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REFUSAL AND POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE SPEECH ACT OF REFUSING INVITATIONS IN MALAYSIA'S MULTICULTURAL HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXTS

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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Abstract

Refusals are a common speech act in everyday interactions. Although they serve the purpose of declining offers or invitations, they can be challenging because they have the potential to cause offense. The complexity of refusals becomes even more pronounced in intercultural contexts, as different cultures possess distinct norms and conventions for expressing disagreement or rejection. Consequently, variations in refusal practices may lead to misunderstandings in intercultural communication. This study investigates the refusal and politeness strategies employed by the three major cultural groups in Malaysia, namely Malays, Chinese, and Indians, when declining invitations. The study aims to identify the refusal and politeness strategies used by these cultural groups and to gain deeper insights into the sociocultural factors that influence their choice of strategies. A qualitative research design was adopted, employing an Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT) involving sixteen participants from the three cultural groups, followed by semi-structured interviews with eight participants. Elicited responses were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed. The findings from the ODCT revealed that Malaysian participants generally preferred indirect refusal strategies, particularly the use of apologies and justifications. Malay participants frequently employed hedging devices and expressions of gratitude to convey politeness, whereas Chinese participants tended to produce more direct refusals accompanied by explicit reasons. Indian participants relied more heavily on apologies than the other two cultural groups. The findings further suggested that the observed refusal and politeness patterns were influenced not only by broader cultural norms but also by family socialisation and upbringing. These findings highlight the significant role of early social experiences in shaping pragmatic behaviour. Overall, the study highlights the influence of cultural practices and parental guidance on refusal and politeness preferences, contributing to a better understanding of intercultural communication in Malaysia. It may help promote culturally sensitive communication practices, thereby reducing the likelihood of unintended offense in Malaysian intercultural interactions and beyond.

Keywords: Refusal, Politeness, Culture, Invitation, Malaysia

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Abstrak

Penolakan merupakan tindak tutur yang biasa dalam interaksi seharian. Walaupun ia bertujuan untuk menolak tawaran atau pelawaan, ia boleh menjadi mencabar kerana ia berpotensi menyebabkan rasa tersinggung. Kerumitan penolakan menjadi lebih ketara dalam konteks antara budaya, kerana budaya yang berbeza mempunyai norma dan konvensyen yang berbeza untuk menyatakan ketidaksetujuan atau penolakan. Akibatnya, variasi dalam amalan penolakan boleh menyebabkan salah faham dalam komunikasi antara budaya.Kata kunci: Penolakan, kesopanan, budaya, jemputan, Malaysia. Kajian ini mengkaji strategi penolakan dan kesopanan yang digunakan oleh tiga kumpulan budaya utama di Malaysia, iaitu Melayu, Cina, dan India, apabila menolak jemputan. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti strategi penolakan dan kesopanan yang digunakan oleh kumpulan budaya ini dan untuk mendapatkan pandangan yang lebih mendalam tentang faktor sosiobudaya yang mempengaruhi pilihan strategi mereka. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kualitatif telah diguna pakai, menggunakan Tugasan Penyiapan Wacana Lisan (ODCT) yang melibatkan enam belas peserta daripada tiga kumpulan budaya, diikuti dengan temu bual separa berstruktur dengan lapan peserta. Respons yang diperoleh telah dirakam secara audio, ditranskripsikan dan dianalisis. Penemuan daripada ODCT mendedahkan bahawa peserta Malaysia pada umumnya lebih suka strategi penolakan secara tidak langsung, terutamanya penggunaan permohonan maaf dan justifikasi. Peserta Melayu sering menggunakan alat lindung nilai dan ungkapan terima kasih untuk menyampaikan kesopanan, manakala peserta Cina cenderung untuk menghasilkan lebih banyak penolakan secara langsung disertai dengan alasan yang jelas. Peserta India lebih banyak bergantung pada permintaan maaf daripada dua kumpulan budaya yang lain. Dapatan kajian selanjutnya mencadangkan bahawa corak penolakan dan kesantunan yang diperhatikan bukan sahaja dipengaruhi oleh norma budaya yang lebih luas tetapi juga oleh pergaulan dan didikan keluarga. Penemuan ini menyerlahkan peranan penting pengalaman sosial awal dalam membentuk tingkah laku pragmatik. Secara keseluruhannya, kajian ini menyerlahkan pengaruh amalan budaya dan bimbingan ibu bapa terhadap keutamaan penolakan dan kesantunan, menyumbang kepada pemahaman yang lebih baik tentang komunikasi antara budaya di Malaysia. Ia boleh membantu menggalakkan amalan komunikasi sensitif budaya, dengan itu mengurangkan kemungkinan kesalahan yang tidak diingini dalam interaksi antara budaya Malaysia dan seterusnya.

Kata Kunci: Penolakan, Kesopanan, Budaya, Jemputan, Malaysia

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List of Abbreviations

A	Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants
AA	Statement of alternative
AC	Avoidance (Verbal)
AD	Avoid disagreement
AG	Speak in maximum efficiency, found in attention getters
AM	Be ambigious
AP	Apology
AR	Give (or ask for) reasons
B	Include both S and H in the activity
C	Use contradictions
D	Attempt to dissuade interlocutors
DCT	Discourse Completion Test
DF	Give deference
DH	Displace H
E	Excuse, reason and explanation
EX	Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)
F	Statement of empathy
G	Greetings and farewell
G/A	Gratitude/Appreciation
GC	Give association clues
GH	Give hints (motives for doing A or conditions for A)
GP	Granting permission for something
GR	State the FTA as general rule
H	Hedge
I	Intensify interest to H
ID	Be conventionally indirect
IDC	Be conventionally indirect
IDH	Go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting H
IE	Be incomplete, use ellipsis
IM	Use in-group identity markers
IR	Be ironic
IV	Invitations
J	Joke
M	Use metaphors
MI	Minimise the imposition
N	Nominalise
NH	Notice, attend to H (interest, goods, needs, wants)
NO	No
NP	Non-performative statement
NW	Negative willingness/ability
O	Offer, promise
ODCT	Oral Discourse Completion Test

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OF	Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement
OG	Over-generalize
OP	Be optimistic
OR	Assume or assert reciprocity
OS	Overstate
P	Postponement
P/F	Pause/fillers
PFA	Promise or future acceptance
PP	Presuppose/assert/ raise common ground
PR	Statement of principle
PRP	Presuppose
PS	Be pessimistic
PV	Using performative verbs
QH	Question/hedge
R	Repetition
RQ	Use rhetorical questions
RS	Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy,understanding, cooperation, *appreciation)
S	Sympathetic, advise, warning
SA	Seek agreement
SC	Set condition for future or past acceptance
SCF	Set condition for future or past acceptance
SH	Impersonalise S and H: avoid the pronoun 'I' and 'you'
SP	Statement of philosophy
SR	Statement of regret
T	Use tautologies
TO	Task-oriented, instructions
TS	Topic switch
UD	Great urgency or desperation
US	Understate
V	Be vague
W	Wish
WDCT	Written Discourse Completion Test
WE	Welcoming

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is a crucial means of communication as it carries some functions to help people interact to one another in expressing feelings, thoughts and fulfilling ones' communicative goals (Apriyanto, 2020). Leech (1974) stated that language has five main functions which are informational, expressive, directive, aesthetic and phatic. The first function of language which is informational function is the most important as it helps people to communicate their messages by conveying information through explanation, negotiation and justification which this will further help to initiate and maintain interpersonal relationship. At the same time, people communicate with each other through language to satisfy each other's needs and fulfill their own goals. The words used, manners of speaking and facial expression may reflect speaker' intention when conveying messages. For example, if a person wants to request for something, they tend to initiate the question using interrogative question likes 'would you' or 'could you' by using soft tone and maintain a good attitude rather than directly asking peopleto grant their wish. Otherwise, some people would perceive such request to be impolite. Apart from that, the ways people interpret certain messages are also influenced by sociological factors likes gender, topic of discussion and many more.

Language usage varies across genders, reflecting differing communicative styles. Women are often observed to use language with greater affection and a heightened

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Appendices

Appendix A: ODCT questions

***To answer the first and second research question.**
The following DCT situations will be read by the researcher. The participants MUST verbally reject to every situation below in the form of conversational discourse. The responses must be fully in English. The researcher can repeat the situation if the participants request for it. There is no time limit to respond to each situation.

Remark: The participant can use the particular example (name of the subject/society/lecturer in the DCT question) as to adapt to the current situationwhich they are familiar with.

Situation 1

Your best friend invites you for his/her brother's wedding on Saturday. How do you decline to his/her invitation?

Situation 2

Your senior whom you familiar with and was once your classmate in the previous semester, invites you to attend his/her convocation next Saturday. How do you declineto his/her invitation?

Situation 3

A junior whom you are not close with who is from the same club/society as you invitesyou to attend an annual grand dinner of such club/society. How do you reject to his/herinvitation?

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Situation 4

Your lecturer who teaches one of the subjects that you are taking whom you close with invites you to be his/her research participant for the university's project. How do youdecline to his/her invitation?

Situation 5

Your lecturer whom you know and familiar with invites you to attend one of the academic talks which will be held in UUM on next Saturday, and it's free of charge. How do you decline to his/her invitation?

Situation 6

Your programme coordinator which you are not close with and only meet him/her for official matters regarding studies invites you to attend a seminar in campus during theweekdays that is on next Thursday. How do you reject to his/her invitation?

Appendix B: Interview Questions

This part will be done after the evaluation of ODCT session.

***To answer the third research question.**

This section consists of two parts; the first part is on the use of direct/indirect strategies and politeness strategies while the second part is about sociological and cultural factors in making rejections and expressing politeness.

Please respond to the following questions. You can give specific examples to demonstrate your answer to the researcher. You are allowed to use Malay and English language. There is no time limit for this section.

PART ONE: The use of refusal and politeness strategies in daily life, and the participants' perceptions on sociological factors in the speech act of rejection. Is making rejection easy or difficult?

1. Why do you think rejection is easy/difficult?
2. From the situations in ODCT session

    a. Do you think you are being direct/indirect in making rejection? Why?
    b. Being polite can be understood as an act of not offending other people, showing respect and be considerate towards others. Do you think you are polite when making rejection to this situation? Why do you think so?

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3. When you receive an invitation to attend an academic talk in university by the following people;

    a. whom do you think will be easy and hard to reject? Why do you think so?

        I. Close junior which you know well for some semesters
        II. Distant junior who you barely know
        III. Best friend/ close classmate
        IV. A lecturer whom you are really close with
        V. A lecturer you barely know
        VI. A lecturer who you familiar with
        VII.

4. From the same situation, when you receive an invitation to attend an academic talk in university by the following people, how do you express politeness when rejecting to their invitation?

        I. Close junior which you know well for some semesters
        II. Distant junior who you barely know

III. Best friend/ close classmate
IV. A lecturer whom you are really close with
V. A lecturer you barely know
VI. A lecturer who you familiar with

PART TWO: *Cultural variables in making rejection and expressing politeness*

1. Do you think the ways you make rejections is due to your cultural practice?Can you explain?

2. Is the act of 'expressing politeness' important in your cultural practice?

3. Do you think culture becomes a factor to the ways you express politeness whenmaking rejection?

4. Do you think making rejection to people from the Malay, Chinese or Indianculture is different or just the same?

5. Do you think people from different cultures who are the Malays, Chinese andIndians do rejection and express politeness differently? Why?

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Appendix C: Sample of Evaluation Form

This section is for the participants to evaluate each DCT situation. This form will begiven after the DCT session.

Please evaluate each six DCT situations in the following questions.

Situation 1
Your best friend invites you for his/her brother's wedding on Saturday. How do you decline to his/her invitation?
Situation 2
Your senior whom you familiar with and was once your classmate in the previous semester, invites you to attend his/her convocation next Saturday. How do you declineto his/her invitation?
Situation 3
A junior whom you are not close with who is from the same club/society as you invitesyou to attend an annual grand dinner of such club/society. How do you reject to his/herinvitation?
Situation 4
Your lecturer who teaches one of the subjects that you are taking whom you close withinvites you to be his/her research participant for the university's project. How do youdecline to his/her invitation?
Situation 5
Your lecturer whom you know and familiar with invites you to attend one of the academic talks which will be held in UUM on next Saturday, and it's free of charge. How do you decline to his/her invitation?
Situation 6
Your programme coordinator which you are not close with and only meet him/her forofficial matters regarding studies invites you to attend a seminar in campus during theweekdays that is on next Thursday. How do you reject to his/her invitation?

1. Which situation(s) seem(s) most realistic to you?
2. Which situation(s) seem(s) least realistic to you?
3. Which situation(s) seem(s) most unclear? Why?
4. Which situation(s) is/are hard to understand or confusing? Why?
5. What would you suggest to make it/them more understandable or clearer?
   Other comments/suggestions?

Appendix D: Sample of Demographic Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MALAYSIAN UNDERGRADUATES AT (THE NAME OF THE UNIVERSITY)

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA
Please fill in the following aspect.

Gender(M/F) :

Age :

Race :

Year of study :

Contact number :

Email :

Hostel's room number:

Best time to reach you:
(Please specify the time)
Morning :

Afternoon :

Evening :

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Appendix E: Consent Form
(Malay/Chinese/Indian speaker of English)

You are invited to participate in English language analysis research. You were selected as theparticipant since you fulfilled all requirements needed to be in this research. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be included in the study.

This study is being supervised by Dr. Nur Rasyidah Mohd. Nordin (SeniorLecturers in Applied Linguistics Programme) and conducted by a doctoral student Nur Asyrani Che Ismail as a requirement for thesis research in the Applied Linguistics Programme, College of Arts & Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia.

INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

1. **Background Information.** The overall purpose of the research is to identify refusal and politeness strategies used when making rejection by the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The researcher is interested in analyzing spoken cross-cultural data

   Participants will be asked to interact with the researcher in oral Discourse CompletionTask (ODCT) and is followed with an interview.

2. **Description of Procedures.** If you agree to be in the project, you will be asked to participate in 6 ODCT situations and interview. Each situation will ask to respond asyou would in a real situation in your home country. Your response to each situation will be fully in English and is tape recorded. The collection of these data has no timelimit. You will be given a token of appreciation in the form of an item.

3. **Risks and Benefits.** The study has no risks. There is a significant potential benefit from your participation in the research. You may gain experience to be in the study ofdifferent cultures towards using language to make rejections and express politeness.

4. **Confidentiality.** The records of this survey will be kept confidential. In the researcher's thesis, any information that will make it possible to identify a respondentwill be excluded.

5. **Voluntary Participation.** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this research as it has no negative consequences for you. If you begin to participate in this research, you may at any time, for any reason, discontinue your participation without any negative consequences.

6. **Contacts and Questions.** The student researcher is Nur Asyrani Che Ismail. You mayask questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via email: nurasyrani_ryssa@yahoo.com or at 019-4529665.

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Authorization: I have read or listened to the above information and I have decided that I willparticipate in the project described above. The researcher has explained the study to me and answered my questioned. I know what will be asked of me. I consent to participate in the study. I will receive a token of appreciation in the form of an item.

Participant's Name:_____Participant's signature: _____

Date:_____

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Appendix F: Sample of Data Tabulation Tables on Frequencies of Politeness Strategies

a. Frequencies *of Positive Politeness Strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians According to Situations*

S	Positive Politeness (%) *N*=														
	The Malays														
	NH	EX	I	IM	SA	AD	PP	J	A	O	OP	B	OR	AR	RS
1.															
2.															
3.															
4.															
5.															
6.															
The Chinese															
1.															
2.															
3.															
4.															
5.															
6.															
The Indians															
1.															
2.															
3.															
4.															
5.															
6.															

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b. Frequencies *of Negative Politeness Strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians According to Situations*

Negative Politeness(%) *N*=										
The Malays										
S	IDC	QH	PS	MI	DF	AP	SH	GR	N	IDH
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
The Chinese										
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										
The Indians										
1.										
2.										
3.										
4.										
5.										
6.										

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c. Frequencies *of Bald Off Record Strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians According to Situations*

S	Bald off record (%) *N*=															
	The Malays															
	GH	GC	PRP	PR	US	OS	T	C	IR	M	RQ	AM	V	OG	DH	IE
1.																
2.																
3.																
4.																
5.																
6.																
The Chinese																
1.																
2.																
3.																
4.																
5.																
6.																
The Indians																
1.																
2.																
3.																
4.																
5.																
6.																

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d. Frequencies *of Bald Off Record Strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians According to Situation*

Bald on record (%) *N*=									
The Malays									
S	UD	AG	TO	S	GP	IV	WE	G	*N*
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
The Chinese									
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									
The Indians									
1.									
2.									
3.									
4.									
5.									
6.									

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Appendix G: Sample of Data Tabulation Tables of Refusal Strategies

a. Frequencies of Refusal Strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians According to Situations

S	Indirect (%) *N=56*										
	The Malays										
	SR	W	E	A	SCF	PFA	PR	SP	D	AUL	AC
1.											
2.											
3.											
4.											
5.											
6.											
The Chinese											
1.											
2.											
3.											
4.											
5.											
6.											
The Indians											
1.											
2.											
3.											
4.											
5.											
6.											

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b. Frequencies of Refusal Strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians According to Situations

Adjuncts to refusal (%) *N=*						Direct (%) *N=29*		
	The Malays							
S	PV	NP	NW	NO	O/F	F	P/G	G/A
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
The Chinese								
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
The Indians								
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								

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Appendix H: Overall Frequencies of Politeness Strategies by the Three Cultural Groups

a. Frequencies of Positive Politeness Strategies

Positive Politeness (%) *N=50*														
The Malays														
NH	EX	I	IM	SA	AD	PP	J	A	O	OP	B	OR	AR	RS
6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	0	0
The Chinese														
0	4	0	6	0	8	0	0	2	2	0	0	22	0	12
The Indians														
0	0	0	10	0	2	0	0	4	4	0	2	14	0	0

b. Frequencies of Negative Politeness Strategies

Negative Politeness (%) *N=35*									
The Malays									
IDC	QH	PS	MI	DF	AP	SH	GR	N	IDH
0	2.9	0	0	0	22.9	8.6	0	0	0
The Chinese									
0	8.6	0	0	0	22.9	0	0	0	0
The Indians									
0	2.9	0	0	0	31.4	0	0	0	0

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c. Frequencies of Bald off Record Strategies

Bald off record (%) *N=2*															
The Malays															
GH	GC	PRP	PR	US	OS	T	C	IR	M	RQ	AM	V	OG	DH	IE
0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Chinese															
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Indians															
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

d. Frequencies of Bald on Record Strategies

Bald on record (%) *N=*								
The Malays								
UD	AG	TO	S	GP	IV	WE	G	*N*
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Chinese								
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Indians								
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Appendix I: Overall Frequencies of Refusal Strategies by the ThreeCultural Groups

a. Frequencies of Indirect Strategies

Indirect (%) *N=56*										
The Malays										
SR	W	E	A	SCF	PFA	PR	SP	D	AUL	AC
10.7	0	16.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Chinese										
1.8	0	19.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8.9
The Indians										
19.6	0	14.3		0	0	0	0	0	0	3.6

b. Frequencies of Direct Strategies and Adjuncts to Refusal Strategies

Direct (%) *N=29*			Adjuncts to refusal (%) *N=10*			
The Malays						
PV	NO	NW	O/F	E	P/F	G/A
0	0	17.2	10.3	0	0	0
The Chinese						
0	0	31.0	6.9	0	0	0
The Indians						
0	0	24.1	6.9	0	0	17.2

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Appendix J: Sample of Transcriptions
from ODCT
(based on respective strategies)

	Transcription Female Chinese 1 (FC1)	Indirect										
		SR	W	E	A	SCF	PFA	PR	SP	D	AUL	AC
1.	I think I'm not able to come to your brother's wedding because I have another family gathering at the same day.											
2.	I have my family gathering at the same day so I cannot come to your convocation.											
3.	I do not have any transport for me to go to attend the annual party dinner that's why I'm not able to come to dinner.											
4.	I have class at the same time so I'm not able to do the interview.											
5.	I do not have any transport to travel back to Kampar to attend the talk.											
6.	I am not interested to attend this invitation. That's why I'm not going to attend.											

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Appendix K: Sample of Interview Analysis
(based on Thematic Analysis)

Q	L	Interview transcriptions (FC1)	Thematic Analysis			
			Culture	Power	Social Distance	Others
1	1	Easy. Because I can come out with any excuses that I want.				
2	1 2 3 4	I think it depends on the situation. Sometimes I need to be very direct to refuse to invitations but sometimes depend on situations. Maybe because I rarely cannot attend, maybe invitations clash with my classes. (obvious reasons would have no problem to do rejections.				
3	1 2	Yes, because if it's in real life situations, I will add like sorry and thank you in my conversation so that's why I think it's polite.				
4	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	A. From Hardest to do rejection. DFEBAC. Like for example if this is the lecturer that I really close with is hard to refuse an adult for the invitation. But if it's my best friend, anytime I can reject. B. If this is the lecturer I really close with, I'll say I'm sorry Miss, I'm not able to come because I have another event or another situation clash with the same event so that's why I'm not able to come. Sorry but thank you for inviting me. If my close friend, I'm not able to come.				
5	1 2 3	Yes, I think my parents taught me to reject people in polite way and because I'm working as part timer sometimes outside, so I have some working experience so I know how to reject politely.				
6	1	Cultural practice for me not but for me personally yes.				
7	1 2 3	Yes sometimes, it depends on situation. Sometimes when we are working in the shopping centre. Some of the salesmen or salesgirl will come and approach us to sell some items then that's the time when we need to reject politely because it is				

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	4 5	about polite, to show (inaudible). After working as promoter a few times I need to understand to reject politely if I do not want that.				
8	1	Just the same. (just the fact to do rejection)				
9	1 2	Yes. Maybe it's from different cultures so that's why we are more polite to the Indians and Malays as compared to the Chinese.				

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Appendix L: List of abbreviations Refusal

Taxonomies (Beebe et al., 1990)

No.	Abbreviations	Refusal Strategies
Indirect		
1.	SR	Statement of regret
2.	W	Wish
3.	E	Excuse, reason and explanation
4.	A	Statement of alternative
5.	SCF	Set condition for future or past acceptance
6.	PFA	Promise or future acceptance
7.	PR	Statement of principle
8.	SP	Statement of philosophy
9.	D	Attempt to dissuade interlocutors
		Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester
		Guilt trip
		Criticize the request/requester (statement of negative feelingor opinion; insult/attack)
		Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping orholding the request
		Let interlocutor off the hook
		Self-defense
10.	AUL	Acceptance that functions as a refusal
		Unspecific or indefinite reply
		Lack of enthusiasm
11.	AC	Avoidance (Verbal)
	TS	Topic switch
	J	Joke
	R	Repetition
	P	Postponement
	H	Hedge
Direct		
1.	PV	Using performative verbs
2.	NP	Non-performative statement
	NO	No
	NW	Negative willingness/ability
Adjuncts to refusal		
1.	OF	Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement
2.	F	Statement of empathy
3.	P/G	Pause/fillers
4.	G/A	Gratitude/Appreciation

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Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

No.	Abbreviations	Politeness Strategies
	Positive	
1.	NH	Notice, attend to H (interest, goods, needs, wants)
2.	EX	Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)
3.	I	Intensify interest to H
4.	IM	Use in-group identity markers
5.	SA	Seek agreement
6.	AD	Avoid disagreement
7.	PP	Presuppose/assert/ raise common ground
8.	J	Joke
9.	A	Assert or presuppose S's knowledge of and concern for H'swants
10.	O	Offer, promise
11.	OP	Be optimistic
12	B	Include both S and H in the activity
13.	OR	Assume or assert reciprocity
14.	AR	Give (or ask for) reasons
15.	RS	Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy,understanding,cooperation, *appreciation)
	Negative	
1.	IDC	Be conventionally indirect
2.	QH	Question/hedge
3.	PS	Be pessimistic
4.	MI	Minimise the imposition
5.	DF	Give deference
6.	AP	Apology
7.	SH	Impersonalise S and H: avoid the pronoun 'I' and 'you'
8.	GR	State the FTA as general rule
9.	N	Nominalise
10.	IDH	Go on record as incurring debt, or as not indebting H
	Bald off record	
1.	GH	Give hints (motives for doing A or conditions for A)
2.	GC	Give association clues
3.	PRP	Presuppose
4.	US	Understate
5.	OS	Overstate
6.	T	Use tautologies
7.	C	Use contradictions

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8.	IR	Be ironic
9.	M	Use metaphors
10.	RQ	Use rhetorical questions
11.	AM	Be ambigious
12	V	Be vague

13.	OG	Over-generalize
14.	DH	Displace H
15.	IE	Be incomplete, use ellipsis
Bald on record		
1.	UD	Great urgency or desperation
2.	AG	Speak in maximum efficiency, found in attention getters
3.	TO	Task-oriented, instructions
4.	S	Sympathetic, advise, warning
5.	GP	Granting permission for something
6.	IV	Invitations
7.	WE	Welcoming
8.	G	Greetings and farewell

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Appendix M: Sample of Data Analysis in Refusal Strategies

	Transcription Female Chinese 1 (FC1)-Veronica	DIRECT			ADJUNCTS TO REFUSAL							
		PV	NO	NW	O/F	E	P/F	G/A	PV	NO	NW	O/F
1.	I'm sorry I cannot make it, but I send you the money. I'm so sorry I cannot come because of work. I hope you understand.			/								
2.	Oh okay, it's your convocation! I look forward in attending but I have to look at my schedule first because something might be on. I'll see how and let you know. If I can't then I send you a message.											
3.	I'm sorry I can't attend and I hope you understand because I have something on.			/								
4.	Thank you for the opportunity taking me as your research participant but I'm sorry be one of the because I have something on. And I will find someone to like replace me.							/				
5.	I'm sorry, I cannot attend it because I have something on and it's on Saturday, so I have my own plan. Sorry I cannot attend the academic talk.			/								
6.	I'm sorry I cannot attend. Thank you for inviting me. Sorry, I cannot attend the seminar conducted on campus. Sorry for the inconvenience caused.			/				/				
				4				2				

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	Transcription Female Chinese 1 (FC1)-Veronica	Indirect										
		SR	W	E	A	SCF	PFA	PR	SP	D	AUL	AC
1.	I'm sorry I cannot make it, but I send you the money. I'm so sorry I cannot come because of work. I hope you understand.	/		/						/		
2.	Oh okay, it's your convocation! I look forward in attending but I have to look at my schedule first because something might be on. I'll see how and let you know. If I can't then I send you a message.			/			/			/		/
3.	I'm sorry I can't attend and I hope you understand because I have something on.	/		/						/		
4.	Thank you for the opportunity taking me as your research participant but I'm sorry be one of the because I have something on. And I will find someone to like replace me.	/		/			/					
5.	I'm sorry, I cannot attend it because I have something on and it's on Saturday, so I have my own plan. Sorry I cannot attend the academic talk.	/		/								
6.	I'm sorry I cannot attend. Thank you for inviting me. Sorry, I cannot attend the seminar conducted on campus. Sorry for the inconvenience caused.	/										
	TOTAL	5		5			2			3		1

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Appendix N: Sample of Data Analysis in Politeness Strategies

Positive Politeness																	
	Situation	NH	EX	I	IM	SA	AD	PP	J	A	O	OP	B	OR	AR	RS	GRT
1.	I'm sorry I cannot make it, but I send you the money. I'm so sorry I cannot come because of work. I hope you understand.														/	/	
2.	Oh okay, it's your convocation! I look forward in attending but I have to look at my schedule first because something might be on. I'll see how and let you know. If I can't then I send you a message.	/					H			/	/				/	/	
3.	I'm sorry I can't attend and I hope you understand because I have something on.														/		
4.	Thank you for the opportunity taking me as your research participant but I'm sorry be one of the because I have something on. And I will find someone to like replace me.										/				/		/
5.	I'm sorry, I cannot attend it because I have something on and it's on Saturday, so I have my own plan. Sorry I cannot attend the academic talk.														/		
6.	I'm sorry I cannot attend. Thank you for inviting me. Sorry, I cannot attend the seminar conducted on campus. Sorry for the inconvenience caused.																/
		1					1			1	2				5	2	2

Negative Politeness													
	Situation	IDC	QH	PS	MI	DF	AP	SH	G	N	IDH	SY	SG
1.	I'm sorry I cannot make it, but I send you the money. I'm so sorry I cannot come because of work. I hope you understand.						BG					/	
2.	Oh okay, it's your convocation! I look forward in attending but I have to look at my schedule first because something might be on. I'll see how and let you know. If I can't then I send you a message.												
3.	I'm sorry I can't attend and I hope you understand because I have something on.						BG					/	
4.	Thank you for the opportunity taking me as your research participant but I'm sorry be one of the because I have something on. And I will find someone to like replace me.						BG						
5.	I'm sorry, I cannot attend it because I have something on and it's on Saturday, so I have my own plan. Sorry I cannot attend the academic talk.						BG						
6.	I'm sorry I cannot attend. Thank you for inviting me. Sorry, I cannot attend the seminar conducted on campus. Sorry for the inconvenience caused.						BG						

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Q	L	Interview transcriptions (FC1)	Thematic Analysis					
			Rejection			Politeness		
			Difficulty	Reason/Strategy	Culture	Difficulty	Reason/Strategy	Culture
PI 1	1	A. actually I find rejection is very difficult la.	Yes					
2	1 2 3 4	For example the first case, the close friend , you can't attend the brother's wedding and something like that, actually bad because I can't make it because that person is really close to me and also and ya.. for people who are not close to, yes it's easier to reject.	Closer-harder to reject Distant- easier to reject	Closeness				
3	1 2	A. While making rejection right, I feel like I make it as indirect as possible as I don't want to hurt that person. For someone that I'm really close to, I don't want to be someone that bad and to those that I'm not really close to, yes I'll be direct because we don't have a certain kind of relationship and we don't know each other right so it's easier to be like very direct. And for people we know, we might hurt their feeling as they expecting something from you and you can't make it so, I try to make it indirect as possible. B. Yes I feel like I'm being polite when making rejection even though the words don't sound it but the way I put it, I try to talk to that person, I sound like as polite as possible.		Closed ones: Indirect- to avoid hurting them Distant ones: Direct			indirect words: rephrasing the words Being polite in refusing	
4	1 2 3 4 5 6	A. Close junior whom you know for the semester	H3					
		B. Distant junior who you barely know	E1					
		C. Best friend/ close classmate	H2					
		D. A lecturer whom you are really close with	H1					
		E. A lecturer you barely know	E2					
		F. A lecturer who you familiar with	E3					
5		Usually when I reject people, I try to apologise first and also, be grateful because they invite me so that means I..so then I try to use words that are like, not that..you know not that direct, in direct way..and then I would express a bit like I sound really really sorry, I cant make it, I really can't. if I can make it then I would try my best to make it to talk or something like that. **these are applicable except for those I don't really know them, as I will just directly reject		Apologise, express gratefulness and indirectness.			Apologise, expression of positive remark and indirectness	

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		them.						
PII 1	1 2 3	I think that my culture does play a huge role because we Chinese we tend to say Yes to everything when it comes to people whom really close to so we say no matter busy we are, we prioritise these people then that's how it makes rejection a bit harder to people who we are really close to. And also like if we don't attend to those people who are really close to, we will hear a lot la, like small talks, people back stab you, 'why is she..something..something'.		Rejection is harder to be made especially to those closed ones.	Reflective from Chinese culture= to being acceptive at most times		Reflective from Chinese culture	
2	1 2 3 4	Yes, for example, if I can't attend my relative wedding or something, we'll try make it up by giving something like money a bit more than usual so like to show that we are sorry then this is how we show that we really want to attend it but we can't attend it because of something else so.		Compensation			Compensation	
3	1	I feel like culture is a part of it but it does not stand a huge, it's not the main thing you know. It's how we view things also like, in the past I also don't like to reject people, basically say yes to everything, and then now when I go into uni, and then and I look at things differently. And then I start to learn that, actually it's ok to reject people. You can say no but find the way that is suitable and it suits like how you respond to them, particular person and then, yea, basically culture and the environment you are in, kind of people you are dealing with it's a huge role. Not because only culture la.				Culture and environment influencing how one is expressing politeness	Politeness and Chinese culture is relatab;e	
4	1	From me,Malays like, when they reject you they say can can. And then at the very last minute, they will tell you, ohh I'm sorry I cannot make it because of this and that. They won't let you know in advance you know. For Indians, they are like, they are the more like the okay one. They are not bad. Some Indians take you seriously. Some will say, can can but at the very last minute, they can't make it.		Different refusal strategies by different cultures. Malays-give excuses Indians-accepting refusal is challenging				
5	1 2	I feel like there is, coming from Chinese background. We always believe that money can cover everything la. Then money is the					Politeness strategies are distinctive due	Chinese-compensation

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		compensation. Just give money. This is how we show this. I am a part of this in different form, not in person but money la. And the malays, I feel like they sometimes right in the past, my malay friends hard to reject you and then they show, some of them are really true with their words and some of them they are like take rejection very easy. And Indians are the same.					to cultures	Malays and Indians-giving true excuses/be honest

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Appendix O: Sample of Expert Review Form

EXPERT REVIEW FORM

I have reviewed samples of data analysis sent to me by Nur Asyrani binti Che Ismail, a doctoral in research student at the Awang Had Salleh School of Arts and Sciences, Universiti Utara Malaysia under the supervision of Dr. Nur Rasyidah binti Mohd. Nordin.

Table 1 summarises the data analysis instrument/method and framework for each research question accordingly:

Research question	Focus	Instrument/Method	Data analysis framework
One	Refusal strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians.	Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT)	Refusal Taxonomies (Beebe et al., 1990)
Two	Politeness strategies by the Malays, Chinese and Indians.	Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT)	Model of Politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987)
Three	Perspectives of refusal from different cultures.	Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012)	Cultural Dimension Theory (Hall, 1979; Hofstede, 2001)

As an Expert Reviewer of this study:

Data analysis of RQ 1:
May require researcher to firstly identify whether the response is direct or indirect by looking at the structure of response/ prosodic nature of the response (upon uttering). I think this would answer whether responses are taken to be direct/indirect at face value (different to what speakers/respondents had in mind).

Data analysis of RQ 2:
I think identifying the elements (refusal and politeness) separately could be confusing. Instead, I suggest that both models be adopted and adapted into a comprehensive table where you can identify the elements in one go (rather than two times as this may affect your labelling them).

Data analysis of RQ 3:
Overall, I think the spreadsheet was pretty comprehensive except that for item Q4 (scale of doing rejection), how did you determine the choice of persons based on power? Aren't all the lecturers technically have more authority over the student? And wouldn't there be different "power" between junior and senior students?

Expert name : SITI AEISHA JOHARRY

Expert Institution : Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam

Expert Signature : 

Date : 14/03/2023

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Appendix P: Sample of Comments on ODCT and Interview

Appendix A: ODCT questions

The following DCT situations will be read by the researcher. The participants MUST verbally reject to every situation below in the form of conversational discourse. The participants are allowed to use Malay or English language when responding to each ODCT question. There is no time limit for this section. The researcher can repeat the situation if the participants request for it.

Remark: The participant can use the particular example (name of the subject/society/lecturer in the DCT question) as to adapt to the current situation which they are familiar with.

Situation 1

Your best friend invites you for his/her brother's wedding on Saturday. How do you decline to his/her invitation?

Situation 2

Your senior whom you are familiar with and was once your classmate in the previous semester, invites you to attend his/her convocation next Saturday. How do you decline his/her invitation?

Situation 3

A junior whom you are not close with who is from the same club/society as you invites you to attend an annual grand dinner of such club/society. How do you reject his/her invitation?

Situation 4

Your lecturer who teaches one of the subjects that you are taking whom you close with invites you to be his/her research participant for the university's project. How do you decline his/her invitation?

Situation 5

Your lecturer whom you know and familiar with invites you to attend one of the academic talks which will be held in UTAR on next Saturday, and it's free of charge. How do you decline his/her invitation?

Situation 6

Your programme coordinator whom you are not close with and only meet him/her for official matters regarding studies invites you to attend a seminar conducted on campus during the next Thursday. How do you reject his/her invitation?

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interviews sessions for participants are conducted at the end of their ODCT sessions. This section consists of two parts; the first part is on the use of direct/indirect strategies and politeness strategies while the second part is on sociological and cultural factors in making rejections and expressing politeness.

Please respond to the following questions. You can give specific examples to demonstrate your answer to the researcher. You are allowed to use Malay and English language. There is no time limit for this section.

PART ONE: The use of refusal and politeness strategies in daily life, and the participants' perceptions on sociological factors in the speech act of rejection.

1. Is making rejection easy or difficult?
2. Why do you think rejection is easy/difficult?
3. From the situations in ODCT session

   a. Do you think you are being direct/indirect in making rejection? Why?
   b. Do you think you are polite when making rejection in this situation? Why do you think so?

4. When you receive an invitation to attend an academic talk in university by the following people;

   a. whom do you think will be easy and hard to reject? Why do you think so?

      I. Close junior which you know well for some semesters
      II. Distant junior who you barely know
      III. Best friend/ close classmate
      IV. A lecturer whom you are really close with
      V. A lecturer you barely know
      VI. A lecturer who you familiar with

5. From the same situation, when you receive an invitation to attend an academic talk in university by the following people, how do you express politeness when rejecting their invitation?

      I. Close junior which you know well for some semesters
      II. Distant junior who you barely know
      III. Best friend/ close classmate
      IV. A lecturer whom you are really close with
      V. A lecturer you barely know
      VI. A lecturer who you familiar with

Would the participants need to be informed earlier about what 'rejection' refers to here?

Would there be a difference between if junior/senior were to be the one inviting?

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PART TWO:Cultural variables in making rejection and expressing politeness

1. Do you think the ways you make rejections is due to your cultural practice? Can you explain?

I think 'cultural practice' may need to be described/introduced first -is it any different to their 'upbringing'?

2. Is the act of 'expressing politeness' important in your cultural practice?

3. Do you think culture becomes a factor to the ways you express politeness when making rejection?

"in the way you express...

4. Do you think making rejection to people from the Malay, Chinese or Indian culture is different or just the same in terms of using words or phrases and the strategies used when uttering the rejection to them? Why?

5. Do you think people from different cultures who are the Malays, Chinese and Indians express politeness differently in terms of using words or phrases and strategies used when making rejection? Why?

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