The Difference of Speech Act of Refusal Strategies between the Malays and Spanish: Cross-Cultural Studies

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Abstract: This study discusses about the difference of linguistic strategies used by the Malays and Spanish in implementing the speech act of refusal. A number of 40 Malay graduate students and 40 Spanish graduate students participated in this study. Data was collected by using DCT method or discourse completion test introduced by Blum-Kulka. The data was analysed based on the refusal model Beebe. Beebe divided refusal act into three categories, namely, direct refusals, indirect refusal and adjuncts to refusals. Overall, the result showed that the Spanish use more strategies than the Malays but they are more direct in refusing as compared to the Malays. It was found that these two nations, Malays and Spanish, use the same strategies while making refusal but differ in frequency and trends. The interesting part is about the use of motives "husband" and "going back to hometown" in Malay refusal data exist but none in Spanish data.

Key words: Refusals, speect acts, politeness, indirectness, cross-cultural pragmatics

INTRODUCTION

Humans are often caught in a situation where they would like to refuse but they are hesitant to say "no". Refuse is a form of speech act that contains the purpose of reluctant, unwilling do not want or do not agree. In daily communication we can hardly avoid in making refusal towards other speech act such as a request proposals, offers, appeals, invitations and suchlike. Naturally, refusals are simply expressed through facial expression and body motion but it is difficult to express in words. As a proof as a sign of refusal we can pout our lips or shake our head spontaneously but it is very hard to say the word "no".

Refusal is a frustrating and painful response. Regardless what language it is it is not an expected or anticipated response. Expressing a refusal is the same as in destroying the hope of an interlocutor. According to Brown and Levinson (1978) refusal is a Face Threatening Act (FTA). The concept of "face" was introduced by which means "shame" or "water-drop interface". Brown and Levinson (1978) divide the face into two namely positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to the desire of an individual to be accepted or appreciated by others. Negative face refers to the individual's will to not to be forced or imposed by another person. Face threatening acts like refusal are at risk of causing the face of speakers and listeners, either positive or negative, endangered. Speech act of refusal is quiet hard to be identified including by their own language. Due to its

nature, it is often become the source of conflict. Beebe *et al.* (1990) concluded that refusal by its nature is subtle and hidden. It is not easy to describe even if the communication takes place between native speakers. Next, Beebe *et al.* (1990) described that refusal as complex speech act because it could potentially threaten the face of both parties, the speaker and the listener. However, the listener will be more affected than the speaker because they have to listen to the answers that they don't expect to hear. Houck and Gass (1999) said that due to the nature of the refusal that is complex, it may need to lengthy negotiations. The parties involved in the communication will seek to reach an agreement that would also extend the conversation.

Refusal may exist in all languages of the world. But do all languages refuse in the same way? According to Beebe *et al.* (1990) despite the existence of the speech act of refusal is universal which it does exist in all languages but the frequency of the use, the context and the linguistic forms that was used varies according to culture. Rubin (1983) pointed out that speech acts reflect basic cultural values that may be specific to certain groups of speaker. According to Rubin, speech acts are controlled by social norms and contextual that act as the framework to its implementation. Limited knowledge about cross-cultural speech acts and insensitivity to the forms and strategies in its implementation can lead the communication between intercultural and inter-ethnic affected (Rubin, 1983). Therefore, it is important to know the signs or features of specific sociolinguistic within a

society, so that the meanings contained in the speech can be interpreted accurately and effectively. A huge number of studies related to refusal was done in many languages, whether among native or non-native speakers (Moaveni, 2014; Chang, 2011; Allami and Naeimi, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2006; Grice,1989; Al-Issa, 2003; Nelson *et al.*, 2002; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1991; Beebe *et al.*, 1990; Takahashi and Leslie, 1993). Apart from studies focusing on the English language, there are also studies about refusal in other languages such as Japanese, Spanish, Korean, Arabic, Mandarin and Italian. In addition, refusal also was studied through a cross cultural comparison in different languages. Most scholars compared refusal in English other languages such as Vietnamese Arabic (Nelson *et al.*, 2002) Spanish (Felix, 2003) German (Beckers, 2003) Mandarin (Liao and Bresnahan, 1996), Korea (Lyuh, 1992), Japan (Beebe *et al.*, 1990) and others.

However, until today, there are no empirical studies that practically compare the speech act of refusal between the Malays and the Spanish within the framework of their native language. Thus, this study is an effort to fulfil the lack in the field of cross-cultural pragmatic approach by investigating the strategies used by two different nations, Malays and Spanish, in implementing speech act of refusal. More specifically, the objective of this study is to identify the refusal differences between the Malays and Spanish. And the questions that will be revealed in this study are; first to what extent does the Malays and Spanish are different in the implementation and the frequency (Felix-Brasdefer, 2006) of making refusal? And second to what extent does the Malays and Spanish refusal are different in terms of structure and content?

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness: Brown and Levinson (1978) introduced the theory of politeness which has created the phenomenon in the pragmatic research, especially research that related to speech act. Based on the concept of "face" triggered by Goffman Brown and Levinson (1978) mentioned that in daily interaction people has a "face" to be maintained. "Face" in this case does not mean the physical appearance but the dignity or self-esteem of a person. In the context of the Malay culture, it is called mien. Brown and Levinson (1978) explore the idea of politeness as face rescue. Politeness is like a buoy which acts to save one's face from suffocation and drowning by the words that hurt. Brown and Levinson explained that politeness is a form of emotional control that acts as a tool to maintain face. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) due to the desire to save face, human had to deviate from the cooperative principles and maxims by Grice (1989) in

which these two principles emphasized the importance of truth and clarity in the information that wanted to be delivered.

Furthermore, Brown and Levinson also explained that every sane human are obliged with two types of face namely, positive face and negative face. Positive face refers to the desire to be looked upon and appreciated by others. It is related to the desire to satisfy the needs of its members in a particular social group. While negative face is interpreted as a wish to be left free or not being forced to do something or the will to preserve the freedom of behavior. Since, the face has already a value as stated above, thus the values must be preserved. And one way to preserve it is by adopting the language of politeness. During a conversation both the speaker and listener will take care of their own positive and negative face. This happened due to the face wants each person not to be seen as threatened, thereby this would damage personal relationships between them. As a solution, selected politeness strategies are used as an instrument to preserve face whether self-face or the face of the opposite party.

Most speech acts naturally in nature are clash with the face desire of both speaker and listener. These speech acts are named as "Face threatening acts" by Brown and Levinson. This occurs when the speaker threatens the listeners with positive face against their will to be looked upon and appreciated. For example like cursing, criticizing rejecting and many others. Or the speaker threatens a listener's negative face by opposing their freedom to react. For example in giving suggestion, advising requesting and urging. However, the speaker is also vulnerable to positive face threats by certain speech acts as, apologizing, responding to compliments, accepting offer and others. Whereas making report, interrupting and others can threaten both negative and positive face needs.

According to Brown and Levinson, most speech acts are fundamentally face threatening acts either in terms of positive or negative face value or both. The tendency to protect own face and others has caused human to use politeness strategies to reduce potential threats. From one angle these strategies function as an instrument that weakens face threatening acts. From another angle, it functions as an act that preserves face wants. By using certain politeness strategies, speaker can deliver messages without baring any risks in degrading the interlocutor's face. Sometimes human are unable to avoid from threatening other's face while implementing speech acts. Therefore, before saying out something, the speaker should consider whether the first utterance will threaten the face or not. In this matter, Brown and Levinson has proposed important strategies in implementing face
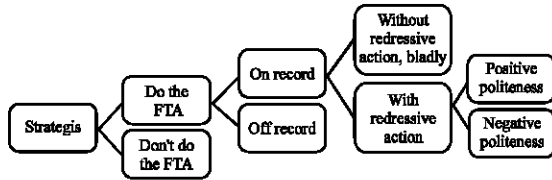
Fig. 1: Strategies of face threatening acts proposed by Brown and Levinson

threatening acts as showed in Fig. 1. According to Brown and Levinson, human can choose to implement face threatening speech acts or otherwise. If they choose not to implement, this indicates the speech acts are at higher level of face threatening. And this shows that the higher the threat the lower the degree of directness strategy and otherwise the lower the threat, the higher the degree of directness strategy. For example, refusal is well known for its character as tough and very face threatening. To do so, the speaker may choose the strategy number 4. To perform other type of speech act such praise is not threatening face; perhaps the speaker will choose strategy number 1.

Various types of politeness strategies can be used if the speaker does not want to drop their interlocutor's face. Speaker has the option whether to use the strategy of directness or indirectness. If the speakers choose directness strategy, the messages will be received easily but the probability to down the face of listener and the speaker is high. The speaker seems to degrade the listener and himself in order to implement the directness speech act. If the indirect strategy was chosen, it is exposed to the risk of message does not reach or misinterpreted as shown in the following speech; "Oh dear, my computer is damaged. How can I prepare this assignment?" In the previous example, the speaker is actually intended to borrow the listener's computer to get his job done due to his damaged computer. Speaker has chosen to use indirectness strategy by raising the question of "How can I prepare this assignment?". The strategies used by the speaker are aimed at reducing the pressure on the listener and at the same time to save the listener's and also the speaker's face from being endangered. In other words, it softens the impact of the request. If the real message is successfully understood by the listener, then maybe the expected response from listeners is "you can use my computer. I have already finished my assignment." But if the listener is to process the utterance as a question rather than a mere request, the response could be this; "The computer is damaged? Somehow, I don't know how to prepare your assignments." Response above can be interpreted as a response from a person who is not sensitive and heartless to the people around. As a result, conflicts may occur and affect personal relationships.

Otherwise, if this was an understandable message but the listener wants to refuse the request, therefore the intention is also exposed to the risk of face threats. Indirect strategies may be used to rule out such as: "my assignment is not ready yet. We have to send it by tomorrow!"

The above respond clearly shows that the speaker is not willing to lend his computer and refuses by using a reason as a strategy. Indirectness strategies are aimed at minimizing the impact of face threat on sides, the listener and speaker. The reason given was to reduce guilt of speaker and to minimize the listener heart felt. Imagine the face of both parties if the refusal is made by a speech like this "Sorry, I will not lend you my computer". Although, it is started with the word sorry but it still sounds rude and unacceptable without a heartfelt or hurt. Of course it will lead to conflict and affect the personal relationship between the communicating parties. However, if it occurs in the context of good friends who knows well about their demeanour, thus such response may not be considered rude or disrespectful. On the contrary excessive politeness speech will be considered false and full of hypocrisy. The best way is accompanying direct utterances like the examples given above by phrases that can neutralize the effects of the face threats. For example, by saying "Sorry, I can't lend my computer because my brother would shortly come to pick it up. Actually, it is his computer."

Brown and Levinson also claim that the theory of politeness introduced by them can be used as a basis or guide for comparing politeness in many different cultures. A speaker must consider the potential face threat by speech acts that will be used before choosing appropriate strategies to minimize the impact of the threat. In addition, according to Brown and Levinson, many other factors such as social status (P) and social Distance (D) and the degree of imposition of speech act (R) also influence the choice of strategy. In fact, the level of seriousness of the speech act (W) is determined by three factors above as formulated by Brown and Levinson as follows:

$$W = P (H, S) + D (H, S) + R$$

However, in this study the researcher only focuses on the difference in strategy between the two nations, Malay and Spanish, without looking at any of the variables.

Next, Brown and Levinson enunciated that politeness is universal; it exists in all languages and all the civilized nations of the world. However, studies conducted by various scholars subsequently pointed out that the universality of politeness is limited to the existence of courtesy only. As for the rules and norms of politeness and linguistic expressions are used to highlight politeness

vary according to culture. In addition, the assessment of the significance of each variable and politeness also vary according to culture. What could be in a culture may not in another culture and vice versa, things that are not accepted in a culture may be acceptable in other cultures. Similarly, the study shows that the Western and Asian society are different in their linguistic politeness based on the values and norms of the society and culture of their nation (Arab versus English, Nelson, Carson, Al Batal and El Bakary in 2002; Mandarin versus English in Liao and Bresnahan, 1996; Japan versus English, Beebe by Takahashi and Leslie (1993) and Korea versus English by Lyuh (1992). In fact, the studies that compare politeness among the Westerns also produced similar findings, namely, the existence of politeness is universal but the details vary according to culture (Spanish versus English by Felix-Brasdefer (2006) and German versus English (Beckers, 2003).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample: A total of 40 Malay graduate students participated in this study. They consist of students of Social Science program, University Malaysia Terengganu. Their age is between 26 and 35 years old. A number of 40 Spanish students, who participated in this study, consist of graduate students from University of Valladolid, Spain, specializing in humanities. They are aged between 25-40 years old. Graduate students were selected as samples because they are matured enough and estimated to understand the norms of society.

Instrument: Researcher has prepared two sets of questionnaires in two different native languages to be distributed to two groups of respondents. Discourse Completion Test or summarized DCT is a questionnaire that contains situations that require the respondents to carry out acting by imagining themselves are present in a given situation. DCT has been introduced by Blum-Kulka (1982) and was used extensively in studies involving acting said. The researcher has prepared two versions of questionnaire in two languages, Malay and Spanish.

Data collection method: Data were collected from two different socio-cultural backgrounds. Six assistants were involved in collecting data. Two of them help to distribute the questionnaires in Malaysia while four others helped to distribute the questionnaire in Spain. Earlier the researchers have explained to all the assistants about the research in order for them to ensure they use the correct and appropriate approach while collecting data. All respondents from both groups were requested to fill in the questionnaire that was developed by the Discourse

Completion test in their own native language. Questionnaires were circulated to Malay respondents in Malaysia whereas questionnaire to the Spanish respondents was circulated in Spain.

Data analysis method: Data were analysed by using a Beebe *at al.* (1990) refusal model. Four linguistic experts are consisting of two Malays and two Spanish and together with researcher in the process of codification data to ensure the reliability of the analysis. When there is a difference in the classification thus in-depth discussion will take place and data will be encrypted again if necessary. Unit that was analysed is written by respondents as the response to each situation presented in the questionnaire.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, a total of 561 strategies were produced by both Malay and Spanish groups. In situation, a total of 20.7% (116) strategies were produced by Malay respondents whereas a total of 22.6 (127) strategies were produced by Spanish respondents. In situation, 20.5% (115) strategies were produced by the Malay respondent and 18.9% (106) by Spanish respondent. In situation, the Malay respondent produced 19.6% (110) strategies while the Spanish respondent produced 21.7% (122) strategies. In situation, a total of 20.3% (114) strategies produced by Malay respondents whereas the Spanish respondents produced 16.6% (93) strategies. In situation, the Malay and Spanish respondents produced a total of 18.9% (106) and 20.1% (113) strategies each respectively. Percentage strategy based on direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals in both groups are shown in Fig. 2.

As shown in Fig. 2, the percentage of direct refusals is much higher among Spanish respondents (15%) compared to Malay respondents (9%). Similarly, the percentage of adjuncts to refusals is higher among the Spanish respondents than the Malay respondents (11% versus 5%). However, in the case of indirect refusals, Malay respondents stated a higher percentage (86%) than Spain respondents (74%). Following is a table containing the frequency for each strategies developed by both groups in each situation. In situation 1 (Party) in which respondents are required to refuse the invitation to the wedding of interlocutor, it was found that Spanish respondents use more strategies than the Malay respondents (127 versus 116). The number of different strategies were also higher among Spanish respondents (14) compared to Malay respondents (11). The most common strategies used by the Spanish respondents is
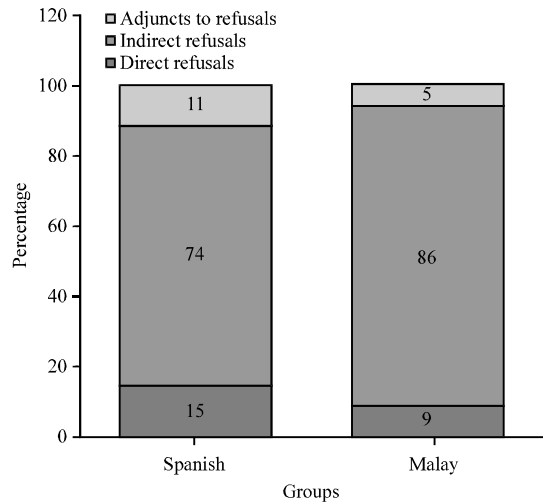
Fig. 2: Direct and indirect refusals and adjuncts to refusals produced by the two groups in five refusal situations

"Non performative" which is 29 times (23%) while the Malay respondents are the most frequent user of "Excuse" which is 31 times (27%). As noted in Table 1 the strategy of "Regret" is used by Malay respondents three times higher, 31 (27%), compared to the Spanish respondents, 10 (8%). Spanish respondents also used "Gratitude" strategy ten times more often than the Malay respondents which is 21 (17%) versus 2 (2%). In this situation, the Malay respondents tend to refuse by starting with an apology, followed by excuses, such as "Maaf, saya terpaksa pulang ke kampung hujung minggu ni" ("I'm sorry, I have to return to my hometown this weekend") or "Maaf, saya dah janji nak teman mak saya pergi shopping" ("Sorry, I promised my mother to go shopping with her"). Spanish respondents prefer to thank in advance, followed by non performative statement and excuse, such as "Gracias por invitarme, pero no puedo asistir, tengo cosas que hacer" ("Thank you for inviting me but I can't attend, there are things") or "Muchas gracias por la invitacion, pero no puedo ir, tengo una cita" ("Thanks a lot for the invitation but I am unable to go because I have a date").

In situation 2 (Car), respondents are required to refuse interlocutor's request for a car ride, overall Malay respondents produced more strategies than the Spanish respondents (115 versus 106). However, the number of different strategies is higher among the Spanish respondents than in the Malay respondents (12 Spanish, 10 Malay). As shown in the table, "Excuse" is the most frequent strategy used by both Malay and Spanish groups. However, the frequency is higher among the Malay respondents, 54 times (47%) compared to 46 times

(43%) by Spanish respondents. In contrast to the previous situation, in this situation both groups use the "Regret" strategy with almost a same frequency which is 36 times (31%) by Malay respondents and 31 times (29%) by Spanish respondents. Whether the Malay or Spanish respondents both tend to start to refuse by apologizing and followed by excuses such as, "Sorry, I have to send my child to the babysitter" or "Sorry, I need to hurry, my friend is waiting".

Situation 3 (Kitchen) is a situation in which the respondents have to refuse interlocutor's request to clean the untidy kitchen. Overall, the Spanish respondents use more strategies than the Malay respondents (22 versus 110). In additions, the number of different strategies was also higher among respondents in Spain than in the Malay respondents (13 Spanish, Malay 9). The use of "Postponement" strategy indicates the highest frequency in both groups, the Malays, 39 (35%) and Spanish, 38 (31%). What is interesting is the use of "Non performative statement" to refuse among the Spanish respondents with the frequency of 9 (7%) but the same strategy does not exist in the Malay refusal data. Unlike the two previous situations, in this situation, the "Excuse" strategy had stated a higher frequency among the Spanish respondents, 37 times (30%) compared to Malay respondents, 21 times (19%). Respondents from both groups tend to begin their refusal by postponement, followed by excuses, such as "Later, I have things to do now" or "Later i will clean it, I am tired now" or "I will clean it tomorrow, I've got to go out now". Apart from the "Postponement" and "Excuse", the Malays are likely to use the "Request for empathy" strategy to express their refusal to clean the kitchen with a frequency of 22 (20%) but only 6 (5%) frequency recorded in the Spanish data by the same strategy. For example, the Malays say, "Nanti saya kemas, tolonglah kasihankan saya yang baru balik ni" ("I will clean it later, please pity me since i just got back") or "Petang nanti saya kemas, fahamilah saya yang sedang sibuk" ("I will clean it in the evening, please understand that I am busy at the moment").

In situation 4 (Box) respondents are required to refuse the interlocutor request to lift the box. Overall, Malay respondents use more strategies (114) compared to Spanish respondents (93). But the numbers of different strategies used are higher among the Spanish respondents compared to Malay respondents (9 versus 8). The most common strategies used by the Malay respondents is "Excuse", 42 times (37%), while "Regret" is the strategy that is most commonly used by Spanish respondents, 30 times (32%). In this situation most of the Malay respondents prefer to initiate rejection by an apology followed by excuses such as "Maaf, tangan saya sakit" ("Sorry, my hand hurts") or "Maaf, doktor tak

Table 1: Frequency for each of the strategies developed by both groups in each situation: S (Spanish), M (Malay)

	Party		Car		Kitchen		Box		Restaurant	
Strategies	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M
Non performative statement	29	23	9	6	9	0	19	10	18	14
Regret	10	31	31	36	15	13	30	40	31	33
Wish	12	7	0	0	0	0	9	1	0	2
Excuse	21	31	46	54	37	21	17	42	37	31
Alternative	0	0	5	3	2	10	0	9	11	0
Condition for future acceptance	0	2	1	0	0	1	3	0	1	18
Principle/Philosophy	6	0	2	0	1	0	5	0	5	1
Threat or negative consequences	0	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Negative feeling	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	3	0
Request for empathy	3	2	1	3	6	22	1	9	3	2
Let interlocutor off the hook	1	3	0	0	5	1	0	0	0	2
Self-defense	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Repetition of part of request	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Postponement	2	0	0	0	38	39	0	1	1	0
Hedging	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Positive opinion/feeling or agreement	17	10	4	1	1	0	8	0	2	0
Empathy	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pause fillers	1	4	3	6	2	2	0	0	1	0
Gratitude	21	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Total	127	116	106	115	122	110	93	114	113	106

benarkan saya angkat benda berat" ("I'm sorry, doctor do not allow me to lift a heavy object"). In comparison, the Spanish respondents tend to initiate refusal by an apology followed by non performative statement and excuses such as "Lo siento, pero no puedo acabo de tener problemas de espalda" ("Sorry but I cannot, I just had back problems") or "Lo siento, no puedo, tengo prisa" ("I'm sorry, I can't, I am in a hurry").

In situation 5 (Restaurant), the respondent is required to refuse the interlocutor's invitation to eat in a restaurant. Overall, Spanish respondents use more strategies than the Malay respondents which is 113 compared to 106. And the number of different strategies among the Spanish respondents is higher 11 than the Malay respondents, 9. Table 1 shows the most commonly used strategy by the Malay respondents is "Regret", 33 times (31%) while "Excuse", 37 times (33%) is the most commonly used strategy by the Spanish respondents. Significant differences was observed in the "Alternative" strategy used by the Spanish is 11 times (10%) and none used by the Malays and "Condition for future/past acceptance" was used by the Malays is 18 times (17%) and used by the Spanish once (1%). This is the only situation where the "Gratitude" strategy not Spanish refusal data but it appears 3 times (3%) in Malay data. Malay respondents tend to initiate refusal with an apology, followed by excuses and condition for future or past acceptance, such as "Maaf, saya sibuklah, kalau cakap awal-awal mungkin boleh" ("I'm sorry, I am busy, if you say earlier maybe I can make it" or "Maaf, saya dah janji nak keluar dengan orang lain, besok mungkin boleh" ("Sorry, I've promised to go out with a friend, tomorrow perhaps"). The Spanish respondents also tend to initiate

refusal by apologizing but followed by excuses and alternatives such as "Lo siento, tengo cita, y si le preguntas a los demAs?" ("Sorry, I have a date, what if you ask others?") or "Lo siento, tengo cosas que hacer y si vamos manana?" ("I am sorry, I have things to do what if we go tomorrow?")

Analysis on refusal content; excuse: Excuse is a kind of strategy that often used to do refusal in both groups Malay and Spanish. However, the frequencies of excuse strategy used among the Malay respondents are higher compared to the Spanish respondents which are the Malays 179 (32%) and Spanish 158 (28%). The highest frequency recorded in situation where respondent is required to refuse a car ride, Malay 54 times (47%) and Spanish 46 times (43%) while the lowest frequency is recorded in cleaning the kitchen, the Malay respondents 21 times (19%) and situation for lifting things for Spanish respondents, 17 times (18%). Malay respondents stated higher frequency in all situations except for cleaning the kitchen, Spanish 37 times (30%) and Malay 21 times (19%). The finding shows that excuses given by the Malays are more specific compared to the Spanish. For example, in situations that require the respondent refuse a car ride, because the Malay respondent mostly use excuses like "Saya kena cepat sebab tiada siapa jaga anak anak di rumah" ("I need to hurry because there is no one to take care of my children at home"), "saya terpaksa pergi mengambil baju di dobi" ("I have to go picking up the clothes from the laundry") "suami sedang menunggu saya di rumah" ("My husband is waiting for me at home") "saya nak melawat ibu saya di hospital" ("I want to visit my mother in the hospital") "saya kena ambil anak di

pusat jagaan kanak-kanak" ("I have to take my child from the child care centre") or "saya kena hantar suami ke lapangan terbang" ("I have to send my husband to the airport"). While most of the Spanish respondents use "Tengo cosas que hacer" ("I have work to do"), "Me quedado ya con un amigo" ("I promised with a friend") "Tengo algo importante" ("I have something important"), "Me estan esperando" ("they are waiting for me") or "Me tengo que ir" ("I have to go") as an excuse to reject a similar request.

Likewise when refusing an invitation to a wedding, the Malay respondents tend to give specific excuse such as, "saya dah janji nak ke majlis di kampung suami saya" ("I've promised to attend a ceremony at my husband's hometown") "saya dah berjanji dengan kakak saya untuk menjaga anak-anaknya ketika dia keluar" ("I have promised my sister to take care of her children while she is out"), "saya dah berjanji dengan mak saya untuk menemaninya menziarahi saudara di KL" ("I promised with my mother to accompany her to visit relatives in KL") or "saya terpaksa membawa ibu saya ke majlis perkahwinan di rumah makcik saya" ("I had to take my mother to the wedding at my aunt's house"). While the Spanish respondents gives general excuses such as "Tengo otro compromiso" ("I have another commitment") "Ya tenia otros planes" ("I have already planned something") and other excuses without specifying it.

Furthermore, the Malays tend to involve third party as a motive in giving excuse while the Spanish are keener in making themselves as the motive. For instance, the Malays often use excuses such as "saya dah janji nak keluar dengan kawan" ("I have promised to go out with a friend") "doktor pesan saya tak boleh angkat benda berat" ("Doctor advised me to not lift heavy things") "saya nak lawat mak saya di hospital" ("I want to visit my mother at the hospital") "saya kena jaga anak saya" ("I have to take care of my child") "saya kena bawa anak ke hospital" ("I have to bring my child to the hospital") "suami saya tiada di rumah, dia outstation" ("My husband is not at home, he is at outstation") "saya dah janji dengan ayah" ("I have promised to my father") and other excuses as well. While the Spanish gives excuses that related to them like "Tengo trabajo" ("I have work") or "Estoy ocupado" ("I am busy") without involving other party as motives.

The analysis also found that in most situations, the percentage of usage for "family" as a motive is higher among Malay respondents than the respondents in Spain. For example, the Malays use excuses like "Saya akan pergi bercuti bersama keluarga" ("I'm going for a vacation with my family") "Hujung minggu ni ada majlis berkumpul bersama keluarga" ("This weekend there is a family

gathering") "Ada majlis keluarga yang saya tak boleh elakkan" ("There is a family event that I can't avoid") or "Saya kena balik kampung kerana ada hal keluarga" ("I have to go home because there is a family matter") in situation where the respondents had to decline the invitation to the ceremony. The Spanish also uses family as a motive in their excuse but the percentage of usage is far more less than the Malays.

An interesting difference between these two groups of respondent, Malay and Spanish, is the existence of the motive "going back to hometown" in the Malay data while it does not exist in the Spanish data. For example, the Malay say "Minggu depan saya kena balik kampung" ("Next week I have to go back to hometown") "Saya dah janji nak hadiri majlis di kampung" ("I have promised to attend a ceremony in my hometown") "Saya dah janji nak lawat mak ayah saya di kampung" ("I have promised to visit my parents in my hometown") or "Saya kena balik kampung kerana ada kematian ahli keluarga" ("I have to go back to home town because there is a funeral") as refusal excuses. In addition, the use of "husband" as a motive also was often found in the Malays excuse. For example, the Malay respondents, regardless of the situation, gives excuse like "Dah janji nak makan dengan suami" ("I promised to eat with my husband") "Saya kena hantar suami ke lapangan terbang" ("I have to send my husband to the airport") "Suami tak izinkan" ("My husband doesn't allow me") "Saya dah janji nak balik kampung suami" ("I promised to go to my husband's home town") or "Suami saya dah tunggu dalam kereta" ("My husband is waiting in the car") to make refusal. The same motive however doesn't exist in Spanish refusal (Appandix A).

CONCLUSION

The study showed that the respondents of both groups used the same strategy to make refusals but differ in terms of frequency and trends. The Spanish are more direct in making refusal compared to the Malays. Overall, the Malays tend to start refusal by apologizing followed by an excuse, whereas the Spanish prefers to start with non performative statement followed by an excuse.

Although, the Spanish respondents use more different types of strategies to refuse but they use direct refusals more compared to the Malay respondents. Otherwise, the Malay respondents use more indirect refusals in refusing but their strategies are less varied compared to the Spanish respondents. This indicates that the more direct one is in the making a refusal thus more strategies are used. This happened due to the intention to mitigate the threat on interlocutor's face as well as to save

their own face. One point to highlight in this study is the different focus shown by both nations against the interlocutor's invitation to the wedding. The Malays focus on their regrets for not being able to attend the wedding. Whereas the Spanish focuses more on feeling flattered for being invited for the wedding. In other words, the concentration of feelings of the Malays is more to regrets whereas the concentration of feelings of the Spanish is more to flatter. Therefore, most of the Malay respondents started their refusal by apologizing while most of the Spanish respondents started with appreciation.

However, the similarities of attitude and stance between these two nations are detected in the context to ride a car and to clean the kitchen. Guilt for refusing the interlocutor's for a car ride was indicated by the use of apologies earlier and followed by a variety of excuses. The highest frequency recorded by the "Excuse" strategy in this situation shows that the degree of imposition in both culture for a car ride is high. Therefore, giving too many excuses is one of the methods to reduce face threat. In the case of cleaning the kitchen, similarities in thinking between the two cultures can be seen through the domination of the "Postponement" strategy which implies that delay is the most appropriate method to avoid in fulfilling the interlocutor's request.

The use of lower excuse among Spanish respondents in refusing the request to lift a box visualizes the possibility of their low guilt feeling to interlocutor compared Malay respondents. It is supported by the use of direct strategy "Non performative statement" which is higher by the Spanish respondents compared to the Malay respondents. Maybe, in the Spanish culture, the effect of face threat on refusal for such request is low thus to refuse also becomes much easier and does not need more strategies. Otherwise, in the Malay culture, it may give deep face effect on both parties, speaker and listener, until many strategies have been produced.

In the last context, refusal towards invitation to dine in a restaurant, the two nations showed a difference in the continuation of refusal after an apology was made. The Malays prefer to describe their willingness if the request was submitted earlier or later. Compared to the Spanish, they prefer to propose other options to interlocutor in their efforts to not display their rejection obviously in order not to let their face down and also the other party's face. In short, no matter whatever type of refusal both nations have their own strategies to save face which perhaps refracted from the norm or normality on daily basis.

The differences in excuse by the respondents of the both countries are the reflection from the differences of culture between the Malays and Spanish. Malaysia is an example of a county that practices collective culture especially in giving importance on the collective value and needs of the member of community beyond personal preferences (Devito, 2009). This is a proof from these findings that indicates the Malay respondents prefer to use the family as the motive for their refusal. Family value in the Malay society is very high. Loyalty and responsibilities towards family is a major responsibility above all others. These are due to the grandeur of individuals in the Malay society is measured by the achievements of the family, clan, village and origin and not determined by the individual's ability or achievement. That is why there is the existence of motive "going back to hometown" in the Malay data as refusal excuse. Going back to hometown is a process for empowering families and descendants in the Malay culture. The Spanish however exhibits their priority to the desire and necessity of an individual compared to the desire and necessity of a community. Thus due to the cultural differences, the Malays prefer to use undeniable excuse or authorized third party like husband, mother, siblings and other as their refusal motive. Whereas, the Spanish likely to make themselves as the motive without using other party because in their culture the necessity and interest of an individual is very important compared to the necessity and the interest of other society. This shows how different the Malays are from the Spanish in terms of the privacy needs and perceptions of what excuses seem persuasive.

This study has contributed to cross cultural knowledge. Due to the awareness about differences in refusal between cultures, it is able to reduce the misunderstanding among the involved party. For example, if the Spanish refused by giving a self-motive excuse, it is not because they are boasting but it is due to their culture and way of communicating are such. The Malays should not be hurt when the Spanish refused directly because it is normal in their culture despite it is awkward and unenlightened in the Malay culture. On the other hand, the Spanish should take into account that the Malays are not weak and do not have confidence when often use family as refusal motive but it is a form of respect and appreciation for the family institution because in Malay culture, one's dignity is determined by the family's dignity. Without a potent knowledge about other cultures communication may be exposed to a misinterpretation because human tend to judge the behaviour of others based on their own values and norms. Awareness of the diversity of attitudes and sociolinguistic behaviour allow the differences to be accepted as the difference and not as lowness and abnormalities. This study not only describes

about the differences between the Malay and Spanish in the use of refusal strategies but also highlights the different features of each culture which is reflected by the use of these strategies. Knowledge about different values and norms that are hidden in language behaviour can reduce the potential for misunderstandings between cultures and thus, increase the tolerance about the differences.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Classification of refusals (Beebe *et al.*, 1990)
Direct refusal:
- Perfomative (e.g., "I refuse")
- Nonperformative statement
- "No"
- Negative willingness/ability ("I can't" "I won't." "I don't think so")

Indirect refusal:
- Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry...," "I feel terrible... ")
- Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you... ")
- Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "I already have a family gathering that day")
- Statement of alternative
- I can X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather..." "I'd prefer...")
- Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")
- Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time", if you had asked me earlier, I would have...")
- Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")
- Statement of philosophy (e.g., "Such things can happen to anyone")
- Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
- Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "You won't be able to understand my handwriting" to refuse lending class notes)
- Statement of negative feeling: Criticism of the request/requester, guilt trip (e.g., "you are lazy")
- Request for help, empathy and assistance (e.g., "I hope you can understand my situation")

- Let interlocutor offthe hook (e.g., "don't worry about it", "That's okay", "you don't have to")
- Self-defence (e.g., "I'm just following the course program", "I'm doing my best")

Avoidance
Verbal:
- Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Did you say Monday?")
- Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it")
- Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure")

Non-verbal:
- Silence
- Hesitation
- Do nothing
- Physical departure

Adjuncts to refusals:
- Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (e.g., "That's a good idea"; "I'd love to...")
- Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation")
- Pause fillers (e.g., "uhhh'; "well'; "oh'; "uhm")
- Gratitude/appreciation (e.g., "Thank you very much")

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