



The Refusal Speech Act in *Me Before You* Movie

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Abstract

This study aimed at identifying the strategies in refusal in *Me Before You*. This movie was adapted by the novel and the writer's name is Jojo Moyes. Refusal has two types, they are indirect and direct refusal. Indirect refusal is mostly used because it can decrease the negative effect (FTA) of refusal itself. The strategies of indirect refusal are found alternative, reason and explanation, request for additional information, apology or regret, repetition of part previous discourse, and postponement. The study applied an observational method and non-participatory technique by Sudaryanto. Then, this study applied pragmatics method to analyze the data. The finding showed that there were 5 utterances that contained request for additional information and this strategy was mostly used by the characters in this movie.

Keywords: pragmatics; refusal; strategies

Introduction

Teacher saw the student who wanted to borrow a pen to her friend, but her friend refused to borrow it by saying “enggak lah!” with a wrinkle face. They argued each other and it caused the negative effect for their relationship. Actually, when people want to refuse, it can be done by politely. From that phenomena, this study is really interesting to be done. It can develop the knowledge for the readers that to refuse in the form of request, offer, suggestion, and statement, it can be accomplished by the strategies where it can decrease the negative effect of refusal itself (Tuncer and Turhan, 2019; Mengesha and Padmanabhan, 2019). The request which is not accomplished due to some reasons or decline is known as a refusal. Félix-Brasdefer (2008) explained that refusal belongs to the category of commissives because the speaker commits the refuser to perform an action. One of

the example that contained the utterance of refusal was found in this movie, it was shown below:

Josie : Lou will get another job. She has a lot of potential.

MrClark : **There are no jobs**, Josie, I should know. Look, I'm just sayin'. (04:19)

Mr Clark was worried about his daughter, Louisa. He made a statement that was refused by Josie as his wife. The utterance recognized as direct refusal. Refusal speech act was done by many researchers all over the world.

Al-mahrooqi and Al-aghbari (2016) discussed the article This to find out how the students refuse in different situation and whether their responses were appropriate according to culture and correct according to the language among Omani EFL students.

Müge and Delena (2010) analyzed this study to figure out to what extent English learners at TOBB University of Economics and Technology Preparatory School in Ankara, Turkey can perform strategies of three specific speech acts: requests, refusals, and complaints.

The focus of this study is about the strategies were found in the *Me Before You*. This research is crucial to be done because refusal always happens in the real life and to make the readers have a good understanding about refusal and the strategies to refuse.

Method

This study applies qualitative descriptive method. It means the data in the form utterances and phenomena occurs in daily life. The data were collected by watching the movie, reading the script of the movie, and taking a note Sudaryanto (2015). The technique of collecting data was non-participatory and it also applied pragmatics identity method Birner (2013) to analyze the data.

Result

There were 12 utterances that indicated indirect refusal and its strategy and 1 utterance was found for direct refusal.

1. Alternative is applied to suggest alternatives or possibilities. The data was found: **"There is no chance of Jay-z?"**
2. Reason and explanation provides excuse and explanation to refuse. The data were found: **"I'm still having nightmares about those giblest", "it turns out hot wax is not my friend"**
3. Request for additional information means the refuser asks for the information which is not previously mentioned. The data were found: **"do we have to discuss it again?", "Is this how anyone like to dress?", " and you thought a drive would be good for me? A breath of fresh air." "did**

you find a good quad support group i could join? Quads-R-Us? The tin wheel club?", "What, What about Thomas?".

4. Apology and regret are expressed by the refuser for some offences. The data was found: **"I'm sorry, we can only serve premier badge holders"**
5. Repetition of part of previous discourse means the refuser repeats the previous discourse of the speaker. The data was found: **"the scarf? Why?"**
6. Postponement means the refuser puts off the suggestion, offer, invitation, and statement. The data was found: **"I will bear that in mind, thank you."**

There were 3 utterances that contained indirect refusal and they had no strategies.

7. **"uuhh, ahhh, no."**
8. **"No I can't, I can't and it's gonna be too deep. I can't."**
9. **"No."**

Literature Review

Pragmatics

According to Birner (2013) pragmatics may be roughly defined as the study of language use in context. In other word, pragmatic is the process of learning the language and it needs context to analyze the language or the utterance. Can be caught that context is really crucial in pragmatic. Pragmatics relates to the speaker, how the speaker arranges what is going to be uttered by the speaker and what is meant by the speaker. Can be explained that pragmatics also the study about meaning in language.

Speech acts

speech acts are the actions done by the hearer that purposed by the interlocutor. Yule (2010)&Song et al., (2019) the term speech act to describe actions such as "requesting," "commanding," "questioning" or "informing."

Refusal

Félix-Brasdefer (2008)refusal belongs to the category commissives because the speaker commits the refuser to perform an action. The forms of refusal are examined refuse to suggestion, offer, statement, inviatio, request, and a variety situation. The refusal strategies can be various. The gender, level of education, social class, and age of the interlocutor can influence the strategies of refusal.

Types of refusal

According to Félix-Brasdefer (2008) there are three classifications of refusal. The first is direct refusal, second is indirect refusal and the last is adjuncts to refusal. Below the explanation as the following:

Direct refusals

Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey as cited in Félix-Brasdefer (2008) the direct verbal style refers to verbal message that embody and invoke speaker's true intention in terms of their wants, needs and desires in the discourse process. On the other hand, direct refusal means people express the refusal clearly. They deliver their true intention includes what their wants, needs and desire when they get offer, invitation, suggestion and so on. Usually, the word "no" is recognized as direct refusal or negation of a proposition, Félix-Brasdefer (2008). The example: "**you know what, i can't go**" Félix-Brasdefer (2008)

Indirect refusals

Leech as cited in Félix-Brasdefer (2008), on the indirectness scale "illocutions are ordered with respect to the path (in terms of means -ends analysis) connecting the illocutionary act to its illocutionary goal. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey stated as cited in Félix-Brasdefer(2008), the indirect verbal style "refers to verbal message that camouflage and conceal speaker's true intention in terms of their wants, needs, and goal in the discourse situation. On the other hand, indirect refusal means people avoid refusing in a clear way. They tend to hide their true intentions in terms of their wants, needs and goal. Indirect refusal has 12 strategies. Below the explanation as the following:

Mitigated Refusal

The mitigated refusal means people use the strategy to mitigate the refusal itself. Basically, when people refuse a proposition by someone directly, it gives the negative effect. To decrease the negative effect of the refusal itself, this strategy can be used. Example of the strategy is "**Unfortunately I won't able to attend your farewell party.**" KinantiKayang (2018). Félix-Brasdefer (2008) conveyed that mitigated refusals are expressions which are internally modified by hedges that reduce the negative effect. The refuser gives such as mental state predicates e.g "to think, to believe", adverbs "unfortunately" or degree modifiers "a little, somewhat".

Reason or Explanation

Félix-Brasdefer (2008) defined when this strategy is used, the respondent indirectly refuses an invitation, request, or suggestion by providing excuses, accounts, or explanation. This strategy can soften the bad effect of refusal itself, because the refuser gives an excuse or explanation why she or he cannot conduct what the interlocutor needs to perform. The example is "**i have an exam**" Ghazanfari, Bonyadi, and Malekzadeh(2012)

An indefinite reply

Félix-Brasdefer (2008) defined that by using an indefinite reply to refuse an invitation, request, and suggestion, the speaker's intentional message remains vague, uncertain, and undecided. In addition, an indefinite reply often shows uncertainty on the part of the refuser and the outcome of the interaction is left open or indefinite. On the other hand, an indefinite reply is a strategy that can be used if refuser cannot assure or cannot give a clear decision whether he or she can attend the invitation, accept the suggestion and conduct the request. As shown in example is "**I really wanna do that**" Félix-Brasdefer (2008).

Apology/Regret

Leech as cited in Félix-Brasdefer (2008), express regret for some offence committed by s[peaker] against the h[earer]- and there is no implication that s[peaker] has benefited from the offence. On the other hand, when the refuser uses this strategy to decline the proposition, there will be no implication of refusal itself. This strategy is appropriate to be used because it delivers good manner to a person who gets refused in terms of invitation, suggestion or request. The example is "**what can i say forgive me i am so ashamed**" Bella (2011).

An alternative

Félix-Brasdefer (2008) defined that the respondent uses this strategy to suggest alternative or possibilities in order to negotiate face with the interlocutor and arrive at a mutual agreement. When refusing an invitation, a request, or a suggestion. An alternative is a strategy used to give another optional thing to the interlocutor when the hearer actually does not agree with the request, suggestion or invitation offered. The example is "**maybe i will try to come later**" Bella (2011).

A postponement

Félix-Brasdefer (2008) stated that when postponing a refusal, the speaker does not want to explicitly make a commitment and therefore, puts off an invitation, a request, and a suggestion. On the other hand, this strategy is an act to put off the invitation, a request and a suggestion. The example is "**i tried**" Allami (2010).

Repetition of previous discourse.

Félix-Brasdefer(2008) defined that when the strategy employed, the speaker repeats a portion of previous discourse mentioned in the interlocutor's invitation, request, or suggestion. On the other hand, repetition of previous discourse means the refuser repeats the words that have been said by the interlocutor where actually it is as a strategy to refuse the proposition. As usual, this strategy is used by the refuser to think which excuses will be delivered to the interlocutor. Can be

seen in the example is “**what? Next Friday?**” Félix-Brasdefer (2008).

Request for additional information.

Félix-Brasdefer (2008) and Park & Oh, (2019) defined that, this strategy is used to ask for the information not previously mentioned in the addressee’s invitation, request, or suggestion and shows interest in both the interlocutor and his/her proposition. Can be understood, this strategy is used by the refuser to ask the detail related with the invitation, suggestion or request. It is considered as a verbal avoidance as stated Félix-Brasdefer (2008) and Alrefae (2019) because it puts off the response from the negation itself. The example is “**what time is the party?**” KinantiKayang (2018)

Context

There are different kinds of context. One kind is described as linguistic context, also known as co-text (Yule, 2020). The co-text of a word is the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence. The surrounding co-text has a strong effect on what we think the word probably means (Kaharuddin, 2020). The word *bank* as a homonym a single form with more than one meaning. If the word *bank* is used in a sentence together with words like *steep*, or *overgrown* we have no problem deciding which type of *bank* is meant.

Discussion

Indirect Refusal

In daily life, people tend to use indirect refusal to refuse something. Indirect refusal is more polite to be uttered in the various situations or it can decrease negative impact of refusal itself. As in the theories above, indirect refusal includes the strategies as the following:

Data 1

Patrick: think what you want to do. Estate agent, maybe shop assistant, catering.

Louisa : ***do we have to discuss it again?***

In the first data, Patrick was Louisa’s boyfriend. He suggested Louisa to get another job because Louisa got fire by her boss. It belongs to indirect refusal, because Louisa refused indirectly to talk about job. Louisa used an alternative strategy. It is categorized as alternative strategy.

Data 2

Sayed : in the last two weeks, we tried the chicken processing factory.

Louisa : ***I’m still having nightmares about those giblest***

In this conversation, Sayeed was the worker in the Job center and Louisa came to

him to ask the job and Louisa refused the job. The type of this utterance is indirect refusal because when Sayeed offered the job Louisa refused indirectly. This utterance is recognized as reason/explanation strategy. She gave the reason why she refused to work at the chicken processing factory.

Data 3

Sayed : we tried beautician.

Louisa : ***it turns out hot wax is not my friend***

In the third data, Sayeed offered her to work at the beautician. She refused it again indirectly. She told the reason why she could not work there. It is recognized as reason/explanation strategy.

Data 4

Louisa: ***is this how anyone like to dress?***

Jossie : it served me very well

Louisa : *in 1983*

In this conversation, Louisa got the new job and her mom dressed her based on the taste of her mom. Louisa refused indirectly to wear it. She used alternative strategy by asking, where actually she wanted to wear another dress. Then her mom said that dress really helped to get the job, and then Louisa refused it again by saying *in 1983* which the dress really helped to get the job when in 1983 not in nowadays.

Data 5

Louisa : So I thought we could go out this afternoon.

Will : Where do you have in mind?

Louisa : well, I was told you have a car that was adapted for wheelchairs.

Will : ***and you thought a drive would be good for me? A breath fresh air.***

In this conversation, Louisa was a paid professional. She was employed by Will's mom. In this situation, Will was paralyzed because he got an accident and Will used wheelchair. Louisa suggested him to go out with the car that was adapted for wheelchair. This strategy is request for additional information where Will asked whether a drive is good for him which that question indicated Will refused Louisa's suggestion.

Data 6

Louisa : well, I could get you your computer?

Will : ***Did you find a good quad support group I could join? 'Quads-R-Us? The 'Tin Wheels' club?***

In this conversation, the situation was still the same with above. Louisa still tried to cheer up Will, and she tried to offer other thing. Louisa wanted to take

Will's computer in order to make Will did not get bored but Will still. The type of refusal is indirect refusal which used a request for additional information. Here, Will gave a question again. Actually Will did not want to be bothered by anyone and Will made a deal with Louisa that Louisa could not be chatty around him.

Data 7

Louisa : we want a table for three please.

Waitress : of course, if I could see your badges.

Louisa : sorry?

Waitress : this restaurant is for premier badge holder.

Louisa : oh well we, we've got the pink badges.

Waitress: *I'm sorry we can only serve premier badge holders.*

In this conversation Louisa went to restaurant at the horse racing with Will and Nathan. Louisa did not have premier badges so Louisa could not eat in that restaurant. It can be seen from the utterance; the strategy is apology/regret.

Data 8

Will : a wind concerto?

Louisa : I've been assured it doesn't involve farting.

Will : *There's no chance of Jay-Z?*

Louisa : sadly, his tickets had just sold out.

In this conversation, Louisa invited Will to go a wind concerto, but it seemed Will did not want to go and he just asked about another concert. It used an alternative strategy to refuse it, because he just offered to see another concert instead of attending a wind concerto.

Data 9

Katrina: Look! I'm thinking of going back to college. Someone's dropped business study and they can take me back.

Louisa: *What? What about Thomas?*

In this conversation, Katrina and Louisa were in the bedroom. Katrina was Louisa's sister. In the bedroom, they shared each other about everything. Then Katrina said that she wanted to go back to college to Louisa while Louisa worried about Katrina's son names Thomas. From what Louisa uttered, she refuses indirectly if Katrina wanted to go back to college. She used request for additional information strategy because she asked about Thomas where actually she wanted to get additional information how about Thomas if Katrina went back to College.

Data 10

Will : Lose the scarf!

Louisa : ***The scarf? Why?***

Will: If you are going to wear a dress like that, you have to wear it with confidence.

In this conversation, Will and Louisa would go to classical music concert. Louisa wore the red dress and the scarf on her neck to cover her breast. Will asked Louisa to take it off the scarf. Louisa indirectly refuses to take the scarf off. Louisa repeated the previous discourse *the scarf?*. It is known as the repetition of part of previous discourse strategy.

Data 11

Patrick: There is Swedish study that says you can train your muscles.

Louisa: Patrick!

Patrick: What? I'm just tryna..

Louisa: Yeah, don't!

Will: ***I will bear that in mind. Thank you.***

In the conversation, Louisa celebrated her birthday party. She invited Will and Patrick to eat dinner in her house. When they ate dinner, Patrick was actually jealous toward Will because Louise fed Will. Then, Patrick told to Will that Will could recover by training his muscles. In that situation, Louisa was actually upset to Patrick. Patrick was not supposed to say that to Will. Then, Will responded what Patrick said. It is recognized as indirect refusal where Will actually put off to what Patrick suggested.

Direct Refusal

In daily activity, people also tend to use direct refusal to decline a proposition. Usually people use direct refusal to people who have same status or toward people who have lower status. Generally, when people use direct refusal can give negative effect to the interlocutor or can affect the relationship between the speaker and listener. Here are the data of indirect refusal done by the cast in the *Me Before You*.

Data 12

Patrick: Run with me babe! C'mon.

Louisa: ***Uhhh... ahhh..no.***

In this conversation, the situation was Louisa met Patrick in the stadium. Patrick asked her to run with him. She refused directly what Patrick proposed. Considering Patrick was Louisa's boyfriend, where they had the same status so Louisa refused him directly.

Data 13

Patrick: What is this Lou?! Your job, it takes priority over everything these days.

Louisa: Patrick, this is important, okay? Trust me.

Patrick: It's Norway. It's mean to be our holiday.

Louisa: *I just can't*

In this conversation, the situation was Louisa approached Patrick when Patrick did his exercise. At first Louisa and Patrick had a plan to go to Norway. Louisa came to Patrick to say that she could not come along with Patrick because she had a trip with Will and it was considered as a work for her. Here, Patrick got mad to her and Patrick forced Louisa to come along with him. She still insisted that she could not go. It is recognized as direct refusal and it caused her relationship with Patrick becoming chaos because they had made a plan and suddenly Louisa had a trip with Will.

Data 14

Will: Just do it

Louisa: *No I can't, I can't and it's gonna be too deep. I can't.*

Will: You can, you can do anything.

In this conversation, the situation was when they were in the harbor. Will requested Louisa to try a scuba diving. She kept saying she could not do it, she refused what Will requested directly. In case Will had higher status than Louisa where Will was actually Louisa's boss so she could not refuse what Will requested directly. In this situation, Will and Louisa actually fell in love each other, so it did not mind for Louisa to refuse Will directly.

Data 15

Louisa: Sorry I'm being chatty again and you need to rest

Will: *No.*

The situation when they were in bedroom. Will was sick and Louisa took care of him. Here, actually Louisa asked Will about what happened with him and why he could be paralyzed. Then, she realized that she broke the deal that she could not be chatty around Will. She said sorry and she suggested Will to rest. Will refused directly what Louisa suggested.

Conclusion

Refusal often causes the negative effect (FTA) toward the relationship between people in society. In this study, there were two types of refusal, they were indirect and direct refusal. In this movie, the characters mostly used indirect refusal to refuse an offer, suggestion, invitation, and request. This type of refusal was chosen because it can soften the refusal itself. Moreover, indirect refusal has twelve

strategies that can be used to refuse politely. The researchers found only six strategies were applied by the characters. They were alternative, reason and explanation, request for additional information, apology and regret, repetition of part of previous discourse, and postponement.

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