I can't', 'I don't think so, 'No').

An indirect strategy is expressed by means of one or more semantic formulae, of which the following are the most common types:

(1) Apology/regret. (e.g. 'I'm sorry ...', 'I feel terrible ...'etc.)

(2) Wish. It is conducted by wishing that an interlocutor could do something. (e.g. 'I wish I could go to your party')

(3) Excuse, reason, explanationfor not complying. (e.g. 'My children will be home that night'; 'I have a headache')

(4) Statement (offer or suggestion) of an alternative. (e.g. I can do X instead of Y, e.g. 'I'd rather ...', 'I'd prefer ...'; Why don't youdo X instead of Y, e. g., 'Why don't youask someoneelse?')

(5) Set conditions for future acceptance. It is performed by providing a condition over the acceptance of an invitation, offer, andsuggestion. (e.g. 'if I am not busy, I will..; if you asked me earlier, I would have...')

(6) Promise of future acceptance. (e.g. 'I'll do it next time')

(7) Statement of principle. It is a statement of an interlocutor's standard rule of personal conduct (e.g. 'I never do business with friends')

(8) Statement of philosophy. It is a statement of a personal outlook or view point (e.g.
'One can't be too careful; things break any way; this kind of things happen')

(9) Attempt to dissuade interlocutor with some strategies such as stating negative consequences to the requester (e.g. ' I won't be any fun tonight.') or a guilt trip (e.g. 'I can't make a living off people who justorder coffee' said by waitress to a customerwho wants to sit a while) or a criticism of the request or the requester (e.g. 'that's a terrible idea'.) or a request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding therequest or letting off the hook (e.g. 'that's okay') or a self-defense (e.g. 'I'm doing my best'.)

(10) Acceptance that functions as a refusal. Instead of refusing at first hand, interlocutors initiate their refusals by giving an acceptance to the invitation, offer and suggestion. (e.g. 'yes, but…; Ok I willbut…; alright I would go, but..')

(11) Avoidance: This may be expressed by means of a verbal act (such as changing the subject, joking, or hedging),or by means of a non-verbal act (such as silence, hesitation, or physical departure). In addition, Beebe et al. (1990) identify four adjuncts that might be added to either of the two basic strategies:

(1) Positive opinion/feeling/agreement (e.g. 'that's a good idea/ I'd love to…')

(2) Empathy (e.g. 'I realize you are in a difficult situation')

(3) Fillers (e.g. 'uhh', 'well', 'oh', 'uhm')

(4) Gratitude/appreciation (e.g. 'thanks')

The taxonomy proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) has been considered as the most developed categorization, which covers general responses to four different initiating acts: requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions provided by three groups of speakers from two different cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, changes and additional categories to the taxonomy have been made to comply with the need for scrutinizing wider refusal data taken with different data elicitation techniques and from a wider situational context of refusals across cultures. For example some refusal responses are added by Gass and Houck (1999): (1) confirmation in which refusers restate or elaborate their previous refusal responses (2) request for clarification that is used by refusers as a verbal avoidance, and (3) agreement that is used by refusers when they are finally unable to refuse. It was also added by Kwon (2004) with some other strategies. For example passive negative willingness, saying I tries/considered, statements of solidarity, elaboration on the reasons, statements of relinquishment, and asking questions.

A recent modification of Beebe's et al. (1990) taxonomy is that of Campillo (2009). Following Beebe et al. (1990), the author classifies refusal strategies into direct and indirect strategies along with adjuncts of refusals. The direct strategy consists of bluntness (e.g. 'No' and 'I refuse') which reformulates the 'direct No' strategy of Beebe et al. and the negation of proposition (e.g. 'I don't think so/I can't') which is the original conception of unwillingness/inability strategy of Beebe et al. In indirect strategy, Campillo retains some of Beebe's et al. semantic formulae, for example reason/explanation, regret/apology, principle and philosophy.The last two semantic formulae are subsumed into a single category as a strategy of principle/philosophy.The additional formulae proposed by Campillo in indirect strategies are plain indirect formulae (e.g., 'it looks like I won't be able to go') and disagreement/criticism/dissuasion which is under the same classification of dissuasion of Beebe's et al. Change option (e.g. 'I would join you if you choose another restaurant') and change time ('I can't go right now, but I could next week') are proposed as sub-categories of alternatives of Beebe et al. As for adjuncts to refusals, Campillo retains some of Beebe et al.'s classification, for example positive opinion/feeling/agreement, although it is broken up by Campillo into three categories of adjunct that function separately: positive opinion (e.g. 'this is a great idea, but...'), willingness (e.g. 'I would love to go but...'), and agreement (e.g. 'fine, but…'). Beebe's et al. statement of empathy is reclassified as solidarity/empathy (e.g. 'I am sure you will understand but…'), while Beebe et al.'s gratitude/appreciation is classified by Campillo similarly.

Refusal strategies have been studies by a number ofscholars (e.g.,Amarien, 2008; Al-Shboul, Maros, &MohdYasin, 2014; Gol, 2013; Sahragrad&Javanmardi, 2011; Sahin, 2011; Umale, 2008; Wijayanto, 2011; Wannaruk, 2008; Yamagasira, 2001).Amarien (2008) compared refusals by Indonesian speakers speaking English (ISSE), Indonesian speakers speaking Indonesian (ISSI), and Australian speakers speaking English (ASSE). The results of

the study showed that the Indonesian groups tended to express their refusals in relatively indirect manner in order to avoid offending the interlocutor. When refusing invitations, ISSI used adjuncts and reasons the most often, and they frequently used gratitude when refusing offers. By contrast direct refusals to offers were preferred by ASSE than ISSE and ISSI. In their indirect refusals to offers, male ISSE preferred short expressions to dissuade interlocutors. In contrast, female ISSE preferred more elaborated explanations to mitigate their refusals. When refusing requests however, ISSE used more direct refusals than did ISSI and ASSE. The direct refusals used by ISSE in refusing requests were not likely to cause misunderstanding or offence because adjuncts were selected as the next preferred strategy, followed by reasons, which were selected in similar portion.

Al-Shboul, Maros, and MohdYasin (2014) compared refusals in English done by Jordanian English as Foreign Language (JEFL) and Malay English as a Second Language (MESL). The data were analysed in term of semantic formula sequences based on the classification of refusal strategies proposed by Beebe et al. (1990).As reported that excuses, reasons, explanations were the most frequent strategies used by the participants. All Jordanian participants used the strategies when refusing an invitation made by a person of higher status. Statements of regret were the second strategy mostlyused by JEFL and denying was the third strategy frequently used. Like JFL, MESL used excuses, reasons, explanations, statements of regret and denials, and gratitude. Whilst both groups used similar strategies, MESL's refusals were longer than that of JEFL. The main differences between two groups were that JEFL at all social status employed indirect strategies more often than did MESL.

Gol(2013) compared refusals used between Iranian ESL learners and native speakers of English. The data were gathered viarole playsinvolving requests, suggestions, invitations, and offers. Each situation was based on two social variables, relative power and social distance. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the ESL learners and English native speakers in their production of refusals. The researcher concluded that the language learners' refusals were much more native-like refusal strategies.

Saragard and Javanmardi (2011) investigated the similarities and differences of refusals in English made by Iranian EFL learners. The aim of the study was to examine strategies used by the learnersto refuse requests, invitations, and offers, influences of speakers' different gender on refusal strategies, and whether levels of education have some effects on the refusal strategies. DCT was used to collect the data, consisting 12 situations relating to refusals to requests, invitations, and offers. The results showed thatthe most common strategy to refuse invitations was the use of regrets followed by excuses or reasons. Regarding offers, many used gratitude along with

excuses or reasons. Concerning requests, they used explanations commonly followed by expressions of regret. Nevertheless, regarding gender differences, the results were inconclusive due to limited number of participants. Levels of education marginally influenced refusal strategies.

Sahin (2011) examined refusal strategies used by American English (AE), Turkish (TUR) and Turkish Learners of English (TRE). The goal of the study was to uncover the refusal strategies deployed by AE, TUR and TRE in conversations between equals and to uncover whether the learners displayed pragmatic transfer in their refusal strategies. The data were collected from three different groups using Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT), whichwere developed out of the situations in a TV serial. The results of the study showed that refusals wereculturally specific and they differed both cross-culturally and intra-culturally. The findings also revealed that TRE often produced pragmatically appropriate refusals corresponding to that of AE.

Umale (2008) compared refusal strategies used by British and Omani interlocutors. To elicit the data, the researcher adopted the DCTs modelled on Beebe et al. (1990). Umaledesigned the DCT scenarios in which participants had to refuse persons with different status levels (equal, lower and higher). The study found that the Omani interlocutors used more direct strategies than did the Britishnative speakers when refusing offers. Both groups used more or less similarstrategies when refusing requests, especially to higher status people. When refusing invitations, Omani speakers used more indirect strategies. They showed consideration of interlocutor's feelings. By contrast, the British group used more direct strategies particularly when dealing with lower status collocutors.

Wijayanto (2011) investigated the similarities and differences between refusal strategies conducted by British native speakers of English (NSE) and Javanese learners of English (JLE). The data were elicitedusing discourse completion tasks, from 20 NSE and 50 JLE. Comparative data concerning refusal strategies in Javanese were elicited from 35 native speakers of Javanese (NJ) to provide a baseline for investigating the extent to which differences between JLE and NSE could be explained by the influence of L1 pragmatics. The main finding of his research was that JLE and NSE tended to use different sequential orders, although they used similar refusals. JLE commonly used apology/regret to decline an invitation to a collocutor of all status level, while NSE commonly used apology/regret to decline an invitation to those of unequal status. To decline a suggestion, JLE used very different sequential order as compared with NSE. As the two groups used direct refusal strategies, NSE used unwillingness wile JLE mostly used direct No. NSE used alternative or excuse/explanation to provide judgments for their unwillingness to accept a suggestion, while JLE commonly used gratitude which was used to redress direct No.

In Thai FL learning contexts, Wannaruk (2008) reported that Thai learners of English expressed regret much more frequently than did native speakers of English when refusing, especially to those of higher status, since showing regret was the most common strategy of refusals to an invitation or a request in Thai culture. The learners used 'future acceptance' rather than 'No' when they refused someone of low status, reflecting Thai cultural norms of maintaining good social relationships with subordinates. The learners also often employed modest explanations and downgraded their statements of ability reflecting Thai cultural value of modesty.

Yamagashira (2001) studied refusal strategies by Japanese ESL who studied in America. The aim of this study was to examine whether the time spent in the US affected the pragmatic knowledge of the learners. The results of the study showed that pragmatic transfer from Japanese occurred, especially in a request situation with higher status. For example like the native speakers of Japanese, the Japanese ESL learners used positive opinion and pause filler commonly, by contrast native speakers of American English (AEs) commonly used regrets. The results also showed that the high proficiency male and female ESL learners were both aware of the differences in the appropriateness of American and Japanese refusal behaviours. By contrast, the lowest proficiency subjects were more informed by their L1 refusals. Yamagashira suggested that living in the target language community was beneficial for the Japanese ESL learners to develop their pragmatic competence.

III. METHODS

A.   Participants
This is qualitative research involving a descriptive comparative design which analyses two kinds of written data of refusal strategies provided by two groups of participants: (1) Indonesian Learners of English, referred to henceforth as ILE (*n*=15) and (2) Thai Learners of English referred to henceforth as TLE (*n*=15). The age of the research participants was between 20-22 years. All of them were females with intermediate English level.

B.   Techniques of Collecting data
To elicit the data, the present study used discourse completion tasks (DCT). The DCT consists of six social situations in which status levels and familiarities of collocutors were considered. The following are the research instruments.

SITUATION 1. You are a junior in collage. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your friend often misses a class and asks you for your notes. But you refuse.
Friend: "Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again?
You say:…

SITUATION 2. You are fifth semester student. Your junior (third semester student) asks you for all your presentation slides that you used in the third semester, and you refuse the request.
Your junior: "Terrible, this year I get a lot of presentations and assignments. Can I use yourslides for presentation? I heard that youweregreat at the third semester.
You say: …

SITUATION 3. Your lecturer asks you to help him taking research data because he is busy. However, you cannot help him because of some reasons.
Your lecturer : "Would you like to help me taking the data for my research, because this month I am very busy".
You say   : …

SITUATION 4. Your friend suggests you to take rest, because you look so tired from writing up your thesis for the past two weeks, but you refuse.
Your friend: "Why don't you rest at home for a day, you look terrible"

You say   : …

SITUATION 5. You are attending a proposal seminar class, your lecturer checks your work. He suggests that you should change your topic because your topic is too common. But you refuse.
Your Lecturer   : "A lot of students use this topic. Why don't you try something new and change your research proposal?
You Say: …

SITUATION 6. You have waited almost two hours for your supervisor. Your junior suggests you to put the documents on supervisor's desk, but you refuse.
Your Junior   : "why don't you leave and put your research paper on his desk?"
You Say : …

C.   Data Analysis
The data of refusal strategies were analysed based on Beebe et al. (1990) and politeness involved in the refusals were analysed based Brown and Levinson's (1987) strategies of politeness described above.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

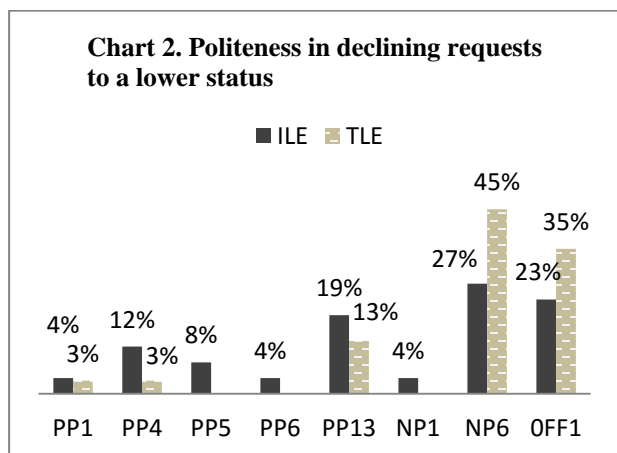A. Politeness in situation 1

Situation 1 is about declining friend's request to borrow some notes. Chart 1 showsthat ILE used off record (OFF1) more frequently than did TLE. Regarding Negative politeness, the strategy of apology (NP6), both of groups used it approximately similar. The groups used more variations of positive politeness (PP), although the frequencies were not similar. For example giving reason (PP13) was more dominantlyused by TLE than was ILE. Other strategies such as PP5 (seek agreement), PP4 (identity markers), PP1 (notice hearer's wants/needs) occurred in very low frequencies, and they were used by both groups with no significantdifference.

Chart 1. Politeness in declining requests to an equal status
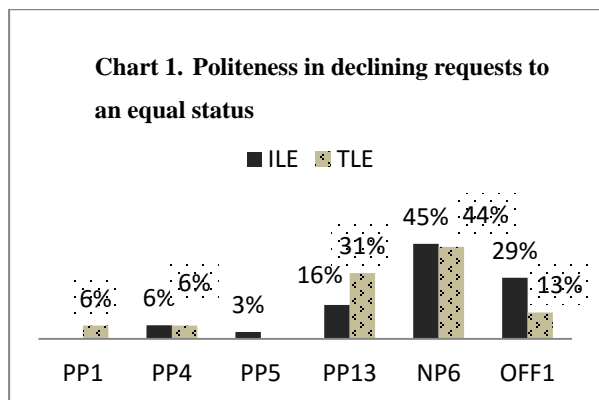
B. Politeness in Situation 2
Situation 2 is about declining a request to a lower status. Chart 2 displays that NP6 (apology) was used very highly. TLE used it more frequently than did ILE. As for hint (OFF1),TLE used itsignificantly higher than that of ILE. Both groups used reasons (PP13) in high frequency and ILE used it slightly higher than did TLE. Other strategies such as seeking agreements (PP5), avoiding disagreements (PP6), using group identity markers (PP4) and giving noticed to the hearer (PP1)were employed very commonly by ILE than TLE.

Chart 2. Politeness in declining requests to a lower status

C. Politeness in Situation 3
Situation 3 concerns refusals to requests to a higher status. Chart 3 indicates that both groups used apology (NP6) very highly. However TLE used it slightly higher than did ILE. The tendency also occurred in the use of off record (OFF1). Nevertheless relating to deference (NP5), ILE applied it significantly higher than did TLE. Regarding reasons (PP13), ILE and TLE used it approximately similar. The strategy of avoiding disagreement (PP6) was used only by ILE.

Chart 3. Politeness in declining requests to a higher status
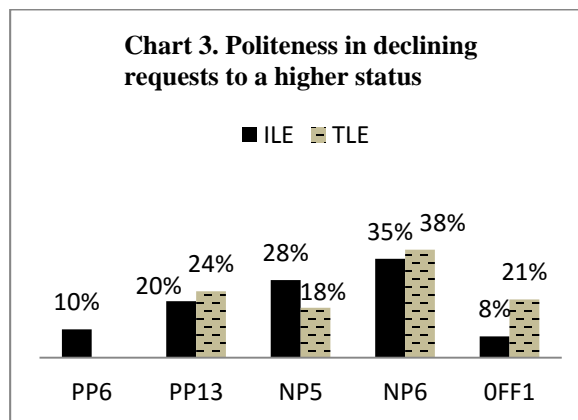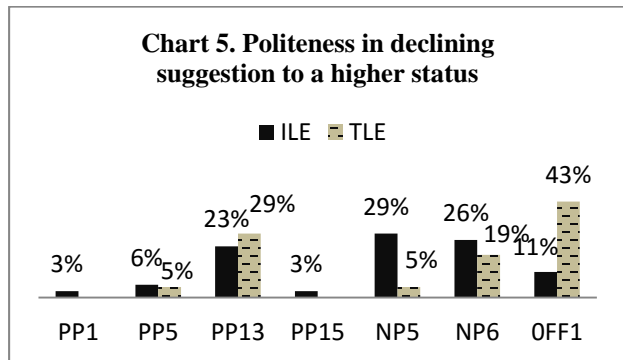
D. Politeness in Situation 4
Situation 4 is about refusing a suggestion to an equal status. Chart 4 shows the use of politeness in situation 4. The chart shows that TLE used off record (OFF1) significantly higher that ILE. This also occurs in the use of giving gift (PP15). However, as for giving reason (PP13), ILE was more dominant than TLE. Other strategies such as PP6 (avoid disagreement) and PP5 (seek agreement) PP4 (identity marker), and PP10 (promising), and BOR (bald on record)were commonly used by ILE.

Chart 4. Politeness in declining suggestion to an equal status
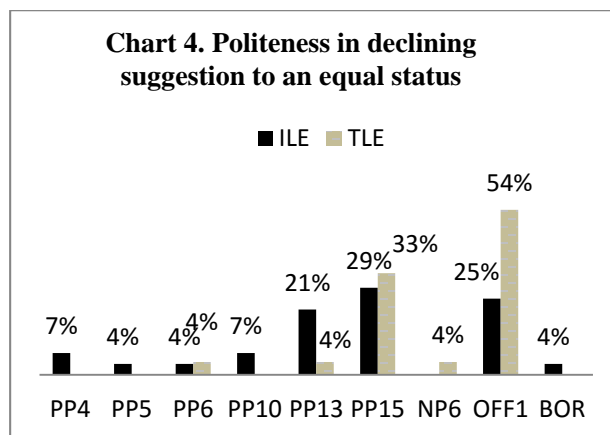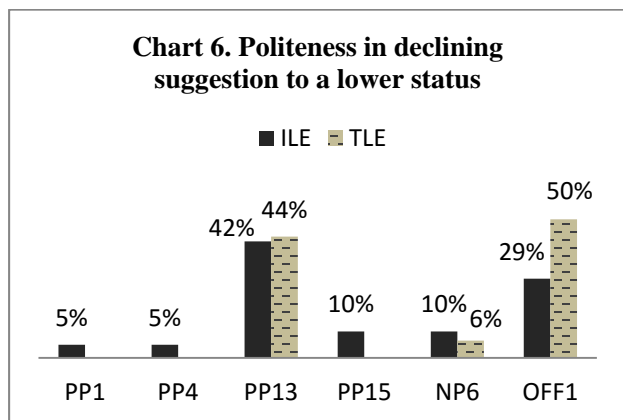
E. Politeness in Situation 5
Situation 5 is about refusing a suggestion to a lower status. Chart 5 shows that TLE used OFF1 (off record)

significantly more often than did ILE. By contrast, ILE used NP5 (deference) and NP 6 (apology) much higher than did TLE. As for positive politeness, TLE used PP13 (reasons) more often than did ILE. In general, both groups used other strategies with no significant difference such as PP1 (notice), PP5 (seek agreement) and PP15 (giving sympathy).

Chart 5. Politeness in declining suggestion to a higher status

■ ILE   ⊞ TLE

Category	ILE	TLE
PP1	3%	
PP5	6%	5%
PP13	23%	29%
PP15	3%	
NP5	29%	5%
NP6	26%	19%
OFF1	11%	43%

F. Politeness in Situation 6

In situation 6, refusers decline a suggestion to a higher status. Chart 6 shows that OFF1 (off record) was used by TLE significantly more frequently than wasby ILE. The tendency also occurs in the use of PP13 (reasons). Other strategies such as NP6 (apology), PP15 (giving sympathy), PP4 (identity markers) and PP1(notice) were used by ILE more commonly.

Chart 6. Politeness in declining suggestion to a lower status

■ ILE   ⊞ TLE

Category	ILE	TLE
PP1	5%	
PP4	5%	
PP13	42%	44%
PP15	10%	
NP6	10%	6%
OFF1	29%	50%

The present study found that TLE tended to be more direct than ILE when declining requests particularly to an equal status. Although, they tended to be direct when declining friends' request, in fact they avoided "no", and they used 'inability' instead. Inability was chosen because TLE did not want to be direct, but they also wished that the other interlocutor could catch the refusals clearly. Moreover, by using inability the speakers wanted to suggest that they were unable to accept a request because it was not their desires. They were aware that using direct 'no' could threat others' positive face and might hurt their feelings. Surprisingly, to decline a suggestion TLE tended to be indirect. TLE concealed their disagreements with silence and produced indirect strategies. They carefully maintained interlocutors feelings and avoided confrontation, therefore even though they disagreed they hardly used direct 'no'.

When declining a request ILE was more indirect than TLE. The finding was quite different from the previous studies in which ILE tended to be direct when they refused a request (e.g., Amarien, 2008). Based on follow up interview, ILE in the present study stated that they would need friend's help in the future. They were afraid if they hurt their friend's feeling, their relationship become worse. Thus, they hardly say 'no'. ILE tended to be more indirect in declining a request because they are afraid to get bad future consequences. However when declining a suggestion, ILE was more direct than was TLE. ILE tended to use unwillingness and direct no while TLE tended to use excuse. Based on the follow up interview, there was no intention from ILE to hurt interlocutors' feelings. ILE often used direct strategy because they did not have any responsibility or obligation to their friends. In contrast, TLE tended to be indirect when refusing suggestions because they believed when someone gave a suggestion especially a friend; it is for their own benefit.

Not all politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) were used by both groups. We found some strategies of positive politeness commonly used by the two groups such as noticing others' wants, seeking agreements, avoiding disagreements, in-group identity markers, giving reasons and gift/sympathy. As for negative politeness, both groups tended to use apologies and deference. The present study found only one strategy of off-record used by both groups, hint. Surprisingly, bald on record was almost rarely used across six DCT scenarios too. Based on the follow up interviews, both groups were aware of other person's face need. They avoided using bald on record because they knew that it could threat other interlocutor's face.

In general when refusing requests, ILE commonly used negative politeness and off record. By contrast when declining suggestions they tended to use 'giving gift' and 'reason'. TLE dominantly tended to use reasons and giving gift strategies.ILE was commonly more polite than TLE. Most ILE tended to be polite to all interlocutors with different status levels. This could be that all ILE mostly are Javanese. In Javanese culture interpersonal communication is regulated by 'SopanSantun'. TLE produced politeness strategy less often than did ILE. This might be that TLE has already used indirect refusals to higher, equal, lower status interlocutors. Based on the interviews, they perceived that indirect refusals were polite; therefore they did not necessarily add politeness strategies.

Based on 180 excerpts of refusal responses produced by ILE and TLE, the present study found that 69% of the refusals contained combined politeness strategies. A combination strategy is the use of two or more strategies of politeness in a single utterance. For example when declining requests and suggestions to their

lecturer (situation 3 and 5), 90% of ILE usedcombination strategies. Based on the follow up interview, they used the combination strategies to show more respect and to compensate their refusals. They tended to add 'reason' after direct refusals as they did not want the other interlocutors misunderstood their refusals. When declining requests to lower status (situation 2), 60% of ILE used combination strategies. They commonly combined negative politeness and off record strategy. In situation 6, they only used 26% of combination strategies when declining suggestion to lower status. In situation 1, ILE used 86% combination strategies and 66% in situation 4. By contrast when declining requests to their lecturer (situation 3) 100% or all of TLE used combination politeness strategies. However, their combinations are much simpler than ILE. TLE commonly combined 'apology' and 'hint'. By contrast, when declining suggestions to their lecturer (DCT 5), 77% of TLE used non-combination strategies. They only used off record strategy or one positive politeness. When refusing requests to an equal status (situation 1), 93% of TLE used combination strategies, and 66% used combination politeness strategieswhen declining suggestions to an equal status (DCT 4). As for DCT 2 (refusing requests to a lower status), most TLE (93%) used combination politeness strategies. They commonly combined 'apology' and 'hint'. In situation 6, only 26% of TLE used combination strategies. The facts that both groups combined politeness strategies show that politeness strategies are not independent. They can occur together mutually supporting speakers to maintain social harmony. Hence the results are quite different fromBrown and Levinson's (1987) theory stating that politeness strategies stand independently.

As compared to the result of previous study, we found different results. For example the research conducted by Al-Shboul, et al. (2014) reported that the ESL speakers dominantly used indirect refusals. Amarien (2008) reported that Indonesian learners of English commonly used direct refusals. By contrast in the present study, Indonesian learners of English tended use indirect strategies.

5. CONCLUSION

Even though the EFL learners in the present study are from approximately similar cultural background, they used different politeness strategies when they made refusals in a foreign language. Status levels of interlocutors influenced the choices of politeness strategies. In addition the nature of the initiating acts of refusals (i.e., suggestion and requests) induced the choices of politeness strategies too. This is due to the facts that suggestions are conducted for the benefit of the hearers, whilst requests are for the benefit of the speakers, thus the latter puts more threats to hearers' face than the former; therefore it requires more subtle politeness strategies. Nevertheless, the two groups had different tendencies and preferences of using

the politeness. We predicted that this is due to their English proficiency and the perception of the nature of interpersonal relationship. All in all the data showed that ILE sounded more polite than TLE when declining suggestions and requests. Most ILEtended to be polite to all interlocutors with different status levels (higher, equal, and lower). The most important finding is that more than a half of data from ILE and TLE showed that both groups commonly used combination strategies of politeness: the respondents used more than one strategy in a single utterance. Thus, every single strategy of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) is not independent (found by the present study); it can be combined with others in a single utterance. Nevertheless, the results should be taken carefully as the data, elicited mainly through written questionnaires, might not arguably reflect real politeness.

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