APOLOGY IN INDONESIAN REFUSALS REALIZED BY PROFICIENT EFL LEARNERS

EVILIANA*

Abstract

This article is aimed at elaborating a mostly used strategy-regret/ apology-in Indonesian refusals realized by proficient English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Data were taken from writer's qualitative research data in 2010 on 18 EFL learners whose TOEFL score was 450 above using Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and were analyzed by using combined refusal classification by Wannaruk (2005) and Campillo (2009) by two raters. Proficient EFL learners used regret/apology in the initial or final position in their refusals to mitigate, to provide support for the interlocutor who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation, and to humiliate himself or herself to some extent and to admit to fault and responsibility for a violation. This is truly culture specific and partially support Syahri's statement (2007) that Indonesian native speakers get accostumed to using 'sorry' in opening their conversations.

Keywords: *refusal, proficient EFL students, refusal strategies, regret and apology.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini memberikan penjelasan mengenai penyesalan/permintaan maaf, strategi yang paling banyak digunakan, dalam ungkapan penolakan bahasa Indonesia yang diujarkan oleh mahasiswa EFL dengan kemampuan bahasa Inggris pada tingkatan cakap. Data yang digunakan merupakan data penelitian kualitatif penulis pada tahun 2010 terhadap 18 mahasiswa EFL dengan nilai TOEFL diatas 450 menggunakan *Discourse Completion Test* (DCT). Data tersebut telah dianalisa oleh dua orang *rater* menggunakan modifikasi gabungan klasifikasi penolakan Wannaruk (2005) dan Campillo (2009). Mahasiswa EFL dengan kemampuan bahasa Inggris *proficient* menggunakan penyesalan/ permintaan maaf di awal dan akhir ungkapan penolakan mereka guna

*Penerjemah Pertama pada Politeknik Negeri Sriwijaya, evilianapolsri@yahoo.co.id. Jln. Srijaya Negara Bukit Besar Palembang.

mengurangi, dan memberikan semacam penghiburan atau dukungan bagi *interlocutor* yang mungkin terluka perasaannya dikarenakan penolakan tersebut. Selain itu juga untuk mengungkapkan rasa bersalah atas penolakan yang telah diujarkan. Hal ini merupakan fakta budaya dan mendukung pernyataan Syahri (2007) bahwa *Indonesian native speakers* terbiasa menggunakan ungkapan 'maaf' ketika memulai percakapan.

Kata Kunci: penolakan, mahasiswa EFL tingkatan cakap, strategi penolakan, penyesalan/permintaan maaf.

1. INTRODUCTION

Refusal is an effort on the part of speakers to deny to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor. It is not an act initiated by the speaker but a response to a speaker's act such as an invitation, a suggestion, an offer or a request. Refusals are also recognized as' face-threatening acts' (Beebee and Takahashi, 1990). Refusals occur in all languages.

The use of apology, basically a speech act which is intended to provide support for the interlocutor who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation, in Indonesian refusal is almost certain when they must refuse people of higher status. They want to be polite and want to provide support for the interlocutors who are actually or potentially malaffected by the violation caused by their refusals. It is trully culture specific that Indonesian native speakers get accostumed to using 'sorry'. An apology is face-saving for the interlocutor and face threatening for the speaker.

Although English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners are successful in learning a foreign language. For example their English proficiency is in proficient caterogy. It is not easy for learners to adopt the cultures of the new language. When they learn a new language, they do not forego their native norms completely. Native norms remains and are commonly with consciousness used in their speech act.

For these, this paper discussed the occurance of Apology/regret in Indonesian refusal realization of proficient learners and the reasons they do so.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This part discusses some literature related to the topic in order to give sufficient theoritical fondation. They are (1) communicative competence, (2) speech act, (3) speech act of refusals, (4) power and solidarity in style of speech.

3. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

When learning a new language, learners do not forego their native norms completely. Although they are successful in learning a foreign language, it is not easy for learners to adopt the cultures of the new language (Eviliana and Simanjuntak, 2011).

The combination of the lack of grammatical competence and that of sociolinguistic confusion, can make learners appear incompetent. Misunderstandings or offense can also emerge when speakers can only understand the literal meanings of words. These can cause pragmatic failure and serious communicative problems on the part of the learners (Yu, 2004).

4. SPEECH ACTS

What we accomplish through physical acts such as cooking, eating, bicycling, gardening, or getting on a bus, we accomplish a great deal each day by verbal acts. In face-to-face conversation, telephone calls, job application letters, notes scribbled to a roommate, and a multitude of other speech events, we perform verbal actions of different types. In fact, language is the principal means we have to greet, compliment, and insult one another, to plead or flirt, to seek and supply information, and to accomplish hundreds of other tasks in a typical day. Actions that are carried out through language are called speech acts (Fromkin et al, 2007).

Every speech act has several principal components -the utterance itself and the intention of the speaker in making it. First, every utterance is represented by a sentence with a grammatical structure and a linguistic meaning; this is called the locution. Second, speakers have some intention in making an utterance and what they intend to accomplish is called an illocution.

5. SPEECH ACT OF REFUSALS

Refusal is an effort on the part of speaker to deny to engage in an action proposed by the interlocutor (Eviliana and Simanjuntak, 2011). It occurs when a speaker directly or indirectly says 'no' to request, invitation, offer and suggestion. It is not an action initiated by the speaker but a response to a speaker's act such as an invitation, a suggestion, an offer or a request. Tanck (2002) states refusal is a face-threatening act to the listener/requester/inviter, because it contradicts his or her expectations, and is often realized through indirect strategies. Refusals may also be understood.

In order to analyze strategies of speech acts including refusals, a tool has been provided a tool has been provided by Blum-Kulka, et al (1989). The Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) found by Blum-Kulka et al (1989) classifies speech act strategies into three categories: (1) *Direct strategies*, (2) *Conventionally indirect strategies*, and (3) *Non-conventionally indirect strategies*. Meanwhile, Campillo (2009) provided Refusal taxonomy which was partially based on the work of Beebe, L.M., T. Takahashi, and R. Uliss-Weltz.

6. POWER AND SOLIDARITY IN STYLE OF SPEECH

Both of power and solidarity are matters of degree. They work together to produce various combinations of distance and intimacy. According to Chaika (2008) a person in power may elect to use some markers of solidarity with her or his employees to maintain friendly

relations. Futhermore, she says that forms which indicate power establish who has authority and how much authority.

The status or power dimension also accounts for a variety of linguistic differences in the way people speak. According to Holmes (1999) speakers speak in a way which signals their social status in a community.

7. REGRET AND APOLOGY

7. a. Apology

An apology is the act of declaring one's regret, remorse, or sorrow for having insulted, failed, injured, harmed or wronged another. Some apologies are interpersonal (between individuals, that is, between friends, family members, colleagues, lovers, neighbours, or strangers). Other apologies are collective (by one group to another group or by a group to an individual). More generally, apologies can be offered "one to one," "one to many," "many to one," or "many to many." (Mihai, 2013). She differenciates apology into five categories. Only four categories among five categories are elaborated in this paper.

The first one is interpersonal apologies, an individual acknowledges and promises to redress offences committed against another individual. They are meant to recognise the equal moral worth of the victim.

The second is one to many apology, one individual apologizes privately for a group of people for example his/her family, group of friends, neighbours, or colleagues. The purposes of one to many apology overlap with those of the interpersonal acts of contrition: recognizing the victims as moral interlocutors and communicating the fact that the offender understands and regrets the violation of their legitimate moral expectations, thus making a first step towards a desired reconciliation.

The third is Collective Apology. Collective apologies take two forms: by "many to many" or by "many to one". In the case of "many to many" one group apologizes to another group. Commonly, it is aimed to restore diplomatic relations, restore the dignity of insulted groups.

Last but not least is the intercultural apology. It is interpersonal and collective apologies between individuals with different cultural backgrounds.

7. b. Regret

Regret is a negative conscious and emotional reaction to personal past acts and behaviors. Regret is often expressed by the term "*sorry*." Regret is often a feeling of sadness, shame, embarrassment, depression, annoyance, or guilt, after one acts in a manner and later wishes not to have done so.

8. PROFICIENT EFL LEARNERS' REFUSAL STRATEGIES IN INDONESIAN

Data of proficient EFL learners' refusal strategies in Indonesian were taken from writer's qualitative research data in 2010 on 18 EFL learners whose TOEFL score was 450 above using Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and were analyzed by using combined refusal classification by Wannaruk (2005) and Campillo (2009) by two raters.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, important terms in this paper need to be defined operationally. Terms, such as refusals acts, refusal realization, strategy, and proficient EFL students are defined specifically. *Refusing acts* refer to speech acts in which the speakers say 'no' directly or indirectly to the hearers' request, invitation, offers and suggestion. *Refusal realization* refers to the utterances that reflect the refusalers' choice of refusal strategies. For the sake of the investigation, refusal realization will be analyzed by using refusals taxonomy combined from refusal categories made by Wannaruk (2005) and Campillo (2009).

Strategy refers to the choice of the level of directness or indirectness by which the refusal is realized. *Proficient EFL students* refers to the students of English as a Foreign Language, in this case are students of English Training and Education Study Program at Sriwijaya University Indralaya.

The refusal strategies in refusals in Indonesian realised by the Indonesian EFL students are described in Figure 1.
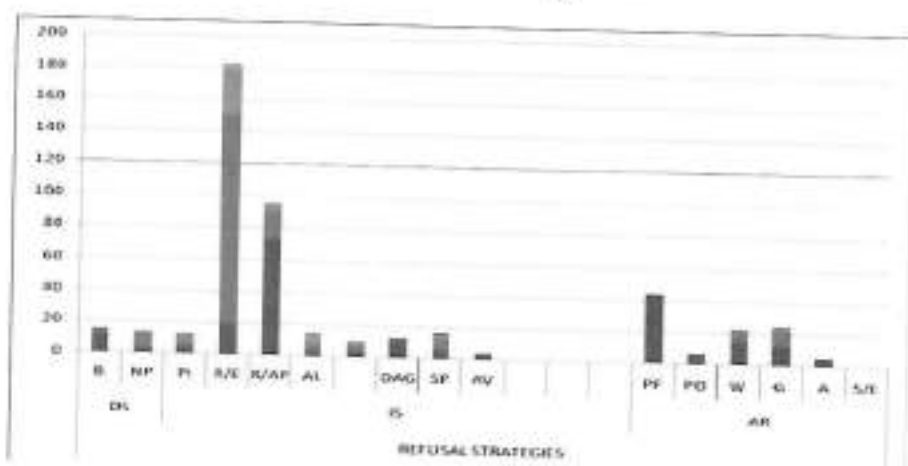

Figure 1. The Total Semantic Formula and Adjuncts in Proficient EFL Students' Refusal in Indonesian (Eviliana, 2010).

The EFL learners' refusal strategies in Indonesian were mostly the indirect strategies. Nevertheless, the use of direct strategies are found especially when they realised their refusal for refusing suggestion of a familiar person of lower status, and also when they refusing offer from an unfamiliar person of equal status. They prefered to use both bluntness than negation of proposition in realizing the direct strategy in their English refusal. The difference is only in the position of these semantic formula, the first mostly use as the first sematic formula meanwhile the later is the second semantic formula. Bluntness was used especially when refusing suggestion from a familiar person of equal status and lower and also when they refusing offer from an unfamiliar person of lower status. R/E (reason or explanation) R/E (reason or explanation) 183 of the total 479 refusal semantic unit, and commonly released as the second semantic unit. Mostly it realised as the highest percentage of the second semantic formula in their refusal realization. For example, "Maaf, Bu. Sebenarnya saya ingin sekali datang. *Tapi minggu depan tepat syukuran kakak saya yang baru saja diwisudah. Jadi saya tidak bisa datang ke syukuran*

kemenangan tim kita.", and "Wah, sebenarnya saya ingin sekali, Bu. *Tapi saya ada tes wawancara beasiswa. Maaf sekali ya Bu!*"

R/Ap (regret or apology) 96 of the total 479 refusal semantic unit, commonly realised as the first, and the second semantic formula of proficient EFL learners' refusal realization. For example, "Wah, sebenarnya saya ingin sekali, Bu. Tapi saya ada tes wawancara beasiswa. *Maaf sekali ya Bu!*", and "*Maaf sekali Bu,* saya harus menghadiri pernikahan kakak saya." (Eviliana, 2010)

Adjuncts to refusal, part of the act of refusing but do not constitute a refusal by themselves, were quite significant in number. Among adjunct commonly used by the proficient EFL learners' refusal realization were PF (pause filler) 45 of the total 479 semantic unit, G (Gratitude) 35, W (willingness) 23, and PO (positive opinion) 7. They are mostly in the first semantic formula.

The top three frequently used semantic formula of subjects are presented below.

Table 1. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the Proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Invitation from a Familiar Person of Higher Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reasons/Explanation	42%
Regret/Apology	35%
Willingness	9%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Maaf, Bu. Sebenarnya saya ingin sekali datang. Tapi minggu depan tepat syukuran kakak saya yang baru saja diwisudah. Jadi saya tidak bisa datang ke syukuran kemen ngan tim kita.*

2. *Wah, sebenarnya saya ingin sekali, Bu. Tapi saya ada tes wawancara beasiswa. Maaf sekali ya Bu!*

3. *Maaf sekali Bu, saya harus menghadiri pernikahan kakak saya.*

Table 2. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Invitation from a Familiar Person of Equal Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	45%
Regret/Apology	26%
Pause filler	11%
Willingness	11%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Ouh! Aku ingin ikut tapi aku punya banyak tugas hari ini.*
2. *Waduh, saya ingin ikut nonton. Tapi saya harus menyelesaikan tugas yang harus dikumpul besok.*
3. *Maaf, besok aku ujian. Aku harus belajar.*
4. *Maaf ya, hari ini saya harus menyelesaikan tugas.*

Table 3. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the Proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Invitation from an Unfamiliar Person of Lower Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	36%
Regret/Apology	26%
Pause filler	15%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Oh, maaf, saya sudah ada kegiatan lain pada waktu tersebut.*
2. *Aduh, besok pagi saya ada kelas di kampus. Maaf ya.*
3. *Aduh, maaf ya! Saya tidak biasa soalnya saya orangnya gugup kalau di depan banyak orang.*

Table 4. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the Proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Suggestion from a Familiar Person of Higher Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	46%
Regret/Apology	23%
Pause filler	11%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Maaf Pak. Saya sudah mengambil mata kuliah lain untuk semester depan, dan saya tidak bisa menggantinya lagi.*

2. *Wah Pak, rencananya saya baru akan mengambil mata kuliah pada semester depannya lagi.*

3. *Oh, tapi saya berencana mengambil mata kuliah kalkulus I dahulu.*

Table 5. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the Proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Suggestion from a Familiar Person of Equal Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Statement of principle	24%
Reason Explanation	21%
Paus filler	21%
Disagreement	18%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Hmm...Saya rasa topik yang saya paparkan sudah cukup jelas.*

Table 6. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Suggestion from a Familiar Person of Lower Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	38%
Disagreement	15%
Positive opinion	12%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Tidak, saya rasa ini sudah jelas, anda hanya melihat judul, bukan seluruh detail penelitian saya.*
2. *Itu bagus jika kamu sudah mengerti semua pelajaran bab 1 tapi ada baiknya untuk memperdalam pemahaman kamu.*
3. *Saranmu bagus, tapi menurut saya contoh-contoh dan penjelasan detailnya itu masih sangat penting.*

Table 7. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the Proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Offer from a Familiar Person of Higher Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	41%
Willingness	21%
Regret/Apology	16%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Saya sangat berminat, tapi sepertinya saya focus dulu dgn studi saya.*
2. *Duh, saya ingin sekali Bu. Tapi saya sudah kontrak ditempat lain full. Pasti tidak ada waktu untuk mengajar lagi.*
3. *Maaf Pak, tapi saya memang kurang tertarik menjadi pegawai.*

Table 8. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the Proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Offer from an Unfamiliar Person of Equal Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	45%
Gratitude	32%
Bluntness	11%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Tidak usah, saya tinggal lari saja.*
2. *Tidak usah, sudah tanggung kok.*
3. *Saya udah hampir nyampe, ngaak usah, terima kasih.*

Table 9. Top Three Semantic Formula frequencies of the proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Offer from an Unfamiliar Person of Lower Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	33%
Regret/Apology	21%
Gratitude	16%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Saya sudah berlangganan Koran Sumeks, maaf ya.*
2. *Terima kasih tapi kami sudah berlangganan Koran lain.*

Table 10. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Request from a Familiar Person of Higher Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	39%
Regret/Apology	27%
Negation of prop.	16%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Saya besok ada kelas dari pagi sampai malam Bu, jadi tidak bisa.*
2. *Maaf, Bu. Besok saya harus pulang kampong karena kakek saya sakit. Jadi saya tidak bisa membantu.*
3. *Saya besok sibuk di kampus, jadi gak bisa maaf ya Bu.*

Table 11. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Request from an Unfamiliar Person of Equal Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	32%
Regret/ Apology	26%
Plain Indirect	13%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Aduh, maaf! Saya sedang mencari info tentang beasiswa.*
2. *Um, maaf tapi saya lagi buru-buru coba tanya yang lain deh.*

Table 12. Top Three Semantic Formula Frequencies of the Proficient EFL Refusal Realization in Refusing Request from a Familiar Person of Lower Status.

Semantic Formulae	Percentages
Reason/Explanation	38%
Regret/Apology	24%
Pause filler	9,5%

Examples of semantic formula:

1. *Waduh, maaf. Saya lagi buru-buru nih.*
2. *Oh, maaf ya, Dek, saya sedang makan. Nanti saja.*

Based on the elaboration of top three semantic formulae in the Indonesian refusal realization by Proficient EFL learners on the twelve situations of DCT, regret/Apology holds predicate for the most semantic formula realized. Deep elaboration for it will be discussed in the discussion part.

9. DISCUSSION

Regret/Apology is the most semantic formula realized by proficient EFL learners. Especially in refusing invitation from a familiar person of higher, equal and lower status, they accompany their refusals by expressing their regret and apology. They said," *Wah, sebenarnya saya ingin sekali, Bu. Tapi saya ada tes wawancara beasiswa. Maaf sekali ya Bu!* They initiate their refusal by expreesing their willingness in order to save their face before they express their inability of doing what their interlocutor wanted them to. Then, they also provide motive in order to mitigate the refusal they had just realized. They express their regret/apology to provide support for the interlocutor who was actually or

potentially malaffected by a violation implicitely expressed when they provide motive by saying, "*Tapi saya ada tes wawancara beasiswa*", and to some extent admit to fault and responsibility for the violation and save the face of the interlocutor (Eviliana, 2010). Olshtain (1989) states that an apology is bassically a speech act which is intended to provide support for the interlocutor who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation. In the decision to carry out the verbal apology, the speaker is willing to humiliate himself or herself to some extent and to admit to fault and responsibility for a violation. Hence , the act of apologizing is face-saving for the interlocutor and face threatening for the speaker.

Meanwhile in refusing suggestion, apology/regret mostly found when they refuse people of higher status suggestion. They said, "*Maaf pak. Saya sudah mengambil mata kuliah lain untuk semester depan, dan saya tidak bisa menggantinya lagi.*" From this example, we see that apology comes in the initial position of the refusal. It provides support for the interlocutor who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation implicitely expressed when he/she said, "*Saya sudah mengambil mata kuliah lain untuk semester depan, dan saya tidak bisa menggantinya lagi.*" For people of equal and lower status this does not occur. They used reason/explanation directly and hardly used apology/regret in their refusal realization.

In refusing offer, they used apology/regret mainly for unfamiliar person of lower status. Since they do not feel close to the person, they just want to be polite eventhough the reality that the person is having lower status. The use of apology/regret is also common when they refuse request no matter whether the interlocutor is of higher, equal or lower status.

10. CONCLUSION

In general, proficient EFL students expressed regret/apology more frequent in their refusals. It is trully culture specific and partially due to politeness. Indonesian speakers get accostumed to using 'sorry' in opening

their conversations in order to provide support for the interlocutor who was actually or potentially malaffected by violation caused by their refusals. It is especially when they must refuse people of higher status. An apology is face-saving for the interlocutor and face threatening for the speaker.

Although EFL learners are successful in learning a foreign language, let say having TOEFL score 450 above, it is not easy for them to adopt western culture-native of English culture. When they learn a new language, they do not forego their native norms completely. Native norms remains and are commonly without consciousness used in their speech act.

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