A Comparative Study of Japanese Refusal Expressions Used by Indonesian and Native Japanese Female University Students

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Article Info	Abstract
	Refusal is an essential aspect of communication that can lead to discomfort for both the refuser and the recipient. Speakers employ various refusal strategies to mitigate potential conflict and maintain social harmony. This study examines the refusal expressions used by Indonesian female university students studying Japanese and native Japanese female university students. It aims to explore how these two groups use refusal strategies in different academic settings: irai (requests), sasoi (invitations), and teian (suggestions), when interacting with both close and less close friends. Data were collected from 60 respondents using an Oral Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and analyzed based on Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal semantic formula. The findings reveal that both groups predominantly use indirect strategies over direct ones across all scenarios. They also employ four main semantic categories in their refusals: fuka (denial), shazai (apology), riyuu (reason), and tamerai (hesitation), with riyuu and tamerai being the most frequently used. However, a notable difference emerged when refusing close friends: Indonesian Japanese learners exhibited a stronger tendency to preface refusals with shazai, suggesting a possible influence from their native language and cultural norms. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of intercultural pragmatics and the influence of linguistic background on refusal strategies. Future research may explore refusal expressions in broader social contexts to investigate cultural and linguistic influences on politeness strategies. © 2025 Universitas Negeri Semarang

INTRODUCTION

In daily communication, situations involving refusal are often unavoidable. These are considered problematic because the answer 'no' directly or indirectly to the initiator may result in a complex issue, threaten the inviter's self-esteem, and potentially disrupt the harmony of relationships between two individuals (Salazar & Jorda, 2009; Bulaeva, 2016; Tuncer, 2016). These circumstances also lead to unpleasant effects for both parties, whether for the one rejecting or the one being rejected (Moriyama, 1990; Wierzbicka, 1991) due to negative rejection and dispreferred messages (Hayashi, 1996; Yule, 1996; Moaveni, 2014). As a result, these kinds of interactions are highly likely to disrupt harmony.

Refusal strategies are employed to maintain communication harmony as refusal interactions occur (Fraser, 1981; Shimura, 1995). Their applications are influenced by several factors, such as settings, contexts, distance of the relation between the person who rejects and being rejected and social norms prevailing in the environment where the language is used (Wolfson, 1989; Kasper, 1990; Finegan et al, 1991; Kitao, 1997; Holmes, 2001; Yamagashira, 2001; Kwon, 2004; Ali & Al-Kahtani, 2006; Felix-Brasdefer, 2006; Eslami, 2010; Soepriatmadji, 2010).

Differences in social norms between people who communicate will almost always result in conflict (Yuan, 2021). For example, a refusal interaction between Japanese and Indonesians will likely result in conflict if both parties have little knowledge of how refusal is done in the involved cultures or have a limited understanding of how communication operates within the cultures they interact with.

In Japan, people generally avoid direct communication (Meguro, 1994; Kamil, 2020; Kana, 2013; Hayati, 2017; Sonoko, 2010). This is because Japanese society is known as a vertical society, where the status of each individual is highly considered, and the language used is adjusted according to the interlocutor's position (Permata, 2017). Similarly, in Indonesian culture, indirectness is highly appreciated. However, indirectness between Japanese and Indonesians may be defined differently because the cultural norms bound within each country are particular (Wierzbicka, 1991; Eslami, 2010).

In the field of language studies, particularly within Japanese contexts, refusal strategies have been a focal point of research for many years. The scope of these studies is broad, covering various contexts and social settings. While some studies suggests that Japanese speakers may use direct refusals, particularly when addressing individuals of lower status or power (Beebe et al., 1990; Gass & Houck, 1999; Osuka, 2009), the majority of studies indicate that Japanese refusals are predominantly indirect across most situations (Beebe et al., 1990; Gass & Houck, 1999; Mizutani, 1987, as cited in Wierzbicka, 1991). These indirect refusals are often expressed through strategies such as appologizing, providing reasons, and postponement (Beebe et al., 1990; Gass & Houck, 1999). Additionally, the use of adjuncts to refusals, particularly through fillers, is a widely employed strategy in Japanese communication (Yoshida, 2015; Hayati, 2024).

Concerning this, Japanese refusal expression is also the primary concern of this study, highlighting the issue of the use of refusal expressions by Indonesian female university students who study Japanese and native Japanese female university students. The study aims to explore the use of refusal expressions under three different academic settings, including irai (requests), sasoi (invitations), and teian (suggestions), with two different types of interlocutors: close friends and less close friends.

This comparative analysis is worthwhile to investigate for two reasons. First, the number of Japanese language learners in Indonesia is increasing. Many of them study subjects such as grammar and listening comprehension to enhance their Japanese competencies. However, in reality, many still do not know how to apply the language they have learned, particularly in refusal situations.

Hence, students must understand what constitutes a refusal interaction in a Japanese setting to communicate better and facilitate smooth interaction. Secondly, studies on comparative analysis of refusal strategies between Japanese and Indonesians in the academic setting and focusing on female university students whose relations are close and less close friends hitherto remained limited. Permata (2016) researched indirect refusal strategies in Japanese used by fourth-semester students majoring in Japanese at a private university in

Indonesia. Data were collected using a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT). The study found that respondents used seven indirect refusal strategies, the most common being 'reasoning' and 'expressing regret' in various contexts.

Permata's study is different from this study in several factors. First, her focus is only on indirect refusal strategies, while this study is conducted to explore all possibilities of refusal expressions used by the respondents. Second, although the setting of the study is similar, Permata's research does not specify the respondents as male and female. In contrast, this study is designed to focus on female refusal interaction. Third, Permata's research does not determine its interlocutor, while this study considers the distance between the person who refuses and is refused. Finally, the method used to collect the data in her research is written DCT, while this study employs oral DCT.

A similar comparative study on refusal expression between Indonesian female university students studying Japanese and native Japanese female university students was conducted by Hayati (2017). She focuses on the structure of the refusal in a 'request' context. Even though the setting of the study is similar, her focus and research context are different. While her study seeks the structure of the refusal in refusal discourse used by the respondents, this study is highly concerned with the refusal expressions used by both respondents. Apart from that, while her research takes only one context (request), this study looks at three different situations, including invitations, requests, and refusals.

There are many more comparative studies on refusal expressions between Japanese and Indonesians. They differ from this study in their focuses, settings, participants, and methods. For instance, Iftikhari (2019) studies refusal speech acts using films as the data source. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method with observation techniques and theory by Beebe et al. (1999) in its data analysis. The findings reveal various strategies of refusal speech acts, both direct and indirect refusals. One year later, in 2020, Novitasari and Kamil conducted their research in different settings. Novitasari (2020) examines Japanese refusal strategies used by former trainees (kenshuusei) who had returned to Indonesia. The research method is descriptive qualitative, and the framework is

Interlanguage Pragmatics. Data are collected through the oral Discourse Completion Test, and the results show three stages of refusal: pre-refusal, primary refusal, and post-refusal, with the majority of utterances being indirect refusal.

Kamil (2020) conducted a contrastive study on refusal speech acts among Japanese and Indonesian who were not learners of the Japanese language. Using the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the data collection method, the study found that Indonesian speakers tended to use direct refusals more frequently than Japanese native speakers. Two years later, Kartika (2022) examined politeness strategies in refusal speech acts and their perlocutionary effect among young Japanese speakers, using the anime *Kaguya-sama: Love is War* as a data source. The qualitative study employed observation and note-taking for data collection, and the data were analyzed using the immediate Constituents Analysis method. The findings identified 29 forms of direct and indirect refusal strategies as well as 15 verbal and non-verbal perlocutionary speech acts. However, the study's scope was limited to school life within a fictional setting.

As mentioned earlier, all studies above concern refusal expressions with distinctive focus, settings, contexts, and methods. These gaps show that there are still few studies concerning the investigation of refusal expressions in three different situations, including invitation, suggestion, and request used by Indonesian female university students who learn the Japanese language and by native Japanese female university students taking into account the distance relation between the person rejected and the one being rejected. This study is conducted to fill that gap.

Therefore, this study examines the use of refusal expressions by Indonesian female university students who are learning Japanese and by native Japanese female university students in three different contexts of situations (invitation, suggestion, and request). This study is expected to first help Japanese language learners communicate better with Japanese, particularly in refusal interaction, and second, enlighten Japanese language teachers in their teaching, mainly on Japanese refusal expressions.

METHOD

This research investigates the use of refusal expressions by Indonesian female university students who learn the Japanese language (hereafter written as IFJL) and native Japanese female university students (hereafter written as NJFS). The study employed a mixed method, incorporating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The respondents involved were 60 in total, consisting of 30 Indonesian female students in Indonesia and 30 native Japanese female students in Japan, with ages ranging from 20 to 23 years.

The Japanese students are native speakers at a public university in Kanazawa, Japan. In contrast, female Indonesian students study at the Japanese Department at a public university in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The data was collected using the oral Discourse Completion Test (DCT).

Both participants were asked to respond orally to recorded academic situations, allowing for the collection of more natural data. It is set in three different contexts, including (1) refusing an invitation, (2) refusing a suggestion, and (3) refusing a request. These three contexts required the respondents to respond in two different roles, paying attention to the relation between the person who rejects and the one being rejected. In this case, the respondents must refuse invitations, suggestions, and requests from close and less close friends.

Below are the transcripts of examples of situations the participants need to respond to within the settings given in this study.

Table 1 Examples of Situations the Participants need to respond to within Three Different Settings.

Settings	Examples of Situations
Request	Refusal to give a response to a request to lend lecture notes to a close and less close friend for use in an exam.
Invitation	Refusal to give response to an invitation to participate in a competition held at the university student level to a close and less close friend.
Suggestion	Refusal to give response to a suggestion applying for a scholarship with fairly complex requirements to a close and less close friend.

After the data collection was done, the data were analyzed using the Semantic Formula developed by Beebe et al. (1990), which was also adopted by Hayati (2021), as seen in the following table.

Table 2. Refusal Speech Acts Classifications based on the Beebe et al. Framework adopted by Hayati (2021)

Category Strategy	Semantic Formulas
Direct refusal	*Suikou* (accomplishment), directly expresses the intention to refuse.
	Fuka (unable), explicitly expresses the impossibility of meeting the other party's intention.
Indirect refusal	*Riyuu* (reason/excuse), expresses reason/excuse for not being able to meet the other party's intention.
	Shazai (aplology), expresses a feeling of "sorry" for not being able to meet the other party's intention.
	Iisashi (interjection), avoids direct refusal and do not end with a categorical statement, but rather a sentence that ends in the middle of a sentence.
	Daianteiji (suggestion) offers a solution to the problem.
	Hihan (criticism), expresses a negative opinion or evaluation of the request.
	Jouken(condition), justifies the refusal by indicating that you would have accepted the request under different circumstances.
	Ganbou (aspiration), expresses a positive attitude, a willingness to go along with the other person's wishes.
	Youi ari(preparation), indicates readiness and willingness to act.
	Aimai (ambiguous), expresses a delayed response as to whether or not the request can be accepted.
	Konwa (confusion), expresses annoyance.
	Shourai no yakusoku (promise of future acceptance), indicates that you cannot accept the other person's intention now, but you will try to meet his/her expectations next time.
	Tamerai (hesitation), acts as a filler, not saying things explicitly, but waiting for a pause before expressing one's feelings.
	Kyokan (sympathy), shows understanding of the other person's situation and makes a step toward the other person.
	Johou kakunin(asking for the information), confirms more specific details about the other person's business.
	Koteiteki hyougen (affirmative espression), expresses interest and positive feelings about the other person's intentions.
	Kansha (thanking), expresses gratitude for the other person's acceptance or understanding of your refusal.
	Igemasu(cheering),gives strength and couragement to a person who is distressed or pressed because their request has been declined.

The data are classified based on the framework shown in the table above, whether the participants (IFJL and NJFS) employed direct or indirect strategies in their refusal expressions when responding to three settings. Afterwards, the data were also analysed by observing the subcategories of

methods used by each participant and classified based on the same categories. Next, the data were calculated using EZR statistical software and tested by Fisher's statistical test to see any significant differences between IFJL and NJFS in using their refusal expressions within the three settings, with close and less close friends. Finally, the analysis results were compared to the theory and previous studies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research investigates the use of refusal expressions by Indonesian female university students who learn the Japanese language (hereafter written as IFJL) and native Japanese female university students (hereafter written as NJFS). The settings cover refusing invitations, suggestions, and requests from close and less close friends.

In general, the results indicate that the refusal expressions used by IFJL and NJFS vary across three different contexts and with two types of interlocutors. Both groups employed both direct and indirect strategies in all given refusal situations. The data obtained is presented in Table 3 below. The semantic formulas displayed in the table are categorized into two main types: direct refusals and indirect refusals. Each subcategory under these main categories is explained in the subsequent description.

Table 3 Refusal Expressions Used by IFJL and NJFS.

Semantic category	Close friend		P-value
	NJFS	IFJL	
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	117(21%)	85(18%)	0.0195 *
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	441(79%)	466(84%)	

(†: p<.1、 *: p<.05、 **p<.01 ***p<.001、 n. S.: non-significant)

The table above shows the frequency of refusals per person. As mentioned earlier and illustrated in the table, NJFS and IFJL favour indirect refusal strategies in all situations. This aligns with Hayati's (2017) and Kana (2019) findings, stating that Japanese and Indonesian speakers use indirect strategies when refusing.

Even so, in this study, the frequency of indirect refusals differs between the two groups; IFJL was employed more frequently than NJFS

concerning indirect refusals. This finding is also consistent with that of Suzuki's (2010) research, which suggests that Japanese language learners tend to use indirect strategies when refusing, as they are influenced by the cultural tendency of Japanese native speakers to favour indirect refusals because of its high-context culture as also reported by Kou (2019), stating that in such cultures, values, rules, and social norms are typically communicated through contextual elements such as language use, tone, and body language.

Furthermore, regarding the types of semantic formulas used as refusal strategies by both IFJL and NJFS across three situations and with two different interlocutors (close friends and less close friends), the study identified 19 subcategories of semantic formulas, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 4 The Total Use of Refusal Strategies by IFJL and NJFS.

Semantic formula		IFJL		NJFS	
main category	sub-category	Close friends	Less close friend	Close friends	Less close friend
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	*Sauikou* (accomplishment)	2	1	29	28
	Fuka (unable)	34	38	31	29
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	*Riyuu* (reason/excuse)	71	68	49	69
	Shazai (apology)	39	62	50	46
	Daian teiji (suggestion)	9	9	19	21
	Tamerai (hesitation)	52	46	36	50
	Sono ta (etc.)	54	66	52	47
Total		261	290	266	290

The table above provides a more precise breakdown of the number of refusal speech acts for each speaker, categorized into main and subcategories, showing the types of semantic formulas for "refusal" expressions used by both respondents.

The table displays that both respondents (IFJL and NJFS) frequently use *riyuu* (reason), *shazai* (apology), and *tamerai* (hesitation) in their refusal strategies. In conversations involving close friends, IFJL most commonly employ *fuka* (denial), *Shazai*

(apology), and *tamerai* (hesitation) as their categories. In contrast, NJFS use *Shazai* and *tamerai* less frequently, although *tamerai* appears more often in interactions with less familiar interlocutors. The refusal strategies employed by IFJL are notably similar to those taught in Japanese textbooks, such as the New Approach Japanese Intermediate Course textbook. It indicates that IFJL is likely to be successful in putting their knowledge in the class into practice, which is also relevant to the principles of meaningful learning, as also suggested by Brown (2001), Harmer (2007), and Richards (2007).

Likewise, the findings indicate that IFJL predominantly used indirect refusals, such as *riyuu* (reason) and *shazai* (apology). This is in line with the results of the studies conducted by Hayati (2017) and Ito (2019), which describe how IFJL uses highly reasonable and apologetic language when expressing their refusal indirectly. Meanwhile, NJFS tend to use *riyuu* (reason) more frequently than *shazai* (apology) when interacting with less close friends.

The preference for *riyuu* reflects the Japanese tendency to avoid overly direct refusals. In this study, Indonesian learners of Japanese are also thought to exhibit similar tendencies. They often use *shazai* (apology) before making refusals, likely influenced by their native language. As noted by Nurjaleka (2020), Permata (2019), and Kou (2019), Japanese learners typically approach Japanese communication with an understanding of its indirect nature. This results in the frequent use of *riyuu* (reason) to soften the tone of rejection and avoid direct refusals.

Furthermore, to ensure clarity, since the results of this study specifically address refusal expressions used across three different contexts and with two types of interlocutors, the data is mapped out in a separate section outlined below. The speech acts of refusal by IFJL and NJFS are presented in the following order: irai (requests), sasoi (invitations), and teian (suggestions). This order is based on the frequency of occurrence across the three situations. The details are as follows.

Request Situation

The first category is refusal in a request situation, where the respondent must refuse the notebook lending. The use of refusal expressions by IFJL and NJFS varies depending on the request situation. Below are the frequencies of refusal expressions categorized for both groups.

Table 5. Frequency of the Use of Expressions of Refusal in Request Situations.

Semantic formula	Close friends		P-value
	IFJL	NJFS	
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	7(8%)	18(18%)	0.018
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	95(93%)	80(82%)	*
	Less close friends		
	IFJL	NJFS	
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	6(5%)	15(15%)	0.0364
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	105 (94%)	87(85%)	*

（†: p<.1、 *: p<.05、 **p<.01 ***p<.001、 n. S.: non-significant）

In request situations involving close or less close friends, the most commonly used refusal category by IFJL and NJFS is indirect refusal. These expressions include categories such as riyuu (reason), shazai (apology), and daian teiji (suggestion). These findings align with the results of Hayati (2017, 2018), stating that riyuu (reason) and shazai (apology) are used by respondents as the most frequently used refusal expressions. However, in this study, tamerai (hesitation) appeared often. This is in contrast to the results of the study found by Fujiwara (2004), Gustini (2016), and Novitasari (2020), in which other forms of refusal expressions, such as shazai (apology), are used in their study. This must be because there is a difference in how the data were collected. While these three studies used written DCT, this study used oral.

Invitation Situation

The second category focuses on refusals in invitation situations. The invitation involves asking the interlocutor to join a *shodou* (Japanese calligraphy) competition. The refusal strategies employed by IJFL and NJFS vary depending on the invitation context, as illustrated in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Frequency of the Use of Expressions of Refusal in Request Situations.

Semantic formula	Close friends		P-value
	IJFL	NJFS	
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	25 (30.8%)	17 (19%)	0.108 (n.s)
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	56 (69.1%)	72 (80%)	
	Less close friends		
	IJFL	NJFS	
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	21 (20.7%)	17 (16.3%)	0.474 (n.s)
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	80 (79.2%)	87 (83.6%)	

（†: p<0.1、 *: p<0.05、 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 n. S.: non-significant)

Table 6 above illustrates the context of invitations from close and less close friends. It shows that NJFS tend to use direct refusals more frequently than IJFL, with *sauikou* (accomplishment) being the most commonly used category of direct refusal. In contrast, the table highlights that IJFL relies more on indirect refusal strategies. Categories such as *shazai* (apology), *riyuu* (reason), and *tamerai* (hesitation) are more frequently used by this group in invitation situations.

Furthermore, when interacting with close friends, NJFS and IJFL tend to use the expression fuka (denial) in the invitation situation. Meanwhile, when refusing less close friends, both respondents use indirect refusal strategies involving fuka (denial), riyuu (reason), shazai (apology), tamerai (hesitation), and kansha (gratitude). Of all these types, IJFL uses fuka and tamerai more often, while NJFS uses kansha and tamerai more frequently. It highlights the cultural significance of expressing appreciation even in situations of refusal.

Further, in refusing invitations to close friends, the p-value indicates a significant difference in how IJFL and NJFS refuse invitations. In this case, NJFS tends to use more direct refusal than IJFL.

The most common direct refusal expressions used by NJFS include "kasu koto ga dekimasen" ("I cannot lend it") and "muzukashii kamo shirenai" ("It might be difficult"). The p-value reaffirms the significant disparity in their refusal strategies, emphasizing the greater use of direct refusals by NJFS compared to their Indonesian counterparts in

the case where the relationship between the refuser and the refuse is close.

The p-value results also highlight differences in invitation situations involving less close friends. The findings are similar to those for close friends: NJFS use direct refusals more frequently (15%) than IJFL, while IJFL predominantly relied on indirect refusal expressions. The most commonly used semantic formula categories for indirect refusals by IJFL included *riyuu* (reason), *shazai* (apology), and teian (suggestion).

It further indicates that NJFS generally use a limited range of refusal expressions, depending on the context and their relationship with the interlocutor. At the same time, IJFL employs a broader variety of refusal expressions. It aligns with the findings of Fujiwara (2004), Hayati (2017), and Suzuki (2010), which suggest that IJFL often adopts the stereotype of Japan's ambiguous culture, where refusals are not conveyed explicitly. This difference may be attributed to the greater variety of indirect refusal expressions IJFL uses, which are likely influenced by the learning materials they utilize. Further, IJFL may construct their refusals while envisioning the cultural norm that Japanese people tend to refuse indirectly (Suzuki, 2020).

To conclude, within the setting of refusing to invitation, it can be seen that IJFL tend to use direct refusals more frequently in a broader category. This aligns with the findings of research conducted by Ito (2019), which indicate that Indonesian speakers often prefer direct refusals in situations involving invitations. Therefore, it can be concluded that IJFL is likely to be influenced by the cultural norms of their native language when forming refusals in Japanese.

Suggestion Situation

The third category centers on refusals in suggestion situations. In this context, the respondents are asked to refuse the advice regarding participation in the scholarship selection. The frequency of refusal expressions in this situation is presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Frequency of Using "Refusal" Expressions in Suggestion Invitation.

Semantic formula	Close friends		P-value
	IJFL	NJFS	
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	14 (18%)	25 (31.2%)	0.0648 *
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	65 (82.2%)	55 (68.7%)	
	Less close friends		
	IJFL	NJFS	
Chokusetsuteki (direct refusal)	12 (15.5%)	25 (29.4%)	0.0407 *
Kansetsuteki (indirect refusal)	65 (84.4%)	60 (70%)	

（†：p<0.1、 *: p<0.05、 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001 n. S.: non-significant）

Table 7 above presents the p-values of the two groups of respondents based on different types of relations of friends (close and less close). The first result reveals that the rejection strategies used in suggestion situations (teian) with close friends have a p-value close to 0.05. This suggests a tendency for significant differences in the rejection strategies employed toward close friends in these situations.

Furthermore, the study indicates that *tamerai* (hesitation) is more frequently used by IJFL as their refusal strategy, even though NJFS generally employ indirect refusal strategies. In this case, the most noticeable result showed that *tamerai* is used less often by NJFS compared to IJFL. These findings suggest that NJFS show similarities with Japanese language learners in other countries, such as China. Suzuki (2010) found that Japanese language learners in China also tend to use *tamerai* more frequently, influenced by the perception that Japanese people typically use *tamerai* as an indirect refusal strategy.

Furthermore, according to Hayati (2017), Ito (2019), and Nurjaleka (2020), Japanese language learners tend to use the *shazai* (apology) strategy more often than native Japanese speakers. However, in this study, *native Japanese speakers use shazai more frequently*. This result challenges the results of previous research, highlighting that in this particular situation, the outcomes differ from those observed in the other two conditions (requests and invitations).

Similarly, there is a notable difference in the frequency of *tamerai* (hesitation) usage between IJFL and NJFS. The refusal responses from both groups do not include a wide variety of expressions or vocabulary, which may be attributed to application

situations being less common in campus life than requests and invitations. Furthermore, the results show a significant difference in refusal strategies when dealing with less close friends, as presented in the table. NJFS are more likely to use direct refusal expressions, whereas IJFL tends to rely on indirect expressions such as riyuu (reason) and camera. The frequent appearance of *riyuu* in their refusals can be attributed to its emphasis in many Japanese language textbooks, which often teach that refusals should begin with a reason (*riyuu*). This refusal pattern is consistent with Nurjaleka's (2020) research, finding that Japanese language learners typically structure their refusals by initially using *shazai* (apology) followed by *riyuu* (reason).

SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN IJFL AND NJFS IN REFUSAL

The data analysis yields some similarities and differences concerning the refusal expressions used by IJFL and NJFS. Each is illustrated below.

Similarities

There are four highlights concerning similarity in the use of refusal expressions by IJFL and NJFS. First, both respondents highly utilize indirect refusals in all situations given (request, invitation, and suggestion) to either close or less close friends. Second, both groups' most commonly used strategy for refusals is *riyuu* (reason). Third, this study also found that *tamerai* was used more frequently by both groups in all three situations. Finally, both groups use longer statements when refusing individuals with less closeness.

Differences

There are several differences between IJFL and NJFS regarding their refusal strategies. For example, when refusing close friends, IJFL predominantly uses the *fuka* (unable), *shazai* (apology), and *riyuu* (reason) categories. This pattern can be attributed to the influence of their native language, Indonesian, where refusal strategies commonly involve *shazai* (apology) and *riyuu* (reason), as noted in Ito's (2009) and Novitasari's (2020) research.

In contrast, NJFS uses fewer *shazai* (apology) and *tamerai* (hesitation) expressions. Furthermore, NJFS tend to use the *riyuu* (reason) form of refusal more frequently than *shazai* (apology), especially

when interacting with individuals who are not very close regarding social proximity. In this study, the speech partners were not close friends.

The use of *riyuu* (reason) is related to the Japanese cultural tendency to avoid direct rejection, which is seen as impolite or too harsh, as also stated by Hayati (2019) in her research that both respondents (IJFL and NJFS) share similar strategies for showing consideration in refusal situations. It is hypothesized that Japanese language learners from Indonesia also share this tendency, using *shazai* (apology) more frequently before refusal, likely influenced by their native language.

CONCLUSION

This research investigates the use of refusal expressions by Indonesian female university students who learn the Japanese language (hereafter written as IFJL) and native Japanese female university students (hereafter written as NJFS). It is set in three different contexts, including (1) refusing a request, (2) refusing an invitation, and (3) refusing a suggestion. These three contexts required the respondents to respond in two different roles, paying attention to the relation between the person who rejects and the one being rejected. In this case, the respondents must refuse invitations, suggestions, and requests from close and less close friends.

The research yields some results. Respondents generally use indirect refusal strategies, given to close and less close friends, in all settings. In request situations involving close or less close friends, the most commonly used refusal category by IFJL and NJFS is indirect refusal. These expressions include categories such as *riyuu* (reason), *shazai* (apology), and *daian teiji* (suggestion). It shows that NJFS tend to use direct refusals more frequently than IJFL, with *sauikou* (accomplishment) being the most commonly used category of direct refusal. In contrast, the table highlights that IJFL relies more on indirect refusal strategies. Categories such as *shazai* (apology), *riyuu* (reason), and *tamerai* (hesitation) are more frequently used by this group in invitation situations. Furthermore, when interacting with close friends, NJFS and IJFL tend to use the expression fuka (denial) in the invitation situation. Meanwhile, when refusing less close friends, both respondents use indirect refusal strategies involving *fuka* (denial), *riyuu* (reason), *shazai* (apology), *tamerai* (hesitation),

and *kansha* (gratitude). Within the setting of refusing invitations, it can be seen that IJFL tend to use direct refusals more frequently in a broader category. This is likely because it is influenced by the cultural norms of their native language when they form refusals in Japanese. Within the suggestion setting, the study indicates that *tamerai* (hesitation) is more frequently used by IJFL as their refusal strategy, even though NJFS generally employ indirect refusal strategies. In this case, the most noticeable result showed that *tamerai* is used less often by NJFS compared to IJFL. Similarly, there is a notable difference in the frequency of *tamerai* (hesitation) usage between IJFL and NJFS. The refusal responses from both groups do not include a wide variety of expressions or vocabulary, which may be attributed to application situations being less common in campus life than requests and invitations.

To conclude, both respondents highly utilize indirect refusals in all situations given (request, invitation, and suggestion) to either close or less close friends. The most commonly used strategy for refusals by both groups is *riyuu* (reason). This study also found that *both groups used tamerai (hesitation) more frequently* in all three situations. NJFS tend to use the *riyuu* (reason) form of refusal more frequently than *shazai* (apology), especially when interacting with individuals who are not very close regarding social proximity. IJFL tend to use *shazai* (apology) more frequently before refusal, likely influenced by their native language. This study recommends that subsequent research utilizing oral DCT focus on refusal expressions set in situations other than those that have been used in this study.

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