Exploring Refusal Strategies among Female EFL Learners: Insights from Indonesian Islamic Boarding School

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study investigated the types of refusal strategies employed by female English EFL learners at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School. It utilized a qualitative approach, collecting data through a Discourse Completion Task and interviews with twenty and fifteen students, respectively. The results indicated that the most frequently used refusal strategy was indirect, followed by direct and adjunct strategies. The interviews revealed that the students' choice of refusal strategy was influenced by their family and school environments. This study supports previous research on refusal strategies, but contrasts with findings that suggest a different approach to refusal. The study highlights the importance of considering the social and cultural context in which language is used, as well as the individual differences in language expression. The findings also underscore the need for further research on refusal strategies, particularly using natural speech as data and exploring the topic across various fields such as psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.

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INTRODUCTION

Refusal as a speech act is typically characterized by a speaker declining to participate in an action such as requests, invitations, or suggestions initiated by another speaker (Green, 2017). While refusal strategies are found across languages, they differ significantly between languages. For instance, Arabic speakers tend to imply their true intentions, whereas Europeans tend to express their disapproval directly (Barkindo & Ochefu, 2022; Qadha et al., 2021). Similarly, Americans and British speakers often employ straightforward approaches (Cohen, 2020). Each language has its unique set of speech acts shaped by cultural differences, which can lead to challenges when performing speech acts in a foreign language. Refusals, in particular, are considered more complex and emotionally demanding than other speech acts (Haghighi et al., 2019), as they carry the risk of upsetting the counterpart and potentially damaging self-esteem. This can lead to anxiety for both non-native and native English speakers, and incorrect refusal strategies can disrupt relationships. Therefore, pragmatic knowledge, particularly regarding refusals, is crucial for English language learners to effectively communicate across cultures.

The study of refusal in pragmatics has been a significant area of research, particularly in the context of English language use across different cultural backgrounds. Over the past few decades, numerous studies have focused on the refusal strategies employed by both native and non-native English users. For instance, Babai Shishavan and Sharifian (2016) found that Americans tend to be straightforward in their refusals, regardless of the distance or authority of the interlocutors. In contrast, Ogiermann (2018) argued that Americans adapt their refusal strategies based on the status of the interlocutors. Meanwhile, Iraqi students tend to provide more detailed explanations, apologies, and wishes when refusing, as observed by Al-Maliki et al. (2024). In the context of Chinese communication, Jiang (2015) found that indirect refusal strategies, such as offering alternatives and expressing regret, are commonly used. Additionally, Moafian et al. (2022) identified the most popular refusal strategies among Iranian EFL students as including excuses, reasons, explanations, non-performative comments, and statements of regret.

Despite the abundance of studies on refusal patterns, there is a significant lack of research in the Indonesian setting, especially in the milieu of Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia exhibit distinct educational characteristics due to their unique emphasis on religious education, courtesy, moral values, as well as foreign language development. Their intensive and mandatory use of English as part of daily communication in Islamic boarding schools as well as their dual focus on the dissemination Islamic teachings and students' language development make Islamic boarding school an ideal place to research on the interplay between language and society, as proposed by Whorphian Hypothesis (Sharifian, 2017). In addition, by focusing on female EFL learners in particular, this study highlighted the unique challenges they face in navigating linguistic and cultural norms, which often require them to employ specific refusal strategies to maintain

social harmony while asserting their needs within their community. The research aims to address the gap in the field of pragmatics by investigating the refusal strategies employed by these students. The findings are crucial in understanding the nuances of communication in diverse cultural contexts and can enhance understanding of refusal strategies that promote effective communication and positive interactions. For EFL teachers, this research provides valuable insights into students' preferences that can inform the teaching of speech acts and their usage, as well as the development of effective course materials. Additionally, this study can assist English course book and material designers in creating more pragmatics-oriented and use-oriented tasks and components. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the sociocultural measures that EFL learners must consider when using a second language and serves as a foundation for discussing interlanguage patterns among Indonesian English Language Learners (ELLs), shedding light on the contemporary issue of EFL students' pragmatic proficiency.

Linguistics Relativity

The linguistic relativity theory posits that language has a significant impact on human thought and behavior. Commonly referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it was first proposed by Sapir and Whorf (1949, as cited in Oktaviana, 2018), who discovered that the linguistic structures used by a society can influence the way people think and behave. Consequently, linguistic relativity demonstrates that language is not merely a means of communication, but also a factor that influences human behavior and culture. Linguistic relativity also suggests that language can influence how people perceive and interpret their surroundings. In the process of language use, individuals employ the linguistic structures available to them to convey meaning and ideas (Bąk & Bąk, 2016). Therefore, linguistic relativity shows that language influences human thought and behavior, as well as how people perceive and interpret their surroundings.

In several aspects, linguistic relativity can be seen as an example of how culture influences human thought and behavior. Consequently, linguistic relativity indicates that language and culture cannot be separated, and that they mutually influence each other in a significant manner. By understanding linguistic relativity, we can better comprehend how language and culture influence human thought and behavior, as well as how people perceive and interpret their surroundings.

Speech Acts

Speech acts are a crucial tool for communicators to achieve their objectives. These acts were first categorized by John Langshaw Austin into three types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts (Petrey, 2016). Locutionary acts refer to the actual words spoken, which must be meaningful, relevant, and make sense. Illocutionary acts involve aligning these words with a specific communication goal, such as making a request or providing information. Perlocutionary acts, on the other hand, refer to the effect these words have on the listener. The illocutionary act is often considered the most significant as it reflects the speaker's intention to communicate (Mišić Ilić & Radulović, 2015). For instance, the statement "It's unbearably hot today" is a locutionary act, while the actual purpose behind it (e.g., a request, explanation, or offer) is the illocutionary act. The listener's response, "I'm going to get something to

drink," is the perlocutionary act.

Speech acts were categorized by John Searle into five classes: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations (Roberts, 2018). Representatives reflect the speaker's beliefs about what is right or wrong and include statements, assertions, and claims. Directives are used to influence others to perform a specific action, such as requests, comments, and advice. Commissives are used to encourage others in authority to perform something, like promises and threats. Expressives reveal the speaker's emotions, including apologies and congratulations. Declarations are used to change a situation after they are delivered. These speech acts are part of a larger context called speaking events, which includes all the speech acts involved in a conversation. For example, a conversation about asking for directions might include four speech acts: apologizing for disrupting, asking for time, providing the requested information, and expressing gratitude for the information.

Speech acts are fundamental components of communication, as they represent the actions a speaker intends to elicit from listeners (Kreishan, 2018). These actions are often conveyed through specific attitudes, such as a request, statement, or apology, which are crucial for effective communication. Speech acts can be performed directly or indirectly, with indirect acts requiring listeners to interpret the intended message based on the context. In a second language (L2), speech acts are even more challenging due to the potential lack of familiarity with L2 societal norms and idiomatic expressions (Hopkinson, 2021; Lee, 2018). Language learners must be aware of what can be transferred from their native language (L1) and recognize that what is acceptable in L1 may not be in L2. Therefore, the ability to generate speech acts effectively depends not only on linguistic proficiency but also on pragmatic understanding of the target language.

Refusal

Refusals are a type of speech act that is typically a response to a request, offer, or advice. They are categorized as commissive acts and are often negative and dissonant (Green, 2017). As a negative response to someone else's utterance, a refusal is, therefore, never initiated. Refusals can be direct or indirect, with direct refusals being more face-threatening but also more straightforward (Babai Shishavan & Sharifian, 2016). Indirect refusals, on the other hand, are more complex and involve added patterns to mitigate their negative connotation. The differences in direct and indirect refusals lead to significant variations in politeness between Westerners and Asians. For non-native speakers, refusals can be a key cross-cultural stumbling block due to their potential to upset the interlocutor and the need to balance politeness with the need to decline a request (Petrey, 2016). As a result, refusals, in contrast to the other speech acts, tend to constitute a face-threatening act; enacting them is more difficult and delicate than issuing apologies and requests as people prefer to offer favorable response such as acceptance and agreement. Accordingly, they often involve indirect strategies to maintain courtesy and avoid social interaction failure, requiring a high level of pragmatic competence.

Discourse Completion Test

Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is among the most frequently applied

instruments in pragmatic-based studies (Haghighi et al., 2019). It is a questionnaire-like instrument that contains accounts of incomplete scenarios, used to acquire certain speech acts and stereotypical patterns of language being investigated. The participants must jot down their answers in a blank spot provided following each scenario, writing down their responses in an actual conversation. The test allows researchers to completely regulate the research's variables such as age, gender, and social standing and assists them in identifying and describing the composition of a certain speech act an interlocutor used (Ogiermann, 2018). DCT offers researchers a less elaborate and intricate language structure, yet nearly identical to genuine one.

Beebe and Cummings (1996, as cited in Taguchi, 2016) and Beebe et al. (1990, as cited in Kreishan, 2018) were among the first to research refusals by using DCT, which consisted of twelve questions which were equally distributed into requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions, each made to someone of higher, equal and lower status. After investigating the pattern, content, and sequence of the semantic formulae, the researchers concluded that transference was discovered in their refusal methods. This research became a watershed moment by establishing a framework in the area of cross-cultural and interlanguage studies.

Indonesia's Islamic Boarding Schools

Islamic boarding school is commonly referred to as *pesantren* in Indonesia. The term originates from the Sanskrit word "Shastri," which refers to individuals with extensive knowledge of Hindu religious texts or religious experts (Warsah, 2020). Geertz (1960, as cited in R. Fitri & Ondeng, 2022) supports this definition by describing Pesantren as a place where people with reading and writing skills reside, suggesting that Pesantren evolved from Hindu temples. Pesantren constitutes a traditional Islamic educational institution where students live and learn under the guidance of a kyai, utilizing the mosque as a learning center. Collectively, these definitions underscore the significance of Pesantren as institutions that prioritize Islamic principles and values.

Historically, Islamic boarding school in Indonesia have played a crucial role in shaping the country's educational landscape. The literature emphasizes the importance of Pesantren in preserving and transmitting Islamic knowledge, as well as their role in fostering a sense of community and cultural identity among students (Ismah, 2022; Umar, 2022). In Indonesia, Pesantren has emerged as a crucial location for enhancing foreign language skills, particularly Arabic and English, among the community. Over the past few years, Pesantren has shifted its focus towards developing foreign languages as part of efforts to improve educational quality and enhance students' ability to interact with the global community, particularly among those residing outside major cities. Pesantren's strategic role in enhancing foreign language skills stems from its broader and more focused curriculum, as well as its better resources and more experienced teachers in teaching foreign languages. The implementation of bilingual programs in Pesantren has proven to be an effective strategy in enhancing foreign language skills (Septiana & Ibrohim, 2021). This bilingual program involves using a foreign language as the medium of instruction in the learning process, alongside the use of Indonesian as a monitoring language.

METHOD

The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative research design (Creswell & Poth, 2016) to comprehensively examine the data. This approach is principally relevant in behavioral science, which aims to comprehend how people behave by recognizing individual or group interactions in social situations. The study utilized this design to scrutinize the refusal strategies used by female English learners at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School. The institution was chosen as the site for the research due to its substantial student enrollment and its reputation for successfully integrating bilingual educational programs into its curriculum.

The researcher employed a multi-step approach to collect data. In the sampling stage, twenty female English students from Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School were selected as respondents, to whom Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was administered. Afterwards, fifteen students who frequently employed refusal strategies were identified and selected for in-depth interviews in the Refusal Strategy Identification stage. Next, ten female English students from Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School were interviewed and recorded. In the final stage, i.e. Data Transcription stage, the collected DCT and interview data were transcribed for further analysis.

The researcher also employed a systematic analysis procedure. Initially, the data were categorized and described according to Beebe et al.'s (1990, as cited in Kreishan, 2018) classification of refusal strategies based on the responses of 20 female English students. Subsequently, the interview data were analyzed in light of Sapir and Whorf's linguistic theory.

FINDINGS

Every student in this study showcased a unique approach to expressing refusal, and their approach is often influenced by their personal habits, environmental factors, and societal norms. This phenomenon aligns with the Whorphian Hypothesis, which posits that language and society are intertwined (Sharifian, 2017), suggesting that an individual's use of language is shaped by their social context. This hypothesis emphasizes the connection between language and society, implying that language use is determined by societal influences.

As previously stated, a set of questions were designed for the interview session to explore the reasons behind the female English students' preference for specific refusal strategies. Specifically, six students were found to consistently employ direct refusal tactics, while nine students opted for indirect methods to decline requests.

Table: 1 The Result of the DCT for Scenario 1

Strategy	Semantic Formula	Frequency
Direct Refusal	Performative	20
	Non-performative	57
Indirect	Statement of Regret	59

Refusal	Wish	7
	Excuse, reason, explanation	43
	Statement of alternative	18
	Setting conditions for past or future acceptance	6
	Promises of future acceptance	10
	Statement of principle	1
	Attempt to dissuade the interlocutor	4
	Acceptance as refusal	8
	Avoidance	11
Adjunct	Statement of positive opinion/feeling/agreement	7
	Statement of empathy	5
	Pause fillers	12
	Gratitude or appreciation	37

Students' Reasons for Preferring Direct Refusal

The survey began by inquiring whether the respondents had completed the DCT. The second question afterwards focused on the most common types of refusal strategies employed by the learners. Among the six female English students identified to employ refusals, half employed either performative or non-performative statements as their strategy. For instance, a performative statement like "I need to complete my deadlines as quickly as possible." and a non-performative statement like "I will not be able to participate in the competition, Sir." were used by these students. Three respondents shared a common reason for directly refusing offers, requests, invitations, or suggestions: they had been educated from a young age to make choices and not be hesitant to decline if the opportunity does not resonate with their circumstances. One of them stated,

> *I'm accustomed to making my own decisions because my parents consistently offered me options. Additionally, I believe I am entitled to accept anything that I perceive as beneficial and am able to accomplish. Conversely, I am also entitled to decline something I do not wish to do.* (Respondent 2)

This statement suggests that their parents had instilled this habit in them, teaching them that they had the right to choose what they thought was good and what they were capable of doing. On the other hand, they also had the right to refuse something they did not want to do. These values were passed down from their parents, who were seen as the first teachers in every aspect of life, including language acquisition.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth respondents shared a similar pattern in their responses. They frequently refused offers, requests, invitations, or suggestions

directly, often citing the influence of their surroundings. This included family members such as parents, grandparents, and other close relatives. These students tended to speak their minds without providing additional explanations or alternative options when incapable of fulfilling the interlocutor's needs. This direct refusal strategy was a result of their upbringing, where they were taught to assert their preferences and boundaries. The respondents' linguistic habits were shaped by the environment in which they grew up, as they observed their family members and neighbors rejecting offers directly without providing justifications or alternatives. Again, this finding aligns with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which suggests that language is influenced by the surrounding setting.

Students' Reasons for Preferring Indirect Refusal

The nine female English learners frequently employed indirect strategies when making refusals. This tendency stemmed from their emotional discomfort when directly refusing, which often left them feeling guilty. Each of these students had a unique approach to refusal, accompanied by their motivations for using indirect strategies to reject the interlocutor's requests. For instance, the first and second learners adopted indirect refusals due to their parents' upbringing which emphasized the importance of politeness. Moreover, they were influenced by the way their family interacted at home, where they often expressed apologies before rejecting others' needs. As found previously, their parents played a significant role in shaping these students' language production and social behavior, serving as their first school in both aspects.

The third, fourth, and fifth respondents employed indirect refusal strategies to maintain a positive image and avoid offending the interlocutors. They believed that direct refusal could lead to hurt feelings, and thus, they adhered to the principle that their approach in communicating and interacting with others plays a crucial role in their overall survival and well-being, which they had learned throughout their years at the Islamic boarding school. Additionally, the sixth respondent admitted to have drawn inspiration from their religious teachings, which emphasizes the importance of reciprocity. They believed that their actions and speech would have consequences, so they needed to be mindful of them. The learners acknowledged that using these strategies was crucial for maintaining healthy relationships with the interlocutors. The seventh and eighth respondents admitted feeling guilty when they refused to meet the interlocutor's needs, as they believed that kindness towards others would be reciprocated. They emphasized the importance of being polite to everyone, regardless of the situation or social status.

Furthermore, the ninth respondent employed indirect refusal strategies because she was influenced by her seniors at the Islamic boarding school. She admired their politeness, even in refusing something, and believed that it was essential to respect others regardless of their social status. She recalled that her seniors always treated everyone with respect and politeness, regardless of their differences in age and status. This experience had a profound impact on her, and

she felt compelled to emulate this behavior, especially when refusing something.

These findings indicate that the nine respondents from the same boarding school setting had distinct reasons and principles for expressing refusal, despite their shared living environment. The first and second respondents developed their refusal strategies from their childhood, learning from their parents. In contrast, the other respondents acquired their attitudes and social skills from the Islamic boarding school, which taught them how to interact with others. Although each respondent has their own reasons for refusing, the common goal is to avoid hurting others' feelings. When faced with situations where they cannot fulfill the interlocutor's needs, the respondents believed that they still have to be courteous in how they refuse. This is crucial as they are constantly expected to uphold good *akhlaq* (manners) and attitude. Moreover, they are concerned about being perceived as students with poor behavior, which could negatively impact their reputation. Therefore, it can be concluded that the role of the boarding school is fundamental in shaping the students' background and cultural identity.

In summary, the female English students at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School employed two primary reasons for expressing refusal. Firstly, they have learned this approach from their parents at home, who have instilled this behavior in them since childhood. Secondly, they have acquired this skill through their time studying at the Islamic boarding school. Notably, despite being in the same environment, individual differences in language usage are still evident among the students.

DISCUSSION

A comprehensive investigation of the refusal strategies employed by female English learners was conducted using the DCT. The results yielded a strategy classification and the motives behind the learners' decisions. Three distinct strategies (Beebe et al., 1990, as cited in Fitri et al., 2020) were found: direct, indirect, and adjuncts, each of which plays a role in refusing the interlocutor. More specifically, sixteen subtypes of refusal strategies were identified.

The results revealed that the language use of the female English learners in expressing refusal is much affected by their environment, as suggested by the Whorphian hypothesis. Six learners cited their families' influence in their way of refusing, while nine others attributed it to their education at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School. This finding is consistent with previous research by (Fishman, 2020), which highlighted that individuals have their own distinct ways of expressing language, shaped by their cultural background. The learners demonstrated a unique approach to refusing offers, requests, invitations, or suggestions, which was distinct from that of native speakers. This difference was attributed to the emphasis on manner or *akhlaq* in the Islamic boarding school, which influenced the way they responded to and rejected various proposals.

The analysis of the data collected by the researcher revealed a significant trend among female English students at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School, where they

predominantly employed indirect strategies over direct ones. This finding is in alignment with (Azwan, 2018; Dewi et al., 2020) who found the preference among This preference was rooted in their desire to evade direct refusal, which they believed could lead to undesirable outcomes, i.e. hurting the other person's feelings. By using indirect strategies, they aimed to mitigate potential conflicts and maintain a positive atmosphere, even if it meant having to meet the same person again in the future.

The Students' Use of Direct Strategies

Female English students at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School quite frequently employed the direct strategy of using "no" to decline offers, requests, and invitations from individuals with equal status or power, especially their friends. According to Wannaruk (2008, as cited in Fitri et al., 2020), such direct rejection is acceptable when speaking to friends due to the absence of social hierarchy and the closeness of the relationship. In addition, the female English learners tended to use performative statements to convey their direct refusal. For non-performative statements, they often employed expression of negative ability or willingness (*I cannot*, *I won't*) while still maintaining a friendly tone. This approach allowed them to be straightforward about their refusal while also being considerate of the other person's feelings (Boonsuk & A Ambele, 2019).

The Students' Use of Indirect Strategies

The findings of this study indicate that the indirect strategy was the most frequently employed approach across all situations. Specifically, statements of regret, reasons, excuses, and explanations exhibited the greatest variety, as evident from the results of DCT, which demonstrated the prevalence of indirect strategies. Notably, the study found that participants utilized indirect strategies regardless of the interlocutor's power status. This phenomenon is influenced by the cultural norms prevalent in Asian countries including Indonesia, where respect and courtesy are highly valued, leading to a society where people generally respect one another (Hybels & Weaver, 2014; Samovar et al., 2016). As a result, English female students tend to communicate respectfully with others due to the cultural emphasis on civility, particularly in the context of boarding schools where students are taught to treat others with respect. This finding is consistent with the research by Moafian et al. (2022), which found that EFL English learners tend to prefer indirect strategies when refusing offers, requests, invitations, and suggestions. Additionally, Taguchi and Ishihara (2018) defined subtlety as the speaker's astuteness to evade collective unrest when declining someone. Lastly, several less-commonly used subtypes were identified in this study. They comprised setting conditions for the future or past, stating a principle, attempting to dissuade the interlocutor, providing an unspecific or indefinite reply, and lacking enthusiasm.

The Use of Adjuncts

Adjuncts, particularly expressions of gratitude and appreciation, were a common strategy employed by the learners. Of the four adjunct sub-types, this approach is the most favored, particularly when responding to suggestions.

Interestingly, the use of gratitude or appreciation in rejection is more prevalent when addressing someone of the same or lower status, whereas it is less common when interacting with someone of higher status. According to Morkus (2021), incorporating appreciation with a straightforward rejection is regarded as courteous, as it aligns with the expression of gratitude.

Furthermore, a statement of positive opinion, feeling, or agreement was another sub-type of adjunct frequently employed in expressing refusal. This approach is usually seen as a speaker's concern for his or her counterpart (Moafian et al., 2022), demonstrating an understanding of their needs. The learners often conveyed refusals by stating a positive opinion, feeling, or agreement, aiming to emphasize the favorable qualities of the demands and show gratefulness for them. In contrast, pause filler and statement of empathy were less-commonly used by the learners. By incorporating adjuncts like expressions of gratitude, statements of positive opinion, and empathy, speakers can maintain decency and foster social intimacy during interactions (Siebold & Busch, 2015).

The findings of this research diverge from those of Fitri et al. (2020) due to distinct situational contexts and participant demographics. Unlike the previous studies, which focused on university students, this study centered on female English learners residing in an Islamic boarding school. This difference in context led to distinct outcomes. The participants in the former study were ordinary individuals without specific social affiliations, whereas the respondents in this study were female English learners living in a shared environment characterized by humility and politeness. Consequently, most of the respondents expressed refusal indirectly, reflecting the cultural norms of their community.

The next key finding of this study highlights the impact of societal influences on the learners' refusal strategies. Two types of societal influences that shaped the learners' refusal expressions were identified, as reported by the learners themselves. Those who employed direct refusal strategies were influenced by their parents' upbringing from childhood, whereas those who used indirect refusal strategies were influenced by the environment of the Islamic boarding school in which they lived. This suggests that their refusal strategies were shaped by both personal and environmental factors.

Correspondingly, individuals or groups exhibit unique preferences in expressing refusal, reflecting their distinct cultural backgrounds and social norms, as demonstrated by Azwan (2018) in his study. In a similar vein, the learners gave precedence to the etiquette they learned through their education at Islamic boarding schools, particularly when expressing refusal. This underscores the significance of politeness as an integral aspect of the uniqueness of students at Islamic boarding schools.

This investigation yielded two significant results: firstly, the types of refusal strategies employed by female English students at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School, and secondly, the correlation between the speakers' specific refusal strategies and their social settings. The female English learners who frequently refused directly

were those who had received parental education from a young age. This phenomenon is consistent with the notion that parents are the primary educators of children, as posited by Benner (et al., 2016). Parents, being the first individuals known to children, play a crucial role in shaping language and social behavior. This phenomenon is also in line with the linguistic relativity theory proposed by Sapir and Whorf (1949, as cited in Oktaviana, 2018), in their Whorfian hypothesis which posits that language is shaped by the environment and society surrounding the speaker, which in turn influences the way speakers communicate and interact with one another.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the refusal strategies employed by female English learners at Daruzzahidin Islamic Boarding School and the motivations behind their choices. Overall, the findings indicate that the students use their own unique methods of responding to the DCT and that these methods were influenced by their personal reasons. Utilizing (1990, as cited in Kreishan, 2018) to categorize the refusal strategies, this study revealed that indirect strategies were the most frequently used by the learners.

The analysis also drew on the context of language and society, as described by Shapir and Whorf, suggesting that individuals develop their own ways of refusing based on their social environment. Despite sharing the same educational setting, Islamic boarding school, the respondents demonstrated distinct refusal strategies, influenced by their individual backgrounds and social contexts. The study found that three respondents attributed their refusal strategies to their parents, while seven respondents credited their environment at the Islamic boarding school. The most common reason for their refusal strategies was the influence of their education at the Islamic boarding school. These findings suggests that a social structure can significantly impact the development and usage of language, shaping both its form and the manner in which people interact with it.

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