



## The Realization of Refusal Strategies in Political Interviews Used by Donald Trump--The President of the United States of America

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### Abstract

Refusal is not simple to be taught to language learners. It is a challenging act due to its intrinsically face-threatening nature. This study is aimed at finding out the realization of refusal strategies in five different channels of political interviews used by Donald Trump--The President of the United States of America. The method of collecting data is documentation. The researcher uses descriptive qualitative in analyzing the data. The results show that there are direct and indirect refusal strategies used by President Trump in five different channels of political interviews. In direct strategy, there are 'no' and negative willingness. Moreover, in indirect strategy, there are excuse reason and explanation, promise for future acceptance, statement of principle, threat or negative consequences, criticizing or statement of negative feeling or opinion, and verbal avoidance. Further, there are the similarities and differences of refusal strategies used by President Trump among the five different channels of political interviews. The similarities are shown in the interview with CNN; he is more indirect to refuse the interviewers' want. It is similar to the interview with FOX and CBS News that he is more indirect too. In addition, the differences are shown that in the interview with CNN, FOX, and CBS News, he uses more indirect refusal strategies. In contrast, in ABC and CNBC News, he uses more direct refusal strategies. In terms of social status, he uses more of indirect refusal strategies to the interviewers who have lower social status. It means that he wants to soften the offending of interlocutor's face in refusals. This study also gives pedagogical implication for the language learners to improve their pragmatic competence especially in refusal speech act. Thus, they can use refusals appropriately for communication.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language is communication system which is used by people in the world. People use language to interact with other to reach their purposes in their life. They can share their information, their experiences, their hopes, their feelings and their thoughts for other because of the use language in their communication. Moreover, according to Yule (2006, p.124) when study language, it not only observes the components of language but also how the way language is used. Further, people have their intention in saying something and the interaction will be successful if the hearer can get the speaker's intention. It means that people must know the manner of using language, thus they can understand the use of language correctly and also can achieve the speaker's intention.

Realization is the key term of this study. Realization is also called as the speech production. It is the practice in performing the speech, especially refusal speech act strategies. The realization of the speech will be success when it is appropriate with the context of the speech.

Refusal is a speech act that is very possible to result face threatening act. It can be the risk for interlocutor's face. Further, refusal strategies are the way to give negative respond in different situations or contexts of speech. Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990, p.56) proposes two main strategies of refusal namely direct and indirect strategies. They also mentioned that there are two points of view of refusal which are interesting to be studied. First, refusal speech act is complex. In real communication, it involves to a long negotiated sequence, and the degree of indirectness respond that usually exists because of the risk for offending one's interlocutor. Second, form and content of refusal speech act vary based on the eliciting of speech act, such as invitation, offer, request, or suggestion. Moreover, refusal is also sensitive to the social parameters namely social status and the degree of intimate.

Nowadays, in using language in communication, the people must master pragmatic competence. Pragmatic competence is the ability to use language in proper context. Pragmatic is how the use of language in communication (Leech, 1983, p. 1). Chomsky (1980) also said that pragmatic competence is the people knowledge to use language appropriately for various purposes in their life. It means that it is used to understand the speaker's intention so the hearer can respond appropriately based on the context of speech. Moreover, people also must understand that speaking fluency without pragmatic competence can result face threatening act. Face threatening act is the act which is risky in communication. It happens because face is something that is emotionally invested, and also can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and it must be constantly attended to in interaction (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 61). Thus, people should understand how to use language which is suitable to save another's face so the interaction can be harmoniously.

In fact, refusal is not simple to be taught in second or foreign language learner. It is challenging act due to its intrinsically face threatening nature. In delivering refusal, the speaker should think how to avoid face threatening act because it is negative respond to the interlocutor's want. Some researchers such as Can and Cengizan (2015) and Cifty (2016) had been conducted the studies about refusal strategies used by different groups of learners. Both of them compared between the learners of Turkish and English in making refusals. They used discourse completion task to take the data. As a result, Turkish learners made different strategies with the learners of English native speaker. It happened because of the difference of socio-pragmatic competence. Thus, the second or foreign language learners should be pragmatically and socio-culturally competent in using target language (Hymes, 1972, p. 281). The learners' inability in using appropriate utterances that is appropriate with contexts is a great problem in learning language.

Moreover, understanding social status in delivering speech is also needed. Based on Trosborg (1995, p.364) social status is the power of the speaker to the hearer in delivering speech. It consists of higher, equal, and lower power of the speaker. The existence of social status influences the choice of speech act strategies.

On the other hand, political interview is political communication between the journalist as the interviewer and the politician as the interviewee. It discusses the political situation in a country. Moreover, the president is the politician who led the country. President Donald Trump is the current president in the United States of America. He is often asked to be interviewed to discuss about the country of United States of America. He often uses refusals to respond the interviewers' questions. The use of Trump's refusals in interviews is interesting to be studied because it is natural communication between the interviewer who has lower social status and the interviewee who has higher social status. The existence of social status will influence the use of refusal strategies.

Based on the phenomenon above, it is very significant for the people to communicate appropriately in real interaction among others based on the pragmatic competence. It is not enough for them to be only fluent in speech. They should speak appropriately to the others too in order to maintain social interaction especially in refusal speech act. Thus, this study is aimed at finding out the realization of refusal strategies in five different channels of political interviews used by Donald Trump--The President of United States of America.

## METHODS

This study assumes that President Donald Trump uses both direct and indirect refusal strategies. This study is designed as qualitative. It belongs to case study. It analyzes the data based on the existing theory. The subject in this study is Donald Trump. The object of this study is the utterances of refusals produced by President Donald Trump during the political interviews in five different channels. There are

five channels of political interviews namely: CNN, CBS, FOX, ABC, and CNBC News.

In collecting data, the researcher uses documentation of the political interviews transcript in five different channels. Moreover, the procedures are determining videos of political interviews in youtube; and downloading the transcript of the political interviews.

In analyzing the data, the first step is identifying refusal utterances. The second step is classifying the refusal utterances into the refusal strategies using the theory from Bebee et al. (1999). Then, the next step is accounting the refusal strategies. Then, the refusal strategies are compared in five different channels. Finally the data are interpreted.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that there are direct and indirect refusal strategies used by President Donald Trump in five different channels of political interviews. In direct refusal strategy, it is found that there is the type of non performative. It consists of 'no' and negative willingness or ability strategy. Meanwhile, in indirect refusal strategy, it is found that there are six types of indirect refusal strategy used by President Donald Trump namely criticizing or statement of negative feeling or opinion strategy, excuse reason and explanation refusal strategy, promise for future acceptance strategy, statement of principle strategy, threat or statement of negative consequence strategy, and verbal avoidance strategy.

### Non Performative of "No" Strategy

Non performative of "no" strategy is used by President Donald Trump to show his directness in refusing to answer the interviewers' question. It is also used to refuse incorrect statements. Saying "no" is non performative expression for refusal (Kaur and Singh, 2013, p. 23). The use of "no" strategy also shows the refusal for interlocutor's request. This strategy has high possibility to offend the interlocutor's face because it is negative respond for the

interlocutor's want. It belongs to negative response to another speech act such as request, invitation, and suggestion (Sattar, Lah and Suleiman, 2011). As an example in the interview with FOX News at 07.15 minutes, when the interviewer said that President Trump's team was preparing written answers. In fact, President Trump refused by saying "No, no, no, not my team". He refused directly by using "no" strategy. Thus, it implies that by using this strategy, President Donald Trump is possible to make face threatening act to the interviewers' positive face.

The other example is found at 08.15 minutes of FOX News interview. Wallace as the interviewer asked President Donald Trump to envision a situation into his second term where he thought that he was as good as the President to lead the country and he was very useful for the country so he tried to change the constitution, finally he could get the third term to lead the country again. In fact, President Trump refused Wallace's request to envision that situation. He refused by saying "No, no". This utterance means that he would not to envision that situation. It implies that President Trump expresses his refusal by using explicit strategy. In fact, it can offend the interlocutor's face. In a study from Chojimah (2018), she found that most of the learners avoided in using direct refusal strategy such as "no". It is because the use of "no" for refusal can result face threatening act to the interlocutor.

#### **Non Performative of Negative Willingness/Ability Strategy**

Non performative of negative willingness/ability strategy is also used by President Donald Trump in the interviews. Negative willingness/ability strategy for refusal indicates unwillingness expression. In other words, it is used to show or to express unwillingness to do something or to comply something. The direct way of refusing something is simply to say "I can't," "I will not," or "I don't think I can" (Abed, 2011). In a study from Chojimah (2015), she found that direct refusal strategy is often realized through inability

expression for examples "cannot, may not". Many refusal utterances are marked by the word 'not'. As an example in the interview with ABC News at 22.21 minutes, President Donald Trump refused by saying "I don't wanna discuss things". It implies that President Donald Trump uses this strategy to show his unwillingness to answer or to give his opinion on the interviewer's question.

In addition, in a study from Ulum, Sutopo and Warsono (2018), they found that President Trump used performative verb 'refuse' in the debate with Clinton in 2016. Here, he did not want to talk to the audiences about his opinion. The other example is found at 03.04 minutes of CNN interview. When Yamiche said to President Trump that the Republican Party was seen as supporting white nationalist, in fact, President Trump refused Yamiche's statement by saying "Oh I don't believe that. I don't believe that". Here, President Trump showed his negative willingness in refusing Yamiche's statement. In addition, he said "I don't believe that" twice. It means that President Trump would show his belief that Yamiche's statement was false. This strategy shows President Trump's direct expression to refuse the interviewer's statement. It implies that he shows his refusal explicitly by saying refusal directly to the interviewer.

#### **Excuse, Reason and Explanation Strategy**

The strategy of excuse, reason, explanation refusal strategy is used by President Donald Trump to show his indirectness of refusal. This strategy can soften the offending of interviewers' face during the interviews. Here, President Donald Trump wants to show his refusal by using regret and it is followed by reason and explanation based on the fact. It is in line with the study from Demirkol (2016), Han and Burgucu-Tazegul (2016) who found that the learners tended to use excuse, reason, explanation strategy to express their refusal in some situations. This strategy is to show that the speaker does not want to hurt his/her interlocutor's feeling (Chojimah, 2015, p. 913). It means that excuse, reason, and explanation

strategy can make President Donald Trump to relieve face threatening act to the interviewers.

The example in the interview with FOX News at 07.16 minutes, President Donald Trump gave reason and explanation in refusing the interviewer's statement by saying " *I'm preparing written answers*". He gave his reason and explanation that the one who prepared written answer was only himself not his team. In the interview, it implies that reason explanation strategy is used by him to soften the face threatening act to the interlocutor. The other example is found at 08.33 minutes of FOX interview. When Wallace as the interviewer said that there was a security concern, it made President Trump cannot go. Then, President Trump cut his talk and refused his statement by saying " *excuse me. Not security concern – they wouldn't allow me to go-*". Here, President Trump refused the statement because there was no security concern. He used excuse, reason, and explanation strategy to refuse Wallace's statement. It implies that this strategy can soften the offending of interlocutor's face in refusal.

#### **Promise of Future Acceptance Strategy**

Promise for future acceptance strategy is used by President Donald Trump to show his appointment to give the information for the interviewers' in the future time. Arisetyarini and Yuliasri (2017), Kohar, Bharati and Rukmini (2018) in their study found that promises were the most common used by the debaters in a campaign speech. In addition, Mubais and Sofwan (2018) also found that the students used future action, promise to act and predictive assertion strategy in promising. Kartikasari (2016) also found that most used promises strategy was future action. The use of promise is to delay acceptance and the refuser does not refuse the request on the spot, but she/he promises to accept in future (Kaur and Singh, 2013, p. 23). This promise has functions as a refusal. As an example at 07.37 of ABC News interview, David Muir as the interviewer told about the relitigating of presidential campaign in the last time. Then, President Donald Trump refused to give his opinion on it through

promising for future acceptance strategy. He said " *We're looking at it for the next time*". It means that President Trump promised to give information about that topic in the next time.

The other example is found in the interview with FOX News at 04.11 minutes. President Donald Trump refused to answer the question by saying " *I will tell you*". It means that he made promise to tell the interviewer. It implies that President Donald Trump makes promise as the refusal strategy and he has obligation to accept the interviewers' want in the other time. In a study from Ulum et al. (2018), they found that during the debate in the campaign speech with Clinton in 2016, President Donald Trump used promise strategy which could be seen through modal auxiliary verb " *will*". It is in line with this study that also found that President Donald Trump used " *will*" in his promise for future acceptance strategy for refusal during the interview in five different channels. It implies that he has the obligation to do something/to give the information to the interviewer in the future.

#### **Statement of Principle Strategy**

Statement of principle strategy is used by President Donald Trump to show his principle that he has his own opinion which can be different with other people. As an example in the interview with CBS News at 08.41 minutes, President Donald Trump refused to answer the question by saying " *I have my own opinions*". He did not want to answer the question and he refused to respond on it. In a study from Aliakbari and Changizi (2012), they found that the statement of principle/self-defense was frequently used to refuse the interlocutor's suggestion. In the interview, it implies that the use of statement of principle strategy also indicates that President Donald Trump expresses his self-defense to not to be forced to answer the interviewers' question.

The other example is found at 08.43 minutes of CBS News interview. John Dickerson as the interviewer tried to get President Trump's answer in the question. In fact, President Trump refused to give his answer.

He said “*You can have your own opinion*”. It means that he had principle that other people had their opinion. The utterance shows that he used the statement of principle strategy for refusal. In line with the study from Chan and Chengizan (2015), they found that the participants tended to use a specific principle which indicated that the people avoided in using direct refusal strategy and they intended to use indirect refusal/explicit intention to the interlocutor. It implies that the use of this strategy can soften the offending to the interlocutor.

### **Threat or Statement of Negative Consequences Strategy**

Threat or statement of negative consequence strategy becomes the least frequent type of refusal strategy used by President Donald Trump in the interviews. It is the strategy to hurt the interlocutor's feeling (Kaur and Singh, 2013, p. 25). The use of this strategy is shown through the example in the interview with CBS News at 08.40 minutes, when the interviewer asked about his opinions, then President Trump refused by saying “*You don't have to ask me*”. It implies that he states negative consequences to the interviewer. The consequence is that he will be angry if the interviewer repeated the same question again. The use of this strategy is President Trump's expression to refuse for answering the question indirectly. In a study from Ulum et al. (2018), she found that Donald Trump used threat strategy in responding Clinton's statement during the debate. He said that something harmful would happen if Clinton's plan was realized. In the interview, it implies that President Donald Trump uses this strategy in order to hurt the interlocutor's feeling. It has high possibility to result face threatening act to the interlocutor's positive face.

### **Criticizing of Statement of Negative Feeling or Opinion Strategy**

Criticizing or statement of negative feeling or opinion strategy is used by President Donald Trump in the interviews. In this strategy, President Donald Trump tries to give negative

comment to the interviewers' question. This is the strategy when the refuser gives negative comment on the offered thing (Chojimah, 2015, p. 912). It is the attempt to dissuade the interlocutor. As the example, in the interview with FOX News at 11.20 minutes, President Donald Trump gives his comment that the question is the stupid question by saying “*You ask a lot of stupid question*”. It is negative feeling or opinion strategy to refuse in answering the question. It implies that by using this strategy, President Donald Trump insults and attacks the interviewers.

The other example is found at 02.58 of CNN interview. Yamiche as the interviewer asked President Donald Trump about white nationalist. In fact, before she finished her question, President Trump cut it and he refused to respond in the question. He refused by saying “*I don't know why would you say that... that's such a racist question*”. Here, President Trump said that the question was a racist question. It means that he used criticizing or statement of negative feeling or opinion strategy for refusal. In line with the study from Aliakbari and Changizi (2012) who found that the participants used criticizing or statement of negative feeling or opinion strategy to refuse the people who had equal and lower social status. It is the strategy to insult or attack the interlocutor. In the interview, it implies that President Donald Trump uses this strategy for refusal in order to insult or attack the interviewer.

### **Verbal Avoidance Strategy**

Verbal avoidance strategy is used by President Donald Trump in the interviews when he avoids answering the interviewers' question. There are topic switch and gratitude as the ways of avoiding strategy used by him. The term of topic switch means that he wants the interviewers to forget the question then discuss the other topic. Topic switch is to shift and to divert the conversation to the other topic. As an example, in the interview with CNN News at 02.08 minutes, when the interviewer asked the question then President Donald Trump cut it and he refused to respond the question by saying

*“Ok, just sit down please”*. It implies that he diverted the conversation on the topic. In addition, gratitude means that he wants to finish in discussing the topic. The use of gratitude can soften the refusals made (Kaur and Singh, 2013, p. 24). It is the act of telling someone else that we are grateful about what they have done. In the interviews, it also shows that President Donald Trump cuts the interviewers' question for many times because he avoids the topic being discussed. As an example, in the interview with CBS News at 08.46 minutes, the interviewer asked President Trump about his opinions. Then, he refused to give his opinions. He said *“Okay, it's enough. Thank you. Thank you very much”*. It is switching the topic and gratitude in refusal. It implies that he avoided giving his answer to the question.

The other example is found at 02.04 minutes of CNN interview. Peter Alexander as the interviewer tried to ask President Donald Trump. Before he finished asking the question, then President Trump cut the question. He did not want to respond on that question. President Trump refused to answer the question by saying *“You aren't the best”*. It implies that he avoided answering the question by switching the topic.

#### **The Similarities and the Differences of Refusal Strategies among the Five Channels**

There are the similarities and the differences of refusal strategies used by President Donald Trump among the five different channels of political interviews. In the interview, the dominant use of indirect refusal strategy happens in CNN. It is similar to FOX and CBS News. The other similarity is that the dominant use of direct refusal strategy happens in the interview with ABC and it is similar to CNBC News. Meanwhile, the differences are the dominant use of indirect refusal strategy that happens in the interview with CNN, FOX, and CBS News. It is different with the interview with ABC and CNBC News because the dominant use is direct refusal strategy. Based on the explanation, it can be concluded that in the interview with CNN, FOX, and CBS News, President Donald Trump is more indirect to

refuse the interviewers' want. Meanwhile, in the interview with ABC and CNBC News, President Donald Trump is more direct to refuse the interviewers' want.

#### **The Relation between the Strategies and the Social Status**

In the five different channels of political interviews, the relation between refusal strategies and social status analysis shows that the use of indirect refusal is higher than direct refusal strategy. In fact, President Donald Trump has higher social status than the interviewers. These findings are in line with the study from Abed (2011), it is found that Iraqi speakers were more polite and used indirect refusal formulas for refusing. Moreover, in the study from Umale (2012), he found that both the British and the Omanis also used indirect strategies to refuse requests (Umale, 2012). Further, the study from Izadi and Zilaie (2014) found that Persian speakers employed indirect strategies more than direct strategies in refusals. It means that these studies found more of indirect strategies than direct strategies in refusals. The speakers tend to use indirect strategies to show his refusal implicitly to the hearer rather than to show the refusal explicitly because they try to save the interlocutor's positive face.

The existing of social status between interlocutors becomes the major factors that influence the choice of refusal strategies. Social status affects the directness or indirectness of refusals (Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari, 2016). Furthermore, Soepriatmadji (2010) and Umale (2011) in their studies also mentioned that there were some factors that can affect the choice of refusal strategies; one of them is social status. In other words, the choice of refusal strategies is sensitive to the existing of social status. The dominant use of indirect refusal strategies used by President Donald Trump in the five different channels of political interviews in which President Donald Trump has higher social status than the interviewers means that he prefers to use indirect strategies in refusals for the people who have lower social status. It implies that he shows the want to soften the face threatening act

for refusing the interviewers' want. He also tends to use refusal strategies implicitly to the hearer.

As a result, this study gives pedagogical implication for the language learners to improve their pragmatic competence especially in refusal speech act. They should understand the context of speaking. Thus, they can use refusals appropriately in real communication.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on data analysis, President Donald Trump uses both direct and indirect refusal strategies in five different channels of political interviews. In direct strategy, it is found that there are two types of non performative strategy used by President Donald Trump. They are 'no' strategy and negative willingness or ability strategy for refusal. Moreover, it is found that there are six types of indirect refusal strategy used by President Donald Trump namely excuse reason and explanation strategy, promise for future acceptance strategy, statement of principle strategy, threat or negative consequences strategy, criticizing or statement of negative feeling or opinion strategy, and verbal avoidance strategy.

Further, there are the similarities and differences of refusal strategies used by President Donald Trump among the five different channels of political interviews. The similarities are shown in the interview with CNN; President Donald Trump is more indirect to refuse the interviewers' want. It is similar to the interview with FOX and CBS News that he is more indirect too. Meanwhile, in the interview with ABC News, President Donald Trump is more direct to refuse the interviewers' want. It is similar to the interview with CNBC News that he is more direct too. In addition, the differences are shown that in the interview with CNN, FOX, and CBS News, President Donald Trump uses more indirect refusal strategies. In contrast, in the interview with ABC and CNBC News, he uses more direct refusal strategies.

However, in term of the relation to the social status, the calculation shows that President Donald Trump uses more of indirect

refusal strategy than direct refusal strategy. In fact, he has higher social status than the interviewers. It can be concluded that he wants to soften in offending the interlocutors by using refusal implicitly to the people who have lower social status.

Since that refusal is the most face threatening act than the other speech acts. It is not enough for the speakers to be only fluent in speaking, but also they should have pragmatic competence. Moreover, the speakers are also need to consider to the existing of social status. As a result, they can use the utterances appropriately especially in refusal speech act. There are still many kinds of speech acts that can be found in the political interviews. Therefore, it is better for the future study to analyze the other kinds of speech acts so that the strategies can be exploited and explained. Thus, it will give the contribution in the study of speech acts.

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