

INVITATION REFUSAL STRATEGIES OF
BANGLADESHI POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN
MALAYSIA

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FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
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KUALA LUMPUR

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BANGLADESHI POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN
MALAYSIA**

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ABSTRACT

Speech acts are functions performed through the use of words (Searle, 1969). Among them are request, directive, command, apology, acknowledgment, exclamation, and refusal (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). As a refusal speech act that involves making a decline or a rejection, showing an unwillingness to perform something for the 'speaker' or the 'inviter,' some refuser may use direct and bold strategies to the face. Others may use several strategies to make this refusal less face-threatening. However, there is a lack of research looking into the context of Bangladeshi participants and refusal strategies. This study aims to address this gap. Focusing on 105 Bangladeshi postgraduate students, this study explores the students' most utilized types of refusal strategies made in English to an invitation to visit during a festive celebration and how these refusal responses are realized linguistically and structurally. The collected data are in the form of written responses made on WhatsApp. The refusal responses are coded according to the classification of refusal strategies proposed by Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al. (1990). The refusal sequences (i.e., head-act, pre-and post-refusals) are also examined. The categorization of the internal modifiers is adapted from Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper (1989) to identify internal modifiers that are employed to intensify or mitigate the refusal expressions. The analysis suggests that most students expressed refusals indirectly than directly. They often employed 'excuses,' followed by 'statement of apologies,' and 'negative willingness' as head-acts through various linguistics utterances. They often employed 'excuses,' 'address forms,' 'gratitude,' and 'closing statements' as supportive moves (pre-and post-refusals) through various linguistics utterances as mitigators. They employed a combination of direct, indirect strategies, and adjuncts arranged in many different combinations and positions especially with three or four combinations. They also often employed internal modifiers; e.g., adverbial intensifiers and time intensifiers to intensify the refusal expressions.

Keywords: *Bangladeshi postgraduate students, invitation, pragmatics, and refusal strategies.*

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ABSTRAK

Perbuatan ucapan adalah fungsi yang dilakukan melalui penggunaan kata-kata. Antaranya adalah permintaan, arahan, perintah, permintaan maaf, pengakuan, seruan dan penolakan (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). Sebagai tindakan pertuturan yang melibatkan penurunan atau penolakan, menunjukkan keengganan untuk melakukan sesuatu untuk 'pembicara' atau 'penyerang', beberapa pengantara mungkin menggunakan kaedah langsung. Sesetengah mungkin menggunakan beberapa strategi untuk membuat penolakan ini kurang mengancam. Terdapat kekurangan penyelidikan yang melihat konteks hubungan antara orang Bangladesh dengan strategi penolakan. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menangani jurang ini. Mengacu pada 105 pelajar pascasarjana Bangladesh, kajian ini menerangkan strategi penolakan yang paling dimanfaatkan oleh para peserta dalam bahasa Inggeris kepada jemputan untuk berkunjung semasa perayaan dan bagaimana penolakan ini direalisasikan secara struktural dan bahasa. Data yang dikumpulkan adalah dalam bentuk tindak balas bertulis yang dibuat di WhatsApp. Untuk menjalankan analisis, tiga rangka kerja berikut disesuaikan contohnya, klasifikasi strategi penolakan dan urutan penolakan. Kedua-dua rangka kerja ini dicadangkan oleh Beebe et al (1990), dan pengkategorian pengubah dalaman disesuaikan dari Blum-kulka, House & Kasper (1989). Analisis mendedahkan bahawa peserta Bangladesh banyak menggunakan strategi tidak langsung daripada strategi langsung. Untuk menolak tindakan-tindakan kepala mereka sering menggunakan strategi berikut seperti 'Excuse,' 'Kenyataan permohonan maaf,' 'Kesediaan Negatif' dan 'Janji penerimaan masa depan' melalui pelbagai ucapan linguistik. Untuk membenarkan penolakan mereka, mereka sering menggunakan langkah sokongan berikut seperti 'Borang alamat,' 'Penghargaan,' 'Penutupan penutupan' dan 'Positif tanda' yang muncul sebelum atau selepas penolakan kepala.

Kata kunci: *pelajar pascasiswazah Bangladesh, jemputan, pragmatik, aksi ucapan penolakan.*

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study examines how Bangladeshi postgraduate students use WhatsApp to refuse an invitation in English. This chapter includes the following: background of this study. The problem statement, followed by the research objective, research questions, the significance of this study, the scope of this study, and the definition of key terms.

1.2 Background of this study

Many universities worldwide encourage cross-cultural integration by persuading international students to enroll in particular academic courses (Guoa & Chase, 2011). In the same vein, Malaysian universities have started to recruit more international students in its mission to become an education hub for the world (Mustafa, 2017). The international students come from other Asian countries, such as Thailand and Indonesia, and countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, and Korea. International students from the Middle East also make up the composition of the student population, particularly those from Jordan, Libya, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia (Mustafa, 2017).

This phenomenon has turned Malaysia into a melting pot for various nationalities to congregate and learn from each other while promoting a cauldron of cross-cultural opportunities for all alike to interact with each other as they participate in various activities to promote learner diversity. The congregation of international students provides the opportunity for all to learn about each other's different cultures and their culture-specific behaviors, and the exchange is done through communication in English. The opportunities for communication by students from diverse cultural backgrounds offer an insight into human interactions that strive to maintain intercultural harmony.

People from different communities use various speech acts to attain particular communicative objectives in their daily conversations (Cheng, 2003). Speech acts are functions that are performed through the use of words (Searle, 1969). Some of the types of speech acts used are requests, directives, commands, apologies, exclamations, and refusals (Searle, 1969). Speakers performing these acts may or may not be genuinely effective with their speech acts until the proposed meaning is comprehended by the listener (Beebe et al., 1990). For example, a Japanese refused an invitation in the following manner; e.g., “Sorry, I cannot come” (Beebe et al., 1990). At this point, the refuser was not just saying “sorry,” but performing an act of apology for being unable to accept the invitation. Likewise, the present study investigates how Bangladeshi postgraduate students refuse an invitation in English and what strategies they employ in performing this act.

The scope of this study is on the refusal speech act as international students frequently utilize this act in their daily communications (Rica, 2015). Speech acts are culture-specific and act as culture mirrors when it is realized through language (Beebe et al., 1990). Besides, the speech act’s illocutionary force, this study shows how the culture-specific speech act of refusal is used by Bangladeshis in communication.

1.2.1 WhatsApp

An invitation to a gathering is generally done by giving out a card or through a telephone call. With the advancement of social media, invitations can also be done via Emails, Facebook, and WhatsApp. This study would focus on how WhatsApp is used in invitations and the responses.

WhatsApp is a form of computer-mediated communication (CMC) that is technologically advanced. People can connect via the CMC in many ways; e.g., audio, texts, and video (Mahdi & Najran, 2010), and is a mainstream mobile application that

provides immediate texting services on smartphones. It serves as the research site and tool for collecting data (Acton & Koum, 2009). It utilizes the internet service to connect different multimedia messages and texts between groups or users and is popular among students (Kumar & Sharma, 2017). In fact, in February 2016, it is reported as one of the most downloaded CMC applications, crossing over one billion in total usage (Kumar & Sharma, 2017).

1.2.2 Cultural aspects in Bengali invitations

In Bengali culture, group consciousness and family relations are central aspects of the culture (Hossain, 2013). In other words, it is a conventional expectation among Bengalis to consider each other as related, and sisters, brothers, friends, relatives will keep in touch with each other, be equally helpful and loyal. They greatly depend on the social groups they belong to, as family and kinship are central to social life in Bangladesh (Haque & Mohammad, 2013).

Invitations to gather or celebrate some events are a common occurrence in Bangladeshi society as it is through invitations that Bengalis express their feelings for each other (Jamil, 2007), and maintain a good relationship. Bengali culture appreciates invitations because it is seen as a form of respect given to the invitee by the inviter (Jamil, 2007). Festive gatherings are seen as an opportunity to show warm hospitality, as a gesture that unites people, and an occasion of sharing with others. Some people may feel slighted or 'looked down upon' if they do not get invited (Hossain, 2013). This implies that the offer of an invitation is a meaningful gesture.

Since an invitation is viewed as a good rapport-building gesture, it has become a social norm of the Bangladeshi community that any function necessitates an invitation (Hossain, 2013). This seems to be the case even when they are abroad. Bangladeshi students who are in Malaysia continue this tradition of inviting others to similar home-based functions

or events such as Independence Day, *Pohela Boishakh*, *Eid-ul-Fitr*, Language movement day, *Muharram*, National Mourning Day, *Eid-ul-Azha*, Christmas, and *Durga Puja*.

Pohela Boishakh is a cultural festival. *Pohela* refers to the first day in the Bengali calendar, and *Baishakh* is a Bengali month (Marwaha, 2017). To celebrate this festival, Bengalis greet each other by uttering, “*Shubho Nobobarsho*” which means “have a prosperous new year” in English. They spend time visiting fairs with family, adorning new clothes, and cleaning their homes.

Another cultural festival is ‘Language movement day.’ On this day, individuals visit ‘*Shaheed Minar*’ (a national monument) to honor the movements of Bangladeshi martyrs and organize seminars that discuss and promote Bengali as Bangladesh's state language (Al-Azami, 2013).

An example of a religious festival is ‘*Durga Puja*.’ This festival honors the goddess ‘*Durga*,’ who won a fight against the evil ruler ‘*Mahishasura*’ as indicated by Hindu mythology (Singh, 2018). *Puja* signifies “ritual.” This festival is celebrated between September and November as indicated by the Hindu calendar in various ways. For example, family exchange greetings and hand-crafted desserts with loved ones.

Another religious festival is ‘*Eid al-Fitr*’ which comes after the holy month ‘*Ramadan*’ as indicated by the Islamic calendar. ‘*Eid-al-Fitr*’ is viewed as a time to celebrate, with Muslims assembling their friends and family to show appreciation towards God, after a month of fasting also known as *Ramadan* (Satt,2017).

Thus, when the students are in abroad like in Malaysia, invitations are extended to celebrate such occasions. Since the Bengalis in Bangladesh follow the Islamic culture, verses from the holy Quran and Prophets sermons guide the followers on how to receive and give invitations.

For example, prophet Mohammed said, “The rights of a Muslim on other Muslims are five: to respond to the *salaam*, visiting the sick, to follow the funeral processions, to

accept an invitation, and to reply to those who sneeze” (Al-Bukhari, n.d., see Hadith 1239).

Although most people would appreciate the gesture of being invited, there are possibilities that some may need to turn down or refuse the invitation. Accepting an invitation is not an issue, but refusing an invitation may be slightly uncommon in Bengali culture since nobody wants to be seen affronting the social norm (Jamil, 2007).

However, when the invitation has to be refused, several strategies are involved (Kwon, 2004) because refusal is a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1978). To avoid the risk of threatening the speaker's face, the refuser needs to know how to refuse (Kwon, 2004). Besides, a refusal speech act is both complicated psychologically and linguistically (Kwon,2004). It would be interesting to investigate how Bangladeshi students cope with this act.

1.3 Problem statement

This study focuses on an invitation sent out via WhatsApp. This invitation comprises precise information concerning the place and time of the event. The invitation was extended for an event the '*Eid al Fitr,*' a Muslim religious festival with specific significance for Muslims worldwide, in which families spend time together (Hossain, 2013).

In Bengali culture, this is also a great moment to fortify one's rapport with one's family or others from the same community (Hossain, 2013), particularly with those who are abroad. It is expected that one's priority towards one's family will be higher than one's priority towards a colleague or friend during an important day such as '*Eid al- Fitr.*'

In the case of postgraduate students who are unable to return home, it is expected that they would have plans to celebrate the occasion in whichever country they are in. These

people may also be invited to the occasion by fellow citizens. The issue of refusing an invitation becomes extremely complicated when one has priorities and needs to attend to one's needs first, and yet one does not wish to offend the inviter. This refusal speech act needs to be balanced as a refusal by its nature is hidden and subtle (Beebe et al., 1990). It is difficult to portray, even if the communication occurs between native speakers (Beebe et al., 1990). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how refusal strategies are conveyed by Bangladeshi students in English.

1.4 Research objective

The objective of this study is:

To examine Bangladeshi postgraduate students' refusal speech acts in English via WhatsApp.

1.5 Research questions

Two research questions were formulated:

RQ 1: What refusal strategies are employed by Bangladeshi postgraduate students when refusing an invitation in English?

In this section, the types of refusal strategies used by the students are examined. The frequency counts of the various refusal strategies, the refusal sequences, and the internal modifiers are tabulated. How these refusals strategies are realized is the focus of this question. This is achieved by categorizing the refusal responses based on the taxonomies of refusal strategies by Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al. (1990). Further, Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper's (1989) categories of internal modifiers is adopted to identify the internal modifiers used in the refusals.

RQ 2: How are these refusal strategies structured?

In this section, the way these refusal strategies are structured in students' Whatsapp messages is examined through identifying the patterns and positions of the refusal strategies.

1.6 The significance of this study

Studying speech acts help to recognize the cultural and social norms that govern speech act realization in a provided speech community (Meier,1995). Thus, this study is significant because there is no study on Bangladeshi student's refusal speech act in English in Malaysia to the best of the researcher's knowledge. This study's outcomes will add to the current literature on speech acts since it opens up the avenue for understanding Bengali culture better.

This study would be useful for both researchers and instructors in formulating more effective ways of teaching the English language, particularly to the speakers of a second language, who can better understand their speech patterns, therefore their linguistic behaviors. Meier (1995, P:1) cited, "teaching pragmatic aspects of language can minimize intercultural communication breakdowns and reduce cultural stereotyping." Further, it is significant because even though refusal speech acts are universal across cultures, their linguistic forms and occurrences are culture-specific (Al-Ghamdi & Ibrahim, 2019). Subsequently, it would be interesting to see how Bangladeshi students refuse an invitation in English.

1.7 The scope of this study

This study is confined to only 105 Bangladeshi postgraduate students who are personal acquaintances of the researcher. Hence, the strategies that are used may be constricted due to this relationship. In that regard, the findings are only reflective of one sample of the community, and therefore, they cannot be generalized. Moreover, refusal responses

are aimed at only one invitation to visit the inviter during the '*Eid-ul-Fitr*' at the researcher's house (see Chapter 3). These responses are not focused on other situations like requests, offers, or suggestions due to time constraints. These responses are also not focused on other aspects of Bengali culture, for example, gender, age, language proficiency, and other factors, as other studies may have done. This study focuses only on one mode of interaction, WhatsApp with English as the medium of communication.

1.8 Definition of key terms

In this study, various key terms are defined.

- '**Address form**' strategy denotes a word/title/name or some combination of these are employed to address someone while speaking or writing; e.g., endearment terms, nicknames, or affectionate names (Al-Issa, 2003).
- '**Closing statement**' strategy appears through good wishes at the end of the refusal expressions (Sattar, Lah, & Suleiman, 2011).
- '**Greeting**' strategy appears through an expression to attract attention in the beginning of the refusal (Sattar et al., 2011).
- '**Negative willingness**' strategy is when the refuser refuses directly by utilizing articulations that contain negations to make refusal (Beebe et al., 1990).
- A **direct strategy** occurs when the utterance structure parallels its function (Yule, 1996).
- A **family-oriented 'excuse'** stresses the family matter (Ismail, 2017).
- A **self-oriented 'excuse'** stress primarily oneself (Ismail, 2017).
- **Adjuncts to refusals** are strategies, that come before or after the refusal head-acts, but that cannot stand alone as refusals (Beebe et al., 1990).
- An **adverbial intensifier** through an adverbial form stresses a certain element in the speech act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

- **An indirect strategy** appears if there is an indirect correlation between the structure of the utterance and its' function (Yule, 1996).
- **Head-act:** The linguistic utterance that independently realizes the refusal act (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). It can be recognized as a direct or indirect strategy.
- **Internal modifiers** are certain linguistic expressions that appear within the same speech act to intensify or mitigate their force and, consequently, convey politeness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).
- **Post-refusals** are strategies that employed after the refusal head-act to ease refusal expressions' outcomes (Beebe et al., 1990).
- **Pre-refusals** are composed of one or more strategies that prepare the refuser for a forthcoming refusal (Beebe et al., 1990).
- **Refusal strategies** are forms employed by the refusers when performing refusal speech acts; such forms include the refusal head-act and modification devices (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).
- **Speech act** uses language in a particular way to carry out a particular action (Yule, 1996).
- **Time intensifiers** stress the temporal aspect of a speech act. These intensifiers increase the credibility of the speech act (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

1.9 Summary

This chapter introduced the background of this study, the research objective and questions. The significance of this study and the scope of this study was also discussed. Finally, the definition of key terms.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the relevant concepts: speech act theory and the refusal speech act. It also includes the relevant frameworks and pragmatic studies by Bangladeshi English speakers. Past refusal and internal modifier studies that have been conducted in Malaysia and other countries are reviewed to provide more insights into the present study.

2.2 Speech act theory

British philosopher Austin (1962) developed this theory, and his student Searle (1969) fine-tuned it. It was expanded by others, such as Grice (1975), Brown and Levinson (1978), Levinson (1983), and Yule (1996). They all agreed that the basic idea behind a speech act is to use language in a particular way to carry out a particular action. Speech acts might be considered 'functions of language' (e.g., refusing, inviting, thanking, apologizing, complimenting, and requesting); e.g., "Is it possible to pass the spoon?" was said at a feast table do not display the speaker's purpose at gaining evidence about the hearer's inabilities or abilities (Searle, 1969). It functions as a request. A one-word utterance can also be a speech act, it does not have to be a long sentence like simply answering, "Sure," or just passing the salt in response.

To indicate the meaning in semantic rules in which speech acts are realized, Austin (1962) proposed three kinds of speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary, wherein locutionary act denotes the act of conveying the literal meaning of the utterance; e.g., "It is airless in here." The actual purpose is that there is not sufficient fresh air. An illocutionary act contains the implicit meaning and indicates the speaker's intention to the listener; e.g., "It is airless in here." It is a request for the listener to unlock the window.

Perlocutionary act is the reaction of the listener when they listen to locutionary act. This effect is based on the particular context in which the speech act is mentioned. For instance, in the above situation, the listener may open the window or refuse to do it.

Expanding on Austin's (1962) proposition, Searle (1969) recommended five fundamental classifications of Illocutionary acts; e.g., commissive, declarative, directive, expressive, and representative, wherein commissive is the speech act that allows the speaker to devote himself to a (future) action, such as promising, guaranteeing, or refusing.

A declarative is the speech act in which the speaker's utterance brings on a new external condition; e.g., marrying, or resigning, "We discover the defendant not liable!"

A directive is a speech act in which the speaker tries to get his listener to do something; e.g., "Leave my home in a second."

An expressive is the speech act in which the speaker expresses his feelings; e.g., apologizing, welcoming, or complaining.

A representative is the speech act that allows the speaker to utter his beliefs, feelings, claims, or assertions; e.g., "The sun rises in the east." In line with this categorization, the refusal speech act belongs to the category of the commissive.

2.2.1 The refusal speech act

As noted above, this study centers on realizing the refusal speech act by Bangladeshi postgraduate students. The refusal speech act is not an initiating act but is a response that is performed when the refuser directly or indirectly refuses a particular offer, suggestion, request, or an invitation and they are inherently face-threatening act since it opposes the speaker's expectations (Beebe et al., 1990).

Searle (1969) stated that any speech act's accomplishment depends on the felicity conditions- a sentence has to be felicitous because being grammatically correct is not sufficient. Searle (1969) proposed the following felicity conditions for the refusal speech act- propositional focuses on the textual content; e.g., when one is invited to attend a birthday party, the inviter predicts that the invitee would have accepted the invitation to acknowledge it.

Preparatory focuses on the background circumstances; e.g., the invitee may acknowledge or refuse the invitation.

Sincerity focuses on the invitee's psychological state like the inviter sincerely wishes that the invitee attends the invitation.

Essentiality focuses on the illocutionary point; e.g., the inviter aims to make the invitee identify his articulation, “do join my birthday party tonight” to make him attend the invitation. The following section details the types of refusals.

Types of refusals

There are four types of situations that refusals may take place (Yang, 2008): (i) A refusal to a request is refusing to an act of inquiring formally about something. (ii) A refusal to an offer is refusing to an act to give or do something. (iii) A refusal to a suggestion is refusing a plan or an idea put forward for consideration. (iv) A refusal to an invitation is refusing a verbal or a written request to invite someone. Refusal studies on invitations are limited compared to refusal studies on requests, suggestions, and offers (Izadi & Zilaie, 2015), particularly on Bangladeshis in Malaysia. Thus, this study investigates refusals to an invitation.

2.3 Frameworks

In this study, a combination of Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification of refusal strategies are adopted to identify the types of refusal strategies. The categorization of internal modifiers is adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The comprehensive explanations of these frameworks are provided in the following subsections.

2.3.1 The classification of refusal strategies

Refusal strategies are forms used by the refusers when performing refusal speech acts and such forms include refusal head-act and modification devices (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). There are various classifications of refusal strategies to Beebe et al.'s (1990) original version. They are Al-Issa (2003), Campillo, Jordà, and Espurz (2009), Felix-Brasdefer (2008), Houck and Gass (1999), Lee (2006), Nelson, Al-Batal, and El-Bakary (2002), Rubin (1983), and Umale (2011)'s models that are modified versions. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain's (1984) model is the general version. The explanations of several refusal frameworks are provided in the following subsections.

■ Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz's (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies

Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990) carried out a refusal study in English based on similarities and differences by 20 Japanese and 20 Americans using DCT (Discourse Completion Test) to extract refusals to suggestions, requests, offers, and invitations based on their social status. Japanese and Americans differ in three areas: the frequency, the order, and the content of the strategies. For example, the Japanese often employed indirect strategies and were more polite with those of higher status while direct strategies were used with those of lower status in all situations. In contrast, Americans often employed direct strategies regardless of their status in all situations. Both groups provided 'excuses.' The Americans were specific in their 'excuses' while the Japanese

‘excuses’ were ambiguous. The Japanese often employed ‘gratitude’ or ‘apology’ with people of higher status which showed they were careful status differences, while Americans were deprived of such differences. This seems to be the outcome of transfer from the Japanese language which employed different strategies in refusals to people of different status in the Japanese culture. Americans often initiated their refusals in the following manner, “I would like to (positive), but sorry (apology), I have another appointment (excuse).”

There are two types of refusal strategies (Beebe et al., 1990): (i) **Direct strategies** are alluding to the fact that the refuser utters his 'inability or intentions' by using negative propositions (Beebe et al., 1990). (ii) **Indirect strategies** refer to "verbal messages that conceal the refuser's true intentions in terms of his wants, needs, and goals in the speech act" (Beebe et al., 1990, p:4). There are 2 types of direct, 11 types of indirect strategies, and 6 adjuncts to refusals that can be employed when performing a refusal speech act are shown in table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Beebe et al.’s (1990) taxonomy of refusal strategies

Direct strategies	Examples
Performative verb: It is performed by declining explicitly.	“I have to decline.”
Nonperformative: This strategy is divided into two sub-strategies:	
a. Negative willingness: It is performed by utilizing articulations that contain negations to make refusal.	“I can’t.”
b. No: It is performed by providing a directly by uttering a flat no.	“No.”

Continuation of Table 2.1

Indirect strategies	Examples
Excuse: It is performed through providing various reasons; e.g., Specific or General, or Family-oriented, or Self-oriented.	
a. Family-oriented excuse stresses the importance of family.	“I need to be with my family.”
b. Self-oriented excuse stresses primarily with oneself.	“I am busy.”
Statement of apology: It is performed by expressing a form of regret.	“I am sorry.”
Promise of future acceptance: It is performed by providing a few articulations, including a promise.	“I will do it some other time.”
Alternative: It is performed by providing an altered option from the usual one.	“Why don’t you request him?”
Wish: It is performed by demonstrating a wish.	“I wish I could.”
Setting conditions for: This strategy is divided into two sub-strategies:	
a. Past: It is performed by providing a hypothetical condition to refuse.	“If I knew it earlier...”
b. Future: The refuser tries to soften the refusal by guiding the refusal to a circumstance where it is suitable.	“If I do not go, I may join you.”
Attempt to dissuade the speaker: This strategy is divided into five sub-strategies:	
a. Negative consequence to the speaker: It is performed by providing a negative reply to the speaker’s offers.	“It will be boring by then.”
b. Guilt trip: It is performed by responding to the speaker with a strong feeling of guilt to indicate refusal.	“I will not make a living off people who just order coffee.”
c. Criticize the inviter/invitation: It is performed by criticizing the inviter or invitation.	“That is a terrible idea.”
d. Let the interlocutor off the hook: The refuser employs an expression to imply no need for the speaker to get involved in the respondent's matter.	"No worries..."
e. Self-defense: The refuser defends himself when making a refusal.	“I’m doing my best.”

Continuation of Table 2.1

Indirect strategies	Examples
Statement of principle: It is performed by showing the refuser's standard rule of personal conduct.	"I never drink after dinner."
Statement of philosophy: It is performed by employing a statement that the refuser has trailed for a long time.	"One can't be too careful."
Acceptance that functions as refusal: This strategy is divided into two sub-strategies:	
a. Unspecific reply: The refuser provides a vague response.	"I have no idea when I can give them to you."
b. Lack of enthusiasm: The refuser offers a lack of interest.	"I am not interested in diets."
Avoidance: This strategy is divided into two sub-strategies:	
I. Nonverbal: (do nothing, physical departure, and silence).	
II. Verbal: This strategy is divided into five sub-strategies:	
a. Repetition part of the request/invitation: It is performed by repeating the part of the speaker's offers, or invitations.	"Tuesday?"
b. Sarcasm: It is performed by uttering some jokes.	"I forgot, I'm your Servant!"
c. Hedging: The refuser employs a hedge to adverse the refusal threats.	"I am not sure."
d. Topic Switch: It is performed by changing the discussion.	"Just make me a cup of tea."
e. Postponement: The refuser delays what is requested, but without providing an exact time.	"I will let you know."

Continuation of Table 2.1

Adjuncts to refusals	Examples
Gratitude: It is performed by expressing an appreciation.	“Thank you, but...”
Positive opinion: It is performed by expressing a positive remark.	“That is really good, but...”
Discourse marker: The refuser uses “well,” “oh,” or “er” before coming to the refusal head-act.	“ <u>Well</u> , I cannot come.”
A request for consideration: It is performed by requesting the speaker for consideration.	“Please do not get angry.”
Statement of empathy: It is performed by expressing the refuser’s empathy towards speaker.	“I know you are in a bad situation but”
Suggestion of willingness: It is performed by an introductory statement, which looks like an acceptance at first glance.	“ <u>I would love to</u> , but...”

Al-Issa’s (2003) classification of refusal strategies and adjuncts to refusals

Al-Issa (2003) conducted a contrastive study on refusal strategies in English among Jordanian EFL learners and Americans using DCT followed by semi-structured interviews to extract refusals to requests and invitations to see whether there was an indication of pragmatic transfer from Arabic and the factors triggering this transfer. There was an indication of pragmatic transfer concerning types, frequency, and content of the strategies employed. Arabs employed more indirect strategies compared to Americans, and both groups employed ‘excuses.’ Arabs ‘excuses’ were less specific compared to Americans and there were certain strategies that were only employed by Arabs. For example: ‘address form,’ “Ok my dear professor but...,” ‘return favor,’ “I’ll pay for me and you,” ‘removal of negativity,’ “You know we’ve been very good friends but...,” or ‘request for understanding,’ “Please understand my situation.” Their refusals were detailed to avoid hurting the other person. Moreover, due to certain factors pragmatic transfer took place in instances such as love and pride for their native language, linguistic

difficulties, and religious beliefs. Al-Issa (2003) also concluded that the cultural background of people may affect the way they interact and comprehend the meaning. However, in the refusal classification, Al-Issa (2003) developed 3 direct strategies, 14 indirect strategies, and 8 adjuncts that can be employed when performing a refusal speech act is shown in table 2.2 in Appendix C.

██████████ Campillo et al.'s (2009) classification of refusal strategies

In the refusal classification, Campillo et al. (2009) developed 2 direct strategies, 7 indirect strategies, and 5 adjuncts that can be employed when performing a refusal speech act is shown in table 2.3 in **Appendix C**.

██████████ Félix-Brasdefer's (2006) taxonomy of refusal strategies

In the refusal classification, Félix-Brasdefer (2006) developed 2 direct strategies, 11 indirect strategies, and 7 adjuncts that can be employed when performing a refusal speech act is shown in table 2.4 in **Appendix C**.

In general, all the refusal frameworks discovered that refusal strategies can be classified into the following categories: direct, indirect strategies, and adjuncts to refusals. The frameworks also discovered terms of strategies that were similar and different. For example, similar terms of strategies are 'excuse' or 'apology' and different terms of strategies are 'address form' or 'reprimand' from Al-Issa's (2003) refusal framework, which was not found in Beebe et al. (1990). The current study adapted the combination of Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal classifications.

The main reason for this choice of taxonomies is that Beebe et al.'s classification of refusal strategies has been used widely to examine refusal speech acts across different languages and cultures, for example, the studies by Al-Shboul & Huwari (2016), Amirrudin & Salleh (2016), Chunli & Nor (2016), Izadi & Zilaie (2015), Lee (2016),

Miolo, Emzir & Supriadi (2018), and Tuncer & Turhan (2019). Beebe et al.'s (1990) framework also examined the refusals of Asians particularly the Japanese.

In addition, Beebe et al.'s (1990) theoretical framework is explicated in detail and each strategy is specifically explained, thus the reason for adopting this framework. Al-Issa's (2003) refusal framework is also chosen as many strategies are found in the current findings. Therefore, by applying these analytical frameworks, the researcher aims to understand the types of refusal strategies employed by postgraduate students in English. The following section details the refusal sequence frameworks.

2.3.2 Refusal sequences

There are various frameworks on the refusal sequences; e.g., Beebe et al. (1990), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), and Félix-Brasdefer (2004). They all agreed on the basic idea that refusals can be realized in the following phases: pre-refusal, head-act, and post-refusal. These refusal sequences enable one to identify the pattern, structure, position, or construction of the refusal utterances. The explanations of these refusal sequences are provided in the following subsections.

■ Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal sequences

Beebe et al. (1990) stated that refusals can be realized as a series of three phases: pre refusals, head-acts, and post refusals are shown in table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5: Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal sequence

Refusal sequences	Definitions	Examples
Pre-refusals	These are composed of one or more refusal strategies, those that prepare the refuser for a forthcoming refusal.	A refusal sequence to a Japanese friend's request to another friend to join his dinner party; e.g., "uh (pre-refusal), I would like to (pre-refusal), but I can't (head-act), I am sorry (post-refusal). I have plans (post-refusal)."
Head-acts	These are the refusal strategies that independently realize the refusal acts. Head-acts can be either direct or indirect strategies.	
Post-refusals	These are refusal strategies employed after refusal head-acts. They aim to emphasize and soften the refusal outcomes.	

Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) refusal sequences

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) stated refusal can be realized as a series of three phases like supportive moves as in adjuncts that come before or after the refusal head acts, head-act, and alerter. The refusal sequence is shown in table 2.6 below.

Table 2.6: Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) refusal sequence

Refusal sequences	Definitions	Examples
Alerter	"An opening element preceding the actual request; e.g., a term of address or an attention getter" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p.276).	"John (alerter), stop bothering me (head-act), or I'll call the police (supportive move)."
Head-acts	"The minimal unit which can realize a request; it is the core of the request sequence" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 275).	
Supportive move	"A unit external to the request, which modifies its impact by mitigating its force." (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 276).	

Félix-Brasdefer's (2004) refusal sequences

Félix-Brasdefer (2004) stated that refusals can be realized as a series of three phases like pre-refusals, head acts, and post-refusals are shown in table 2.7 below.

Table 2.7: Félix-Brasdefer's (2004) refusal sequences

Refusal sequences	Definition	Examples
Pre-refusals	These strategies initiate the refusal interaction for the upcoming refusal.	“Dear (pre-refusal), this Saturday (head-act)? I already have plans (post refusal)” (Félix-Brasdefer, 2004).
Head-act	This strategy indicates the illocutionary force of the refusal.	
Post refusals	These strategies come after head-acts and emphasize, mitigate, or conclude the refusal responses.	

In general, a refusal expression begins with a pre-refusal strategy before the head-act to prepare for the refusal, followed by a strategy that is applied as a refusal head-act and finishes with a post-refusal strategy as mitigators. Nevertheless, the strategies that establish the pre-and post-sequences are also known as supportive moves (Blum-Kulka et al.,1989).

Above all, refusal sequence frameworks also discovered similar and different terms in refusal sequences. For example, they are similar in terms of the ‘head-act,’ but differ in how they identified the terms. What Beebe et al. (1990) identified as pre-refusal and post-refusal differs from Blum-Kulka et al.’s (1989) classification of both these terms as supportive moves.

The main reason for this choice of Beebe et al.’s (1990) refusal sequence is that it has been used widely to examine refusal speech acts across different languages and cultures (e.g., Chojimah, 2015; Çiftçi, 2016; Farenkia, 2019; Izadi & Zilaie, 2015; Lee, 2016; Rešetar & Knežević, 2017; Saad et al., 2016).

Beebe et al.’s (1990) refusal sequence also examined the refusal of Asians particularly Japanese. Furthermore, Beebe et al.’s (1990) refusal sequence is the pioneering theoretical framework which is adopted by many other recent researchers.

The current study found Beebe et al.'s framework strategy is appropriate to the data obtained. Therefore, by examining the refusal sequences based on the different functions of strategies established by Beebe et al. (1990), the researcher aims to understand the structure of the refusal strategies and the way these refusal expressions are realized.

2.3.3 Internal modifiers

Internal modifiers are certain linguistic expressions that appear within the same speech act to intensify or to mitigate its' force, and consequently, convey politeness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The following expression was used to refuse a request: "Can we please do it tomorrow instead of today" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The refuser employed 'please' to express politeness through a 'politeness marker' where it functions as a mitigator. There are various types of internal modifiers that were studied in past studies of Barron (2003), Bella (2011), Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Félix-Brasdefer (2004), Fraser (1996), and House and Kasper (1987). The explanations of several refusal frameworks are provided in the following subsections.

Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) classification of internal modifiers

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) developed 14 internal modifiers are shown in table 2.8 below:

Table 2.8: Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) classification of internal modifiers

Types	Examples
Appealer: The listener employs this element when he desires to appeal to his speaker's generous understanding to lessen the speech acts' impact. Tags are common realizations.	"Let us meet tomorrow. <u>Can we?</u> "
Assessment: It indicates the listener's assessment of the world's state signified in the proposition.	" <u>Unfortunately</u> , I can't attend."
Commitment indicator: It demonstrates the listeners' heightened degree of commitment.	" <u>Surely</u> I will join later."
Downtowner: It is an adverbial form that mitigates the force of the speech act's expression.	" <u>Perhaps</u> you can ask someone else."
Expletive: It is used to intensify the speech act by showing solidarity or frustration.	"Why the <u>bloody hell</u> it is tomorrow?"
Intensifier: It is an adverbial form that stresses a certain element in the speech act.	"I am <u>really</u> sorry."
Subjectivizer/Mental state predicate: "The listener explicitly expresses his subjective opinion vis-à-vis the state of affairs referred to in the proposition, thus lowering the assertive force of the speech act" (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, p. 284)	" <u>I think</u> it will be a wonderful event"
Politeness marker: "An optional element added to a request to bid for co-operative behavior" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, P:283).	"For that <u>please</u> excuse me"
Past tense modals: It makes a speech act more polite, such as 'could' instead of 'can.'	" <u>Could</u> you make it tomorrow?"
Preparator: It is an element that the speaker prepares his hearer for the ensuing request by announcing in some way that he will refuse a request or invitation.	" <u>The problem</u> is that I don't have time."
Solidarity: The listener employs it to send a message stating solidarity or increase harmony with the speaker.	"I can't come as <u>you know</u> I will be at another program."
Time intensifier: It stresses the temporal aspect of a speech act. It also increases the speech act's credibility.	"I cannot come <u>right now</u> ."
Understater: It is an adverbial form employed to lessen speech act's imposition.	"I have <u>a little bit</u> of work."
Manner of speaking: They "signal a comment on how the basic message is being conveyed" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 181).	" <u>Frankly</u> , I can't attend"

Félix-Brasdefer (2004) classification of internal modifiers

Félix-Brasdefer (2004) developed four internal modifiers are shown in table 2.9 below:

Table 2.9: Félix-Brasdefer's (2004) classification of internal modifiers

Types	Examples
Mental state predicates	"I believe."
Modal verbs	"Probably."
Degree modifiers	"Kind of."
Tag questions	"Is that okay?"

Barron's (2003) classification of internal modifiers

Barron (2003) developed seven internal modifiers are shown in table 2.10 below:

Table 2.10: Barron's (2003) classification of internal modifiers

Types	Examples
Politeness marker	"Please."
Understater	"A bit."
Hedge	"Somehow."
Subjectiviser	"I'm afraid."
Downtoner	"Perhaps."
Cajoler	"You know."
Appealer	"Okay?"

In this study, the categorization of internal modifiers is adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) since several researchers have also utilized it to examine internal modifiers of the refusal speech act (e.g., Al- Rubai'ey, 2016; Ren, 2013). Other internal modifiers were mostly employed to examine how the requests were being made by different cultures and languages (Abdolrezapour, 2015; Abdolrezapour & Eslami-Rasek, 2012; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008; Rešetar, 2014; Hassan & Rangaswamy, 2014). Therefore, by applying this framework, the researcher aims to identify the internal modifiers that intensify or mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusal expressions.

2.4 Past pragmatic studies by Bangladeshi English speakers

Over the past few years, numerous studies on pragmatics have been conducted by Bengali English speakers. For example, Das and Herring (2015) studied greetings and

interpersonal closeness by Bengalis using Orkut. Computer-mediated discourse analysis and interviews were employed to retrieve data. Wolfson's bulge theory was employed to analyze data. Das and Herring (2015) stated that the association between greetings and politeness practices in CMC was studied mostly in Western languages like English, and not focused on Asian languages such as Bengali. Bengalis realized 'greetings' in two ways on Orkut like ritualistic 'greetings' were exchanged throughout various occasions as part of their socially-agreed-upon rituals, such as 'New Year,' "happy new year" and regular 'greetings' were used to recognize other people's presence or to initiate the conversation, "*kemon acho?*" which means: "how are you?" or "*Nômoshkar.*" '*Nômoshkar*' is an act of regular greeting in Hinduism. They also intensified their regular 'greetings' through laughter ("Hi Hi ha ha ha ha,") and repetitive punctuation, "Hi Hi ha ha ha ha.....good morning....." when greeting their close friends. Intensified 'gratitude' was also often uttered when Bengalis interacted with their close friends. For example, the English syntax gets switched to Bangla, "ok, **onek (lots)** thanks Amit. Ami jay meaning let me go." They intensified their 'greetings and 'gratitude' with their close friends to show their solidarity. Thus, it can be stated that in Bengali culture 'greetings' and 'gratitude' play an important role in interpersonal relationships.

In another study, Kamal (2018) investigated Bengalis who were chosen randomly and identified the strategies that were employed in different speech events. In his contrastive analysis, Kamal (2018) stated that in the 1950s through 1970s, studies were inadequate, as they merely studied the grammatical structure and phonology. To keep with present times, more focus was given to speech acts using DCT based on various speech events. The results revealed that it is common to exchange regular 'greetings' "*Assalam-Alaikum.*" '*Assalam Alaikum*' begins as a loan word from the Arabic language but has become part of the 'greeting' pattern, especially by Muslims. It is equivalent to 'hello' in English. Further, it has become a norm among Bangladeshis to say '*Assalamualaikum*' as

a greeting. Regarding 'gratitude' they used it during different events, "*Onek Onek dhonnobad* which is equivalent to thanks a lot in English." This finding supports the findings of Das and Herring (2015). Bengalis tended to code-switch when they wanted to share some 'positive opinion' in English, "*Bah (wow) bhai (bro) bah (wow)* I have very much enjoyed" (Kamal, 2018). 'Discourse markers' were also employed in the following way, "Oh!" or "*Asolei* means Really!," and they also employed intensified 'apology' mostly in English, "I am very/terribly sorry."

Using Facebook as an instrument, Mohamadi and Khan (2018), examined 'discourse markers' of Bengali students on CMC. Limited research has been conducted on written and spoken genres, especially in the digital era. Therefore, their study aimed to contribute to the field of pragmatics and discourse analysis. Bengalis often employed the following linguistic expressions on CMC, "Wow," "*Bah (wow)*," or "Hmm" as the markers of exclamation, and thought). This finding is similar to Kamal's study (2018) which implies that Bengalis employed 'discourse markers' on CMC. Thus, it can be stated that employing 'greeting,' 'discourse marker,' or intensified 'apology' or 'gratitude' characteristics of the Bengali culture.

Inden and Nicholas (2005) explored how 'address forms' played an important role in fictive relationships in the Bengali cultural context. The results demonstrated that Bengali people often employed various 'address forms' while communicating with others to keep their conversations polite. Terms such as "*Apu*" meaning elder sister is used to show respect, although there is only a fictive relationship between the speakers. Bangladesh is a country where people are respected because of their age and to keep up their cultural values (Haque & Mohammad, 2013). Thus, this term has extended a more generalized usage, which is employed to address a female regardless of age (Inden & Nicholas, 2005) to show respect.

Bengali to English code-switching has been investigated by Harun & Rashid (2014), and Obaidullah (2016) focused on codeswitching on Bengalis in the classroom. The researchers employed questionnaires to collect their data and the students were selected randomly. Code-switching is an act of switching between languages in a single utterance, phrase, or sentence (Obaidullah, 2016). Bengalis often code-switched between Bengali and English. The reason for code-switching is to help them to play a positive role in the classroom; e.g., “We will meet next Sunday, *thik ase* is similar to ‘shall we?’” (Harun & Rashid, 2014). Obaidullah (2016) indicated that code-switching occurs both subconsciously and consciously in Bengali people. It also occurs when there was no suitable lexis in one language and expressed solidarity. Code-switching also helped to ease communication in the class for students of different backgrounds.

In conclusion, it can be stated that using 'address forms,' 'code-switching,' 'discourse marker,' 'gratitude,' 'greeting,' and 'positive opinions' are common among Bengalis. Such Bengali conversational norms may shape Bangladeshi students' refusal strategies in this study.

2.5 Past refusal studies

Over the past few years, numerous refusal studies have been conducted in numerous cultures such as Arabs, Chinese, Iranians, Malaysians, and others. The following are the studies.

2.5.1 Refusal studies by Malaysians

In the Malaysian context, Farina and Wu (2012), Ismail (2017), Saad, Bidin, and Shabdin (2016), and Sattar, Lah, and Suleiman (2011) studied refusal speech acts in English. To analyze data, they employed Beebe et. al.'s (1990) refusal taxonomy.

For instance, Ismail (2017) studied similarities and differences in refusal strategies by 40 Malay graduate students from the University of Malaysia Terengganu and 40 Spanish graduate students from the University of Valladolid using DCT to extract refusals to requests and invitations. Both groups frequently employed similar strategies like 'excuse,' followed by 'statement of apology,' or 'gratitude' with different frequencies to refuse in each situation. However, the Spanish employed more direct strategies than the Malaysians. Malaysians employed more 'excuses' than the Spanish to avoid threats. Malaysian 'excuses' were family-oriented, "husband" or specific, "going back to hometown," or related to a third party, "I have promised to go out with a friend," while Spanish 'excuses' were self-oriented or general, "I have another commitment." Additionally, to refuse invitations, Malaysians frequently utilized the 'apology,' followed by an 'excuse,' "Sorry, I promised my mother to go shopping with her" while, Spanish frequently initiated their refusals through an expression of 'gratitude,' followed by a 'non-performative,' and 'excuse,' "thank you for inviting me (gratitude), but I can't attend (non-performative), there are things (excuse)." It can be seen that Malaysians frequently regretted not joining where the Spanish were pleased for being invited. It can also be said that Malaysians softened the refusal while Spanish tended to be straight with mitigating the refusal like employing the 'negative' direct strategy along through an expression of 'gratitude.'

In searching for the realization of refusals to an invitation, Farnia and Wu (2012) compared 38 Chinese international students and 36 Malaysian students from the University of Sains Malaysia using DCT and structured interviews. Farnia and Wu (2012, p:163) reported: "the amount of research on refusals was very limited." Thus, they examined how Malaysian and international Chinese university students in Malaysia refused. Both groups frequently employed similar strategies like 'statement of apology,' followed by 'excuse,' 'negative ability' as head-acts, and 'excuse' or 'gratitude' as

supportive moves with different frequencies. It can be stated that both the culture carried similar features to some point. A similar pattern of results was obtained in Ismail's (2017) refusal study. Malays used more strategies than Chinese. Both groups initiated their refusals in the following manner like Chinese refused "I'm sorry (apology). I can't come to your party (negative ability). I'm working on my school projects (excuse)" while Malaysians refused "I'm sorry (apology), I can't come (negative ability). I've got other important things to do (excuse)." Apart from these, Malaysians employed more 'address form,' "I'm so sorry Prof," while Chinese employed more 'gratitude,' "**Thank you** for your invitation, but I am sorry" to soften the refusal outcomes. Both groups mostly employed 'apology' at an initial position. They tended to employ 'excuse' mostly as post-refusals.

A further contribution was made to the analysis of refusals to extract refusal to offers by Saad, Bidin, and Shabdin (2018) by contrasting twelve Americans and twelve Malaysians in English in Penang using open role-plays. The types and the contents of refusal strategies were examined. Both groups frequently employed similar strategies like 'excuse,' 'apology,' or 'positive opinion' as head-acts with different frequencies. Malaysians didn't employ direct 'No' at all where Americans employed that. Malaysians employed more 'excuses' than Americans. Malaysians 'excuses' were family-oriented, "family is precious in my life," which reflected their priority for their family. In contrast, Americans 'excuses' were self-oriented, "It's my life," emphasizing the individual's needs. Even though the data collection instruments were different for both Saad et al. (2018) and Ismail's (2017) studies, their finding is similar. Additionally, Malaysians often intensified their apologies, "really" or "very," which headed the word, "sorry," to intensify its effect. Both groups also employed an expression of 'positive opinion' as a supportive move as mitigator as refusals are sensitive (Beebe et.al.,1990); e.g., Malaysians refused as "I really would like," while Americans refused as "It's a good

offer.” In Al-Shboul and Huwari’ s (2016) and Beebe et al.’s findings, an ‘apology’ was the second frequently employed strategy contrasting to the Saad et al. (2018) study’s discovery in which ‘apology’ was the first most frequently employed for both groups. The modifications in the findings were perhaps due to the change in the situations that they refused.

Sattar et al. (2011) focused on refusals to requests using DCT based on the social distance by forty Malay University Sains Malaysia students. As per Sattar et al. (2011), there were numerous refusal studies on different cultures but not on Malaysians. Malaysians employed ‘excuse,’ ‘statement of apology,’ or ‘alternative’ more than direct strategies. Direct strategies were employed mostly in encounters with those of lower and equal statuses, “No, you must go to class to get your note.” Malaysians were more likely to use their cultural norms when making refusals in English. They often employed “sorry,” which is equivalent to the Malay word, ‘*maaf*’ when refusing a request. The findings are directly in line with the findings of Ismail (2017) that Malaysians often initiated their refusals through an ‘apology.’ However, to refuse those who are of higher status, Malaysians refused as, “Sorry (apology), Prof (address form). I have next class (excuse). Can I get another student to help you? (alternative).” It was observed that Malaysians employed various ‘address forms’ at different positions within the refusal structure, but mostly in the second position to reduce the refusal outcomes. A similar pattern of results was obtained in the refusal studies of Farnia and Wu (2012), in which Malaysians employed the strategy ‘address forms.’ To refuse those who are of equal and lower status, they refused: “I am sorry (apology) I can't (negative ability) because I have class (excuse).” However, Sattar et al. (2011) also mentioned the drawbacks of using DCT that it does not represent spontaneous conversations. Thus, they recommended redoing the study by employing a naturally occurring data gathering method. Malaysian students also frequently employed a ‘closing statement’ and ‘greeting’ (Sattar et al., 2011).

Similarly, Chunli & Nor (2016) stated in their refusal study that Chinese respondents tried to end their responses politely and positively to sustain the relationship with the speaker through a 'closing statement.' Das and Herring (2015) also reported that Bengali participants frequently employed a 'closing statement,' like "May all your dreams come true this year" or "take care" before they end their refusal.

It can be concluded from all the Malaysian refusal studies discussed above, that all the Malaysian refusal studies employed Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal framework to categorize the data. Most studies employed DCT to collect their data with different situations and social variables. Malaysians mostly employed 'excuses,' or 'apologies' to realize their refusals through various linguistic expressions in attempting to save face. Most of their 'excuses' were family-oriented. It can be stated that among Malaysians, family is prioritized. Regarding adjuncts to refusals, they mostly employed 'gratitude' or 'address forms or a combination any of them as supportive moves through various linguistic expressions, since refusal is an issue (Beebe et al.,1990). They often intensified their 'apologies' through 'adverbial intensifiers, "really" or "very" to enhance the effect of 'regret' or 'gratitude.' They did not employ 'negative willingness,' "I cannot" by itself but rather combined it with an 'excuse' or an expression of 'regret' to reduce the refusal outcomes. In contrast, Americans and Spanish mostly employed direct strategies and self-oriented 'excuses.'

2.5.2 Refusal studies by Chinese

There are numerous past refusal studies by Chinese, such as Cui and Spring (2019), Jiang (2015), Lee (2016), and Ren and Woodfield (2016). To analyze data, they employed Beebe et. al.'s (1990) refusal taxonomy.

Ren and Woodfield (2016) investigated female refusal to a date invitation on a reality TV show in China "Fei Cheng Wu Rao began" using naturalistic data. Many previous

Chinese refusal studies have employed questionnaires to elicit data, thus there was a lack of refusal studies that employed naturalistic data. Female characters often realized their refusals with an ‘apology,’ or ‘excuse,’ and as mitigator adjuncts like: ‘positive opinion,’ “you are a very brilliant man,” or ‘gratitude.’ They frequently employed an expression of ‘gratitude,’ followed by an ‘excuse,’ and an ‘apology;’ e.g., “thank you very much, but we don’t fit each other, sorry.” Ren and Woodfield (2016) suggested further research based on naturalistic data on refusal speech acts.

Lee (2016) conducted a study on refusals to requests by Chinese English learners in China, using closed role-plays to identify refusal types, patterns, and contents of refusals strategies of the participants. Students mostly employed ‘excuse,’ “my friend invites me to go for a movie” or ‘apology,’ “sorry.” They also employed a statement of ‘alternative,’ “can/shall we...” which in Ren and Woodfield’s (2016) data was not found due to the different types of speech acts studied since Lee (2016) investigated refusals to requests while Ren and Woodfield (2016) did on offers. Lee (2016) noted that the Chinese often employed single strategies like ‘excuse,’ followed by a combination of two strategies (excuse + apology). These findings concur with other studies on Chinese refusals (e.g., Cui & Spring, 2019; Jiang, 2015). Lee also noted that the Chinese often did not employ ‘gratitude’ similar to other Chinese refusal studies (e.g., Jiang, 2015; Ren & Woodfield, 2016), but they intensified the ‘apology,’ “I’m so sorry.” Maybe to those participants, being polite is avoiding ‘gratitude’ and intensifying an ‘apology.’ They employed ‘apology’ at an initial which is similar to Malaysian studies (Farnia & Wu, 2012; Ismail, 2017; Sattar et al., 2011). According to Lee (2016), the frequency of refusing directly decreased when age and language-learning exposure increased. Chinese also employed the modal “can” as “could” in a suggestive tone and provided an ‘alternative’ statement. Chinese English learners provided various types of ‘excuses’ like ‘financial inadequacy,’ “I forgot to bring my wallet” or ‘unavailability,’ “I am not free today.”

In another related investigation, Jiang (2015) extracted refusal strategies in English by contrasting Chinese English learners with Americans in China using DCT. Jiang (2015) aimed to answer how do the participants refuse requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions to a person of equal, lower, or higher status. Both groups frequently employed 'excuse,' followed by 'apology, or 'negative willingness' as head-acts or 'positive opinion' as supportive move. Americans employed more direct strategies than Chinese. To refuse requests, Chinese frequently employed 'excuse'+ 'positive opinion,' while Americans employed 'excuse' + 'positive opinion/negative willingness.' To refuse offers, the Chinese frequently employed an expression of 'gratitude' + 'excuse' while Americans employed an expression of 'gratitude' + 'negative willingness.' To refuse suggestions both groups employed an 'excuse' or a statement 'negative willingness' with different frequencies. To refuse invitations both groups employed 'excuse,' 'apology,' or 'gratitude' since refusing an invitation is risky (Izadi & Zilaie,2015). This finding is similar to Ren and Woodfield (2016), where the Chinese often employed 'excuse' or 'apology' to refuse invitations. Additionally, Jiang (2015) reported that Americans frequently employed 'discourse markers,' "Well," while Chinese employed 'address forms,' "Boss" to show courtesy. It is similar to Malaysian culture as they also employed 'address forms' to mitigate refusals (Farnia & Wu, 2012). It was found that the Chinese employed 'excuses' mostly at a second position along with a pre-refusal (e.g., "Boss, I have to take care of my family"). Furthermore, Chinese 'excuses' were family-oriented which echoed the importance given to the family. In contrast, Americans gave 'excuses' that were self-oriented, "I like it here," emphasizing the individual's needs.

Cui and Spring (2019) examined Chinese and Japanese speakers' refusal strategies in English using DCT to elicit refusal to requests and suggestions. All the participants employed various indirect strategies and avoided employing direct strategies. To refuse suggestions most of the participants refused in the following manner, "I know about that

(positive opinion), I just don't have enough time to do the cleaning (excuse).” However, only the Japanese initiated refusals with ‘gratitude,’ “Thank you for the suggestion (gratitude). I will try it later (postponement).” To refuse requests, all the participants initiated their refusals through a statement of ‘apology,’ followed by an ‘excuse,’ “I am sorry (apology), I will use it for preparing the test (excuse).” However, only Chinese English learners frequently initiated refusals with a ‘wish;’ e.g., “I wish I can help you (wish), but I did not attend the class either (excuse)” or ‘address form,’ “Teacher (address form), I already made an appointment with others (excuse).” Cui and Spring (2019) stated that the Chinese were steeped in their culture, similar to Malaysian culture as the latter also employed ‘address forms’ to mitigate refusals (Farnia & Wu, 2012; Sattar et al., 2011). Cui and Spring (2019) noted that their study was limited in several ways, particularly the small size of participants, refusals to those of lower status due to the time constraint, and the drawback of using DCT.

It can be concluded that from all the Chinese studies discussed above, the Chinese mostly employed ‘excuse’ and ‘statement of apology’ through various linguistic expressions. The use of adjuncts to refusals were mostly ‘gratitude’ or ‘address forms’ as supportive moves before or after refusal head-acts. Most of their ‘excuses’ were family-oriented. They often employed single strategies like ‘excuse,’ or the combination of two strategies like (excuse + apology). It can be stated that the contents of their refusal strategies demonstrated the impact of their culture.

2.5.3 Refusal studies by Iranians

In the Iranian context, Farrouki and Arghami (2017), Izadi and Zilaie (2015), and Mohammad, Alireza, and Shirin (2013) conducted refusal speech act studies in English. To analyze data, all studies employed Beebe et. al.’s (1990) refusal taxonomy. While

Shahisvan and Sharifan, (2016) employed the refusal taxonomies of Beebe et al. (1990) and Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal sequences.

Izadi and Zilaie (2015) used fieldnotes to investigate how Iranians realized refusals to offers, suggestions, invitations, and requests in English. Iranians employed more direct strategies when they refused suggestions or requests, combined with other indirect strategies or adjuncts. They employed more indirect strategies when they refused offers or invitations as they value the invitations or offers. They employed often 'excuse' and 'gratitude' to mitigate the effect of their refusals, "Thanks, well I'm a bit busy otherwise." They also employed 'address forms,' "professor," and 'returning the invitation,' "You come that side rather." The choice of these strategies suggested the influence of Iranian culture. It seems common and polite in Iranian culture to refuse with 'returning the invitation' and to use 'address forms.'

Mohammad et al., (2013) compared the linguistic devices used in refusals in English by Iranians and Americans using one hundred movies to elicit refusals to suggestions, and requests. Both groups similarly realized the refusals such as 'excuse,' 'non-performative' or 'apology'. Iranians showed their strong belief in God and utilized God-related expressions to refuse requests; "*Inshallah*" is similar to 'God willing,' while Americans employed more 'lack of enthusiasm.'

Farrouki and Arghami (2017) compared the linguistic devices used in refusals in English by Iranians and Americans using five English and five Farsi novels. Both groups similarly realized the refusals such as 'excuse,' 'non-performative' or 'apology'. Iranians also often employed 'attempt to dissuade speaker' and Americans employed direct strategies combined with 'excuse' while Mohammad et al. (2013) reported that Iranians showed their strong belief in God. Such different discoveries may be due to the different contexts. Adjuncts were evident in English novels but not in Farsi novels (Farrouki &

Arghami, 2017). This is contrary to the findings of Mohammad et al. (2013) since they discovered Iranians employed adjuncts to mitigate the refusals. Iranians 'excuses' were keen to be associated with the community, and thus inclined to employ the word "we" more than "I" to show their inclusivity (Farrouki & Arghami, 2017; Mohammad et al., 2013). On the other hand, Americans employed more "I" which showed they were self-oriented and used more straightforward utterances. Farrouki and Arghami (2017) suggested future studies to include the social variable gender or other languages to contrast with English. The study findings by Allami and Naeimi (2011) is supportive of the choice of indirect types over the direct ones by English and Iranian samples, even though their data collection instruments were different from that of the present study.

Shahisvan and Sharifan, (2016) compared the refusal strategies employed by Iranians and Australians using DCT and focus group interviews (FGIs). Both groups often employed 'excuse,' "I think I will be having better job," 'alternative,' "I've been interested rather in topic area X," or 'negative performative' as head-acts. Both groups mostly refused with an 'excuse' while Iranian 'excuses' were accompanied by pre-refusal as a softener, Australian 'excuses' were devoid of any supportive moves to be straight. It seems proper refusal behavior in Iranian culture as refusers rely on their "deeply held native values in carrying out complicated and face-threatening speech acts such as refusals" (Beebe et al., 1990, p. 68).

It can be established from the above that most of the Iranian refusal studies employed Beebe et al.'s (1990) taxonomy to categorize the data. All studies employed various instruments to collect data like DCT, movies, or novels in various situations. Most researchers (e.g., Farrouki & Arghami, 2017; Mohammad, 2013) compared Iranian studies with western studies like Americans. Iranians mostly employed 'excuse' to realize their refusals through various linguistic expressions. Their major 'excuses' were family-

oriented. In terms of adjuncts, Iranians mostly employed 'gratitude' or 'address forms' as supportive moves through various linguistic expressions. Izadi and Zilaie (2015) discovered the following strategies were often employed by Iranians while refusing: 'invoking God' or 'address form' with various linguistic expressions which other Iranian refusal studies did not state due to various reasons.

2.5.4 Refusal studies by Arabs

In the Arabian context, Al-Ghamdi and Ibrahim (2019), Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari (2016), and Saud (2019) conducted refusal speech act studies in English. To analyze data, all studies employed Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal taxonomy. A few studies, such as Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) employed Hofstede's (1991) cultural dimension of individualism and collectivism, and Morkus (2014) employed Gracias (1992) stages frameworks in combination with Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal taxonomy.

Saud (2019) studied the refusal strategies made in English by 150 Saudi students from King Khalid University using DCT to extract refusals to suggestions, requests, offers, and invitations. "The way people say the negative answer "no" differs in different cultures and has a great impact on communication success or breakdown" (Saud, 2019, p. 98). Saudis employed more indirect strategies than direct strategies like 'excuse,' 'statement of apology,' 'non-performative,' or 'gratitude' with different frequencies to refuse in each situation. This outcome concurs with Al-Issa's (2003) refusal study outlined that Arab EFL students employed more indirect refusal strategies. To refuse offers or suggestions, Arabs employed more direct strategies, contrary to the findings of Izadi and Zilaie (2015) in which Iranian participants did not employ any direct strategies while refusing offers. Saud (2019) reported Arabs provided detailed refusals so that the feelings of the speakers were not hurt, "I am sorry. I can't let you go before you finish your work. However, if you are in a hurry, at least finish the urgent tasks that I've given you." Saud (2019) stated

more studies are required to investigate if the students were influenced by their socio-cultural norms.

Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari (2016) studied how forty-one Omani EFL Students from Sultan Qaboos University in Oman refused using DCT to extract refusals to requests, offers, invitations, and suggestions. Omani EFL students mostly employed indirect strategies like 'excuse,' "because we have a lot of works needed to be done today" or 'apology' than direct ones. Nevertheless, direct strategies were employed while refusing suggestions, "I cannot! We have some work to do" or requests, "No, Sir! My future is to become a scientist." Remarkably, they didn't utilize direct strategies while refusing invitations. This is similar to Izadi & Zilaie (2015) where Iranians did not employ direct strategies while refusing invitations since they value the invitation and Additionally, Omani EFL students stated many responses which were too direct, "Sorry my friend, I can't lend you." They mostly employed 'apology' as a pre-refusal before refusing directly, "I am sorry (apology). I can't (negative willingness) let you go before you finish your work." Arabs provided detailed refusals which reflected their way of life, as they would not like to hurt the speaker. In contrast, Nelson et al. (2002) stated that Americans provided detailed refusal responses and Egyptians employed more direct strategies. The contradiction may have taken place due to the different data instruments or participants' different linguistic behaviors. However, Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari (2016) acknowledged the drawbacks of this study, i.e., using DCT does not elicit natural responses. In addition, the convenience sampling method, the limited number of participants, and drawing on the quantitative method add to the limitations of their study.

An extensive analysis of refusals in English was conducted by Morkus (2014) contrasting ten Egyptian Arabs and ten Americans to see how through role-plays, refusals to requests and offers. A mixed method was employed to analyze data. Egyptians

employed more indirect strategies while Americans employed more adjuncts. Arabs provided detailed refusals to ensure the speaker was not hurt, while that did not work with Americans who often expressed refusals through directness. It was common for both groups to provide 'excuses' as head-acts. The Arabs 'excuses' were more family-oriented, "Today I have to go and pick up my sister" or white lie, "Unfortunately, in this lecture, I did not write good notes"). In contrast, Americans 'excuses' were self-oriented, "I know, but I've got a study session" or Non-white lie, "I'm really busy studying for this test." Americans often employed the expression of 'solidarity,' "you know" or 'gratitude' as softeners whereas Egyptians often employed 'religious expressions,' "I swear to God. It's not worth it." This tendency likewise mirrored the vital role of religion in Arab culture. This finding is similar to the findings of Mohammad et al. (2013) that Iranians showed their strong belief in God. However, the limitation of this study was that there was no control of age variation and gender differences. Morkus (2014) did not initiate follow-up interviews with the participants since such interviews could have provided beneficial understandings. Morkus (2014) suggested additional examination in Arabic at how they realize refusal speech act in Arabic online.

In another study, Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) compared Americans' and Jordanian EFL learners' refusals using DCT to extract refusals to requests, offers, invitations, and suggestions. Arabs utilized more indirect strategies while Americans were more straightforward. Both groups frequently utilized 'excuse,' 'apology,' 'negative willingness,' or 'gratitude.' Several Arab refusal studies (Ghaben & Banikalef, 2020; Saud, 2019) also discovered that Arabs often employed 'gratitude' to appease the speaker before stating their refusal. Additionally, Arabs 'excuses' were family-oriented, "I have to take my mother to a hospital that day," while Americans 'excuses' were self-oriented, "I have a very important test I have to study for." They were inclined to offer an 'excuse' to avoid threats. Certain strategies were employed by Arabs only: 'swearing to God,' or

'address forms,' while Americans used other particular strategies such as 'explicit rejection,' or 'using taboo words.' This finding is similar to Al-Issa (2003) that Arab participants employed 'address forms.' Morkus (2014) also reported that Arabs often employed 'religious expressions.' In Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016), refusal data hardly appeared any solidarity while in Morkus's (2014) refusal study Americans employed. However, Al-Shboul and Huwari (2016) cited the limitations such as the small number of male participants, diverse educational backgrounds, age groups, and gender that could have specified different outcomes. Besides, gathering data via one instrument is not adequate to offer insights into every feature of American and Jordanian refusal strategies.

Al-Ghamdi and Ibrahim (2019) compared Saudi and American students' refusal strategies in the USA using DCT to extract refusals to requests and invitations in English. This study focused on gender and social status. Arab and American employed 'excuse,' 'apology,' or 'alternative' in an almost similar order, but with varying frequency. Arabs 'excuses' were non-specific, "I am busy" since they think that the details of their refusals are private or family-oriented, "I have to take my family out," while Americans 'excuses' were self-oriented, "I make it a policy not to lend my car to anyone" or specific, "I have a group study in the library within fifteen minutes." Americans, however, gave the necessary information explicitly and in detail. This result is in agreement with the findings of several other previous refusal studies. For instance, Arabs (Morkus, 2014), Japanese (Beebe et al., 1990), and Malaysians (Amirrudin & Salleh, 2016). In these studies, most learners' 'excuses' were family-oriented. The participants used a minimum of two combinations in most situations. For example, 'excuse' + 'apology' or 'excuse' + 'alternative.' They hardly employed 'excuse,' 'apology,' and 'alternative' together. To refuse invitations, Iraqis often employed the combination of 'apology' + 'excuse' (Abu Humeid & Altai, 2013; Turki, Hussein, & Al-Kubaisy, 2020), while Turki et al. (2020) reported that they applied 'apology' mostly along with 'appeal to a third party.' Such

differences may be due to the context or different participants, despite employing the same instruments and coming from the same community. Perhaps to refuse invitations without feeling sorry is impolite in the Arab culture. Americans employed “I cannot” not by itself but rather combined it with an 'excuse' or an expression of 'regret' to reduce the impact of refusal outcomes. However, the limitation of this study is the small number of participants, the use of DCT which recorded simulated responses.

To sum up, Arabs mostly employed ‘excuse,’ ‘statement of apology,’ and ‘negative willingness’ to refuse. In contrast, Americans frequently employed direct strategies. Arabs ‘excuses’ were family-oriented or less specific, while Americans ‘excuses’ were self-oriented or specific. In terms of adjuncts, Arabs frequently employed ‘invoking God’ through religious expression or ‘gratitude’ before or after direct or indirect refusals as mitigators. They often employed a combination of two strategies like (excuse + apology). They also “I cannot” combined it with an 'excuse' or an expression of 'regret' to reduce the impact of refusal outcomes. They also employed ‘invoking God’ which reflects the crucial role of religion in the Arab culture.

2.5.5 Refusal studies by Western researchers

Permataningtyas and Sembodo (2018), Farenkia (2019), Siebold and Busch (2015), and Sartika, Fauziati, Marmanto, and Jazadi (2020) conducted refusal speech act studies in English. To analyze data, all studies employed Beebe et. al.’s (1990) refusal taxonomy. Iliadi and Larina (2017) employed the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1978) and the refusal taxonomy of Beebe et al. (1990).

Iliadi and Larina (2017) studied the refusal speech act by British and Russian participants using DCT to elicit refusals on offers, requests, and invitations based on social distance. Both groups often employed ‘excuse,’ ‘apology,’ or ‘negative willingness’ as head-acts. Russians were found to be more direct than the British. The

British employed the following combination: “I’m so sorry (statement of apology), but I cannot (negative willingness) right now.” British employed various modalities, “perhaps” or “maybe” and an identity marker, “buddy” as mitigators. This finding supports Al-Sairi (2019) that Arabs tended to strengthen their apologies through adverbial modifiers, “really” or “very.” To refuse invitations, both groups softened their refusals through ‘willingness,’ “I would love to, but...,” an expression of ‘gratitude,’ “Thank you, (gratitude) but My husband and I have made plans to go away (excuse),” or an ‘apology’ to show their courtesy. This finding supports the finding of Beebe et al. (1990) where Americans employed the most ‘willingness’ or ‘gratitude’ as mitigators.

Permataningtyas and Sembodo (2018) investigated refusals to requests or offers of the British characters in the following movies: ‘Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone’ and ‘Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets.’ Findings revealed that indirect refusals were employed more than direct strategies by the characters in the two movies. They often employed ‘excuse,’ “Snape is one of the teachers protecting the stone!” or ‘negative willingness,’ “I can’t spell it. All right, his name was Voldemort” to express their refusals. They did not employ direct refusal on its own but used it with other strategies.

Farenkia (2019) examined the refusal strategies of undergraduates in a Canadian university using DCT to extract refusals to requests, offers, and invitations. They were chosen randomly. Farenkia (2019) stated that there were numerous studies on refusals in many regional varieties of English like British, Scottish, American but little research was conducted on Canadian English. Data were collected Canadians mostly employed direct strategies compared to indirect strategies. To mitigate their refusals, they also employed ‘excuse,’ ‘apology,’ or ‘gratitude’ as supportive moves (pre-or post-refusals). This finding echoes the findings of Iliadi and Larina (2017). It can be said that it is normal in Canadian culture to employ ‘excuse’ or ‘apology’ as head-acts or supportive moves.

Siebold and Busch (2015) contrasted German and Spanish participants' refusals to invitations using role-play followed by interviews to collect data. Both groups employed direct strategies as head-acts compared to indirect strategies. This finding is similar to Iliadi and Larina (2017) and Ismail (2017) in which Spanish was found to realize their refusals more with direct strategies. However, their direct strategies were supported by supportive moves like 'apology,' "I really cannot (direct), I'm sorry(apology)" or 'gratitude;' "thanks (gratitude) anyway I've already planned something with friends (excuse) so I have to refuse (direct)." Spanish and Germans employed at least one adjunct. Moreover, Germans employed direct "No" as head-act which did not appear in the Spanish data. Spanish 'excuses' emphasized on time, "I've got exams and the truth is I don't have lots of free time" while Germans 'excuses' were a lack of affinity, "I'm simply not the gym-type." In contrast, Beebe et al. (1990) discovered that Americans 'excuses' were specific, while the Japanese 'excuses' were ambiguous.

In another refusal study, Sartika, Fauziati, Marmanto, and Jazadi (2020) investigated refusal strategies by Indonesian English learners and Americans from Ohio University using WDCT. The data were triangulated through different sources. Both groups employed 'excuse,' 'apology,' 'negative-performance,' or 'gratitude' differently. Direct strategies were used with other adjuncts or indirect strategies; perhaps it would be impolite to be direct without any mitigations, "No, I have a friend on the way. Thank you." This finding is similar to Chojimah (2015) that indirect refusal strategies are the most employed strategies by Indonesian students. In addition, indirect refusal strategies are associated with politeness and occur mostly in the Indonesian culture (Sartika et al., 2020). Indonesians and Americans tended to depend on 'wish' indirect strategy to compensate as a mitigating strategy. Americans manipulated 'wish' with 'apology,' and 'excuse' whereas Indonesians merely joined it with 'excuse' "I wish I could (wish), but I am busy on Sunday (excuse)."

Overall, people of western cultures employed various strategies as the head-acts, mostly- 'negative willingness' or 'excuse' through various linguistic utterances. They also employed 'gratitude,' 'excuse,' and 'positive opinion' before or after direct or indirect head-acts. They mostly used 'excuses' that are self-oriented or specific. They also realized refusals in a combination of direct, indirect pragmatic strategies, and adjuncts arranged in many different combinations to ease the refusal threat.

2.6 Past studies on internal modifiers

Over the past few years, numerous internal modifiers studies have been conducted in numerous cultural backgrounds.

Rešetar (2014) examined the use of internal and external modifiers in requests by Serbian English learners using a written discourse completion test (WDCT) and Woodfield's (2012) taxonomy of internal and external request modifications. The Serbians weakened the impact of the refusal by use of 'politeness marker,' "Please," 'understater,' "kind of," or 'conditional structure,' "could you give me"

According to Ren (2013), the internal modification in refusals has hardly been examined, with the exclusion of the following studies, Barron (2003), Bella (2011), Félix-Brasdefer (2004, 2008). Thus, Ren (2013) investigated the internal modifiers of refusals by Chinese students using the Multimedia Elicitation Task and Bella's (2011) taxonomy. Chinese English learners frequently employed 'address form,' "Sorry (apology), **professor** (address form). You know, I have a lot of work to do (excuse)" and 'Downtoner,' "Perhaps," or 'Intensifiers,' "really as softeners. A similar conclusion was reached by Cui and Spring (2019) that Chinese participants employed 'address form' as a mitigator. Alike Ren (2013), Felix-Brasdefer (2006), and Tavakoli and Shirinbakhsh (2014) also reported the linguistic form "I don't think" is employed to mitigate the

illocutionary force of a statement since Benveniste (1971) observed that employing verbs with an epistemic meaning, 'I think...' is equal to a mitigated statement.

Al-Kayed, Akram, Al-zu'bi, and Alkayid (2017) discovered the employment of internal modifiers by Jordanians using twenty-four hours of recorded conversations to extract refusals to invitations or offers using the refusal module of Beebe et al. (1990), internal modifiers of House and Kasper (1987) and Blum-Kulka. Jordanians frequently employed 'excuse,' "I will be busy," 'apology,' "Oh, I am sorry..." or 'non-performative,' "I am afraid I can't. I am sorry." They employed a combination of two strategies, often like "I cannot (direct), I promise I will go with you next time (promise of future acceptance)." They also employed Islamic religious expressions as a mitigator: "*wallah* is similar to I swear." This indicated how Jordanians were influenced by their culture. As internal modifiers they often employed 'downtoners,' "It is probable that I will be busy" to express their refusal utterances more tentatively or 'politeness markers,' "please" to mitigate the speech acts' force.

Hassan and Ranasawmy (2014) investigated the employment of mitigations while requesting by Iranian EFL learners based on gender. The taxonomies of Márquez-Reiter (2000) and House and Kasper (1987) were adopted to code the request modifications. Hassan and Ranasawmy (2014) stated that requests were employed in daily life for different purposes like enquiring about the food in a restaurant, and asking for information among different speech acts like apology, refusal, complaint, and compliment. Thus, they attempted to identify modifiers in the request. The outcomes revealed that gender among it was women who employed more mitigations than men. Iranians frequently employed 'politeness marker' or 'past tense modals' as a polite gesture to soften the negative impacts of a refusal.

Abdolrezapour and Dastjerdi (2011) explored the employment of internal modifiers by Iranian English learners and Americans while refusing requests due to its offensive nature using role-plays and classified by using Beebe et al.' (1990) refusal taxonomy and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) internal modifiers. Past studies gave scant attention to internal modifiers. Both groups employed 'excuses,' for instance Americans say, "No, I have to review them tonight", while Iranians would say, "I have an exam tomorrow. Is it possible to ask another student?" It can be seen that Iranians employed the 'excuse' as head-act while Americans employed that as a post-refusal. However, Iranians were cautious while they refused as they tended to employ 'address form,' "Sorry **professor** it is not possible as I have an exam tomorrow?" Both groups employed the following internal mitigations with different frequencies. Americans would employ a 'downtoner,' "well, I cannot possibly give it to you" or the 'past tense form,' "You **could** perhaps get it from another friend" to minimize the impositions of the refusal. This result is broadly similar to Al Kayed et al. (2017) and Ren (2013), in which Arab, American, and Chinese participants employed a 'downtoner' to soften their utterances. Hassan and Rangasawmy (2014) also reported that Iranians often employed a 'past tense module' to decrease the effect of their requests. In contrast in this study, Iranians did not employ a 'politeness marker', as opposed to Hassan and Rangasawmy's (2014) findings. Such differences may be due to the context as Abdolrezapour and Dastjerdi (2011) investigated internal modifiers used in the refusals while Hassan and Rangasawmy (2014) investigated internal modifiers used in making requests. According to Abdolrezapour and Dastjerdi (2011), Iranians consider internal modifiers as a means to get compliance since Iranian informants felt obliged to use mitigation devices to soften the face-threatening effect of their refusing requests, while Americans assume them as a flattering device due to cultural differences.

In summary, past internal modifier studies of the different cultures showed how people employed different internal modifiers to mitigate their utterances while refusing or

making requests. They employed 'politeness marker' or 'downtowner' the most. Thus, this study aims to discover if such internal modifiers shape Bangladeshi students' refusal strategies in this study.

2.7 Methodological issues

Past refusal studies have been based on the interactional data derived from instruments. Beebe et al. (1990) used the discourse completion task (DCT), Chen (1996) used a judgment task questionnaire, Felix-Brasdefer (2006) used the role-play scenarios, Permataningtyas and Sembodo (2018) used secondary data, extracted from movies to stimulate the activity while Izadi and Zilaie (2015) used field notes to elicit data. It was also evident that most of the previous studies have utilized written DCT as the instrument to collect data (e.g., Farnia and Wu; 2012, Ismail, 2017; Sattar et al., 2011). These tools are handy for examining linguistic or pragmatic issues involving languages or words, and most of these may also experience some methodological restrictions (Nelson et al., 2002). For example, the participants may offer proto-typical answers in role-play scenarios or DCT situations, thereby making the responses less spontaneous.

The written responses to DCT situations are "sandwiched between an opening statement and a follow-up statement" (Houck, Noel & Gass). Altogether, it is difficult to collect data from authentic situations involving refusals due to impracticality, consent, sensitivity, or even the authenticity of the responses. Very few have attempted to utilize authentic data for analysis (e.g., Cui & Spring, 2019; Ren and Woodfield, 2016). Addressing this restraint experienced by past studies also suggested the use of naturally-occurring data while investigating refusals such as in the studies by Farnia and Wu (2012).

2.8 Research gap

In summing up the above literature, it can be concluded that past refusal studies, Bangladeshi pragmatic studies, and internal modifier studies are relevant to this study.

About refusal, it is frustrating to receive some other response, irrespective of what language it is and it is not an expected answer (Brown & Levinson, 1978). It is culture-specific and complicated (Beebe et al., 1990). Thus, different people of different cultures use different strategies to refuse; e.g., Jiang (2015) reported that Chinese students employed more family-oriented ‘excuses,’ whereas American students employed self-oriented ‘excuses’ when refusing a request. Additionally, Chinese students were found to use ‘address form,’ “sir” to their Boss, while American students utilized none of these when refusing a request. It is assumed that this is due to their differences in culture. Thus, it can be stated that the relation between language and culture is mirrored in an individual’s ordinary use of language as it involves diverse speech acts.

Furthermore, many refusal studies have been conducted on Intralingual, cross-cultural, and learner-centered, and based on different areas such as Japan (Beebe et al., 1990), Malaysia (Amirrudin & Salleh, 2016), China (Ren & Helen, 2016), and Saudi Arab (Darwish, 2018). Moreover, Al-Mahrooqi & Al-Aghbari (2016) stated that there are many studies on refusals to a request, suggestions, and offers, but less on invitations. However, to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, no studies are located on Bangladeshi participants in Malaysia. Thus, this study looks into Bangladeshi participants’ refusals towards an invitation.

Further, as indicated by Al- Rubai’ey (2016), there are numerous previous studies on apologies and requests (e.g., Rešetar, 2014) that focused on the internal modifiers besides pragmatic strategies, but internal modifiers are not discussed much in previous refusal studies except for studies by Abdolrezapour & Dastjerdi (2011) and Félix-Brasdefer (2004).

Moreover, Past Bangladeshi pragmatic studies also stressed various areas like code-switching (e.g., Obaidullah, 2016), speech act (e.g., Das and Herring, 2015), or discourse marker (Mohamadi & Khan, 2018) but not on refusal speech act. Therefore, this study seeks to address the gap in the literature in the context of Bangladeshi students, the use of authentic data, and WhatsApp for collecting data.

2.9 Summary

This chapter looked at past studies of the speech act, in particular refusals, refusal taxonomies, refusal sequences, internal modifiers, and pragmatic studies by Bangladeshi English speakers. In short, this chapter gave a general perspective of past works. Altogether, the refusal speech acts have been broadly looked into in numerous cultures. This section provided information that is expected to help the researcher to carry out a reliable and valid study. The present examination is undertaken with the expectation that it will shed some light on how Bangladeshi postgraduate students make refusals in English.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the study's methodology in the following order, participants, pilot study, data collection method, ethical consideration, analytical frameworks, and approaches to analysis.

3.2 Participants

The participants identified for this study are 105 Bangladeshi postgraduate students, who comprise 47 males and 58 females studying at the University of Malaya, the International Islamic University of Malaysia, and the rest from other universities in Malaysia. They are all doing different majors (See table 3.2: Profile of the students in **Appendix C**). Their ages ranged from 26 to 32, and all are personal friends of the researcher. The selection criteria would thus be purposive sampling, where the selected students were approached. This sampling method enables the researcher to identify the potential students from an entire population (Creswell, 2014). In this regard, two criteria are set. First, the students must be from Bangladesh. Second, the students must be bilingual, with their first language Bengali and they must also be able to speak or use the English language well enough for writing messages in complete sentences.

3.2.1 Justification

The justification for selecting Bangladeshi students has been noted in the problem statement in Chapter 1. An invitation was sent out via WhatsApp to 130 Bangladeshi postgraduate students, but only those who refused the invitation are selected because of their negative responses (refusals).

3.3 Pilot study

Before collecting the data, a pilot study involving 10 postgraduate students was conducted. The email was used as the mode of communication, to invite the students to

come and visit the researcher. The email invitation was conveyed in English. The collected responses showed that many refused by using indirect refusal strategies like 'excuse.' The pilot study was conducted to see if the present study would be viable.

3.4 Data collection method

Data for this study are collected from WhatsApp messages. They are then transferred onto the Microsoft word document for analysis. This study followed Flores-Salgado and Castineira-Benitez's (2018) procedure, which looked at request speech acts which were collected from WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a popular form of interactive communication between individuals or groups (Kumar & Sharma, 2017).

3.4.1 Naturally-occurring data

Naturally-occurring data should be spontaneous, productive, and complex (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). This spontaneity and naturalness can highlight the richness of the information. Moreover, some researchers such as Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) and Wolfson (1986) recommend using natural data for analysis to capture how speakers genuinely carry out their various speech acts. In this context, naturally occurring means authentic data written by people involved in the activity. Although it is argued that WhatsApp data are generally in the written form, it cannot be denied that most of these responses are also written as if they are 'spoken' (Veronika, 2013), hence the authenticity. This study focuses on an invitation made via WhatsApp to the students.

3.4.2 Invitation trigger

The invitation situation is based on Al-Mahrooqi and Al-Aghbari's (2016) refusal study, which focused on refusal strategies by inviting the participants to a 'magic show' and a 'dinner' at a hotel. In this study, however, the invitation was sent out on short notice before the 'Eid al-Fitr,' which fell on 16th June 2018. Based on this, it is anticipated that

there would be more refusals. The 'Eid al Fitr' was chosen because it was the nearest upcoming occasion at the point of this study.

The same invitation: “I have arranged a get-together dinner at my house in Shah Alam, section 22, on 16th June, the first day of Eid. Please do come” was sent out to 130 participants simultaneously through the broadcast feature, which resulted in the participants receiving individual invitations rather than as a group. A group invitation was not preferred because it is assumed that participants in the group might influence each other’s responses. Having grown up outside of Bangladesh, the inviter is more comfortable speaking in English, and her friends are aware of this. Consequently, most of their communications also transpired in English.

For this study, only responses that incurred refusals (105) were selected for analysis. 25 participants' responses were eliminated because they accepted the invitation. The data collection took a total of 10 days. Following this, some demographic information of the participants was also added. The following are the screenshots of the first and last invitation that the inviter sent and the students’ refusals.

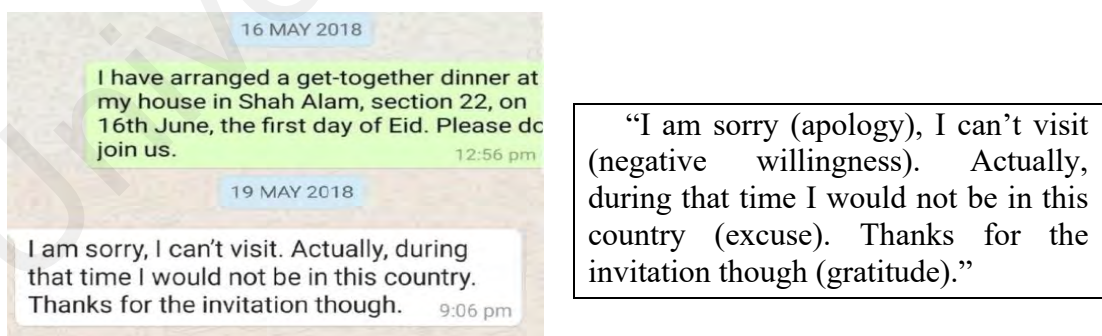
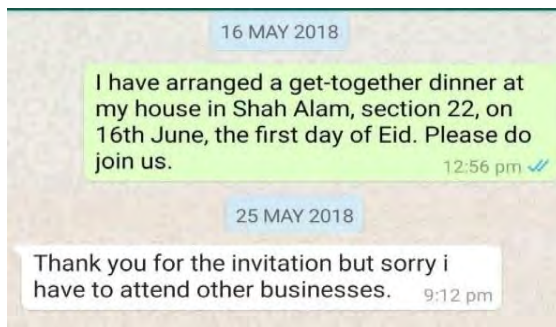


Figure 3.1: Screenshot of the first participant’s refusal



“Thank you for the invitation (gratitude) but sorry (apology); I have to attend other businesses (excuse).”

Figure 3.2: Screenshot of the last participant’s refusal

Lastly, the researcher employed the acquired responses to answer the research questions.

3.5 Ethical consideration

The consent to use the responses for this study is extended to all the participants via WhatsApp and telephone calls. The consent is taken verbally, and they are informed of the research objectives. Following this, they are also informed about their confidentiality and anonymity. These 105 students are then marked as S1 until S105. Gender variable is not focused in this study; hence the element is not factored into the coding.

3.6 Analytical frameworks

The following frameworks are adapted to answer the research questions. The refusal classification of refusal taxonomies is adapted from Beebe et al.’s (1990) and Al-Issa’s (2003) refusal sequences. The internal modifiers' categorization is adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The brief explanations of these frameworks are given below.

3.6.1 Combination of Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al.’s (1990) taxonomies of refusal strategies

As per Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al., (1990) there are two types of refusal strategies. There are adjuncts to refusals as well. The taxonomies are shown in brief in table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2: Classification of refusal strategies by Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al. (1990)

Types	Al-Issa (2003)	Beebe et al., (1990)	Linguistic expressions
Direct strategies	Performative	Performative	“I have to decline” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Negative ability	Negative willingness	“ <u>I cannot</u> ” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	No	No	“No” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Explicit rejection	-	“Hell no” (Al-Issa, 2003).
Indirect strategies	Explanation	Excuse	“My notes are not good” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Regret	Statement of apology	“ <u>Sorry</u> ” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	-	Promise of future acceptance	“I will do it some <u>other time</u> ” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Future condition	Future condition	“If I do not go, I may join you” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Alternative	Alternative	“Why don’t you ask X?” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Past condition	Past condition	“If you would have asked me 10 minutes ago?” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Wish	Wish	“ <u>I wish</u> I could” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Statement of Principle	Statement of Principle	“I don’t ride with strangers” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	-	Lack of enthusiasm	“I am not interested in diets” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	-	Unspecific reply	“I have no idea when I can give them to you” (Beebe et al., 1990).
-	Topic Switch	“Just make me a cup of tea” (Beebe et al., 1990).	

Continuation of table 3.2

Types	Al-Issa (2003)	Beebe et al., (1990)	Linguistic expressions
Indirect strategies	-	Statement of Philosophy	“One can't be too careful” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Postponement	Postponement	“I will think about it” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	-	Repetition part of the invitation/request	“Tuesday?” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Sarcasm	Sarcasm	“I forgot I am your servant” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Hedging	Hedging	“I am not sure” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	-	Nonverbal	(Do nothing, physical departure, or silence) (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Negative consequences	Negative consequences	“Who asked about your opinion” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	-	Guilt trip	“I will not make a living off people who just order coffee.” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	-	Criticize the request/requester	“You are lazy” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Let interlocutor off the hook	Let interlocutor off the hook	“Don't worry about it” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	-	Self-defense	“I'm doing my best” (Beebe et al., 1990).
	Reprimand	-	“You should attend classes too” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	A request for information	-	“Why do you think I should take it” (Al-Issa, 2003).
Adjuncts to refusals	Gratitude	Gratitude	“Thank you very much” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Positive opinion/Agreement	Positive opinion	“That's good idea, but...” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Return favor	-	“I will pay for you and me” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Pause filler	Discourse marker	“ <u>Well</u> , I understand, but...” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	A request for consideration	A request for consideration	“Please understand my situation” (Al-Issa, 2003).

Continuation of table 3.2

Types	Al-Issa (2003)	Beebe et al., (1990)	Linguistic expressions
Adjuncts to refusals	Invoking God	-	“ <i>Inshallah</i> , I’ll take it next semester” (Al-Issa, 2003).
		Statement of empathy	“I know you are in a bad situation but..”(Beebe et al., 1990).
	A request for consideration	A request for consideration	“Please understand my situation” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Address form	-	“Ok, my <u>dear professor</u> , but...” (Al-Issa, 2003).
	Removal of negativity	-	“ <u>You know we’ve been very good friends</u> , but...” (Al-Issa, 2003).

3.6.2 Beebe et al.’s (1990) refusal sequences

Beebe et al. (1990) stated that refusals can be realized as a series of three phases as shown in table 3.3 below:

Table 3.3: Beebe et al.’s (1990) refusal sequences

Refusal sequences	Examples
Pre-refusals	The following example illustrates a refusal sequence to a friends' request to another friend to join his dinner party, i.e., “Uh (pre-refusal, discourse marker), I would like to (pre-refusal, suggestion of willingness), but I can't (head-act, negative willingness), I am sorry (post-refusal, statement of apology). I have plans (post-refusal, excuse)” (Beebe et al., 1990).
Head-acts	
Post-refusals	

3.6.3 Internal modifiers

These are certain linguistic expressions that appear within the same speech act to intensify or to mitigate their force and, consequently, convey politeness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) as shown in brief in table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) classification of internal modifiers

Types	Examples
Appealer	“Let us meet tomorrow. <u>Can we?</u> ”
Assessment	“ <u>Unfortunately</u> , I can't attend.”
Commitment indicator	“ <u>Certainly</u> , I will join later”
Downtowner	“ <u>Perhaps</u> you can ask someone else.”
Expletive	“Why the <u>bloody hell</u> it is tomorrow?”
Emphasis/ Intensifier	“I am <u>really</u> sorry.”
Subjectivizer/Mental state predicate	“ <u>I think</u> it will be a wonderful event.”
Politeness marker	“For that <u>please</u> excuse me.”
Past tense modals	“ <u>Could</u> you make it tomorrow?”
Preparator	“ <u>The problem is</u> that I don't have time.”
Solidarity	“I can't come as <u>you know</u> I will be at another program.”
Time intensifier	“I cannot come <u>right now</u> .”
Understater	“I have a <u>little bit</u> of work.”
Manner of speaking	“ <u>Frankly</u> , I don't think I can attend.”

The main reason for the choice of these frameworks since these frameworks have been used widely to examine refusal speech acts across different languages and cultures (e.g., Al- Rubai'ey, 2016; Amirrudin & Salleh; 2016; Lee, 2016; and Ren, 2013).

3.7 Approach to analysis

This study necessitates the employment of a qualitative method involving discourse analysis to analyze the collected refusals from Bangladeshi postgraduates. This study is conducted based on certain procedures:

Firstly, the refusals are separated into idea units based on Beebe et al.'s (1990) refusal study. Next, each idea unit is categorized based on the classification of refusal strategies established by Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al. (1990) provided in Table 3.2. For instance, a Japanese refused an invitation to a friend “Thank you but I am sorry as I will be busy” (Beebe et al.,1990) as shown in table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: The categorization of refusal strategies

Idea units	Code (refusal strategies)
Thank you but	Gratitude
I am sorry	Apology
as I will be busy	Excuse

This is followed by calculating the frequencies and percentages of the total refusal strategies. Taking the above example of Beebe et al., (1990), “Thank you but I am sorry as I will be busy,” this is an indirect strategy coded as consisting of two refusal strategies and one adjunct to refusal: ‘gratitude,’ ‘statement of apology,’ and ‘excuse.’ Next, a percentage of a specific strategy is calculated by dividing the number of occurrences of that specific strategy by the total number of strategies employed as shown in table 3.6 below:

Table 3.6 Frequencies and percentages of refusal strategies

Idea unit	Code (refusal strategies)	Frequencies	Percentages
Thank you but	Gratitude	1	33.33%
I am sorry	Apology	1	33.33%
as I will be busy	Excuse	1	33.33%
		Total: 3	100%

In instances of a similar strategy that occurs more than once in a response, it is still considered as one strategy. However, two times in frequency; e.g., in circumstances where an Arab refused an invitation to a friend: “Sorry (statement of apology), next time (promise of future acceptance) as I am busy (excuse), sorry (statement of apology)” (Al-Issa, 2003). The frequency is four. Any refusal strategy that does not fall into the coding schema will be considered a new finding of this study. Next, in this study, refusals also are considered as combinations of head acts, and pre-and post-refusals based on Beebe et al.’s (1990) refusal study. Thus, overall frequencies and percentages of refusal sequences

are also tabulated. The head-act can be realized as a direct or indirect strategy. Nevertheless, indirect refusals are considered as the head-acts in situations that occur in the absence of direct refusals, and they are counted as supportive moves when they occur in alliance with direct refusals.

The following example illustrates a refusal sequence to a friends' request to another friend to join his dinner party; i.e., “Uh (pre-refusal, discourse marker), I would like to (pre-refusal, suggestion of willingness) but I can't (head-act, negative willingness), I am sorry (post-refusal, statement of apology). I have plans (post-refusal, excuse)” (Beebe et al., 1990). This is followed by calculating the total number of refusal strategies as the head-acts, pre-refusals, and post-refusals.

Further, the way these refusals are realized the linguistic expressions employed to refuse in the utterance of the Bangladeshi postgraduate students are explained. Taking the above example of Beebe et al., (1990), “Thank you but I am sorry as I will be busy.”

A form of mild 'gratitude,' “thank you,” as pre-refusal introduced the refusal, followed by the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the upcoming refusal before realizing a face-threatening act of the refusal head-act. A statement of ‘apology,’ “sorry,” acted as refusal head-act. The refusal ended through an indirect strategy with a self-oriented ‘excuse,’ “I will be busy.” In this example, an expression of ‘gratitude’ was employed before refusing as mitigator through an expression of mild appreciation. Moreover, ‘gratitude’ ‘apology’ or ‘excuse’ is expressed through various linguistic expressions.

Lastly, internal modifiers are identified in the students' responses. Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) categories on internal modifiers is adopted to identify internal modifiers. The following expression was used to refuse a request: “Can we please do it tomorrow instead of today” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The refuser employed ‘please’ to express politeness

through a ‘politeness marker’ where it functioned as a mitigator. This is followed by calculating the total number of internal modifiers and how are they realized.

How these refusals are realized structurally, i.e., the way these refusal responses are structured by Bangladeshi postgraduate students’ messages are realized is answered in the section of Research Question 2. To identify how these refusals are structured, the positions and the refusal patterns of each refusal response is identified. Each order or combination is referred to as a refusal pattern (Beebe et al., 1990). The following example from Beebe et al. (1990) shows how the refusal response is realized structurally, “Uh (pre-refusal, discourse marker), I would like to (pre-refusal, suggestion of willingness) but I can't (head-act, negative willingness), I am sorry (post-refusal, statement of apology). I have plans (post-refusal, excuse).” It can be concluded that the refuser realized the refusal directly via a ‘negative willingness.’ In this example, the ‘negative willingness’ acted as head-act at third position after two pre-refusals. It displays a combination of five strategies, ‘discourse marker,’ ‘suggestion of willingness,’ ‘negative willingness,’ ‘statement of apology,’ and ‘excuse’ is employed to mitigate the refusal. More examples are elaborated in detail in chapter 4.

3.8 Summary

This study examines 105 Bangladeshi postgraduate students' most utilized refusal strategies to an invitation to visit during a festive celebration, and how these refusals are realized linguistically and structurally in English. Data is collected in the form of WhatsApp written responses. The classifications of refusal strategies established by Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et. al. (1990) is adapted in this study. Further, Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) categories on internal modifiers is adopted to identify internal modifiers used in the refusals.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters contextualized the research and presented its background, objective, related literature, and analysis. This chapter contains the data analyzed to answer the two research questions presented in chapter one. The outcomes are exhibited in order by first considering the frequencies of the refusal strategies, the refusal sequences, the internal modifiers, and how these refusals are realized linguistically. Next, it investigates how these refusals are realized structurally. In this chapter, the examples from data are kept in their original form and there was no attempt to correct the grammar.

4.2 Frequencies of refusal strategies

Refusal strategies are employed by the speakers when performing a refusal speech act (Beebe et al., 1990). In this study, all 105 refusals are first separated into idea units. These strategies are coded according to Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al.'s (1990) classification of refusal strategies: direct, indirect strategies and adjuncts to refusals. These strategies are discussed below.

4.2.1 Direct refusal strategies

Direct strategies refer to forthright refusals which are point-blank with little effort made to soften the effect of the refusal (Beebe et al., 1990). Table 4.1 below illustrates that 17 students did not employ a direct 'No,' or 'performative verb;' instead, their refusals are indicated through 'negative willingness.'

Table 4.1: Frequencies of direct strategies

Direct strategies	Frequencies
1. Performative verb	0
2. Non-performative:	
a. Negative willingness	17
b. No	0
	Total:17

This ‘negative willingness’ is discussed below.

(a) Negative willingness

It is found that 17 students employed articulations that contain negations to make refusal, S34: “I can’t make it.” They didn't utilize ‘No,’ since inviting someone is associated with showing him respect (Jamil, 2007). This is similar to Izadi and Zilaie (2015), where Iranians did not employ a direct ‘No’ while refusing invitations since they value it. However, the students also employed indirect strategies. The following section details the frequencies of indirect strategies.

4.2.2 Indirect refusal strategies

Indirectness would refer to the evasiveness of the speaker in conveying the intended meaning through the structure of the words (Blum-Kulka et al.,1989). Table 4.2 below illustrates 12 different types of indirect refusal strategies that are utilized. Indirect strategies are dominant strategies used by the students; since indirectness consists of politeness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). From the 105 students, 88 students refused indirectly, and a total of 178 indirect strategies are detected since most students employed more than one strategy to mitigate the refusal outcomes.

Among the 178 indirect strategies, 51.9% of indirect strategies are ‘excuse,’ followed by 21.3% are ‘statement of apology.’ A few other indirect strategies also appear with low frequency. Meanwhile, when refusing an invitation, ‘acceptance that functions as refusal,’

and ‘statement of philosophy or philosophy’ from Beebe et al.’s (1990) framework are not found in this study. Likewise, ‘hedging,’ ‘let interlocutor off the hook,’ ‘reprimand a request for information,’ ‘sarcasm,’ and ‘statement of principle’ from Al-Issa’s (2003) framework are not found in this study.

Table 4.2: Frequencies of indirect strategies

Indirect strategies	Frequencies	Percentages
Excuse	92	51.9%
Statement of apology	38	21.3%
Promise of future acceptance	14	7.9%
Alternative	12	6.7%
Avoidance	9	5%
Setting conditions for future and past	7	3.9%
Wish	4	2.2%
Attempt to dissuade the speaker	2	1.1%
	Total: 178	100%

These indirect strategies are discussed below.

(a) Excuse

The frequencies of the 'excuse' strategy in refusing an invitation is substantially higher (51.9%) than other strategies in this study. The content of ‘excuses’ varied amongst students. Among the 92 ‘excuses,’ 35 ‘excuses’ are family-oriented in which students stressed on family-related issues, S90: “I will be in Bangladesh with my family by then,” 30 ‘excuses’ are being away from Malaysia-oriented, S32: “I’ll be outside Malaysia,” 20 ‘excuses’ are self-oriented ‘excuses,’ “S28: "I have an important meeting,” and 7 ‘excuses’ are prior commitments ‘excuses’ whereby students mentioned their earlier commitments to others, “S12: i have some other obligations.”

One possible reason for 35 students having employed family-oriented ‘excuses’ could be due to the Bangladeshi culture which highlights social harmony over individual rights (Haque & Mohammad, 2013) while 30 students stated that they would not be in the country since ‘*Eid al- Fitr*’ is celebrated with family gatherings. They employed self-oriented and prior-commitments ‘excuses’ infrequently because invitations are highly valued (Jamil,2007).

(b) Statement of apology

The students utilized the ‘statement of apology’ strategy (21.3%) to express regret for refusing the invitation; since such apologetic expression is an act of politeness (Sattar et al., 2011), S79: "I'm so sorry. I'm no longer in KL."

(c) Other indirect strategies

The following indirect strategies are employed by 26.8% of the students, ‘**promise of future acceptance**’ (7.9%) to display a 'promise' that the invitation would be accepted at some other time when there would be ideal conditions for its fulfillment, S42: “Yes, I do accept but will join next time *Insha 'Allah* (God willing).”

The ‘**alternative**’ strategy is employed (6.7%) by the students to offer another alternated option to negotiate possibilities to arrive at a mutual agreement-S105: "*Apu* (elder sister), can we rather meet at [Z]’s birthday party by 9th, please?"

‘**Avoidance**’ strategy is expressed (5%) through

- a. ‘**Repetition part of the invitation**’: This verbal avoidance strategy is employed by repeating the invitation date to mitigate refusal outcomes, S52: "1st day in 'Eid? [R]."

- b. **‘Postponement’**: This strategy is employed to delay the response without providing an exact time, S50: "Thank you so much for the invitation. I will try to make it."
- c. **‘Sarcasm’**: This strategy is employed by using a metaphorical statement to distract the speaker, S88: "Thank you for your invitation sweetie. However, i cannot assure for the time being and will definitely let you know soon. **So till then you can eat all the puffed rice you can get.**"

In another strategy, **‘wish,’** (3.9%) this expression to refuse the invitation indirectly by demonstrating desire, S56: "Wow! I wish i could."

The strategy **‘Setting conditions’** based on time frame was also found in the data (2.2%).

- a. **‘Future’** strategy whereby the students employed this strategy by guiding the refusal to a future time in which the circumstance is more suitable, S103: "That's so kind of you *Apu* (elder sister). If I don't go, I may join u.."
- b. **‘Past’** strategy whereby a student employed this strategy by using a hypothetical condition which was valid for refusing the invitation, S45: "Oh, thank you for inviting me, sweetie, you are so nice! If I know it early, I must book the air ticket later."

Another strategy **‘Attempt to dissuade the speaker’** (1.1%) showed

- a) **‘Self-defense’**: This strategy is employed as a self-defense, S40: "_Well! Sounds great cutie pie. If i get free earlier from the other dinner party surely will join you. **I can’t promise though.**"

- b) **‘Critique the invitation’**: This strategy is employed to express his disapproval towards the invitation by criticizing the invitation, S67: "*Wallah* (swear), what a crap!"

These strategies are less frequently used perhaps due to the type of data collected, which is focused on an invitation, and did not cover refusals to offers, suggestions, or requests. Moreover, it may be due to the culture as in Bengali they value the invitation, thus they tended to provide lots of ‘excuses’ and ‘apologies.’ Nonetheless, to minimize the illocutionary force of the refusal expressions, the students employed various adjunct refusals. The following section details the frequencies of adjuncts to refusals.

4.2.3 Adjuncts to refusals

Adjuncts to refusals are important external modifiers to refusal strategies. They may appear before or after refusals to soften the refusal outcomes but cannot stand alone as an independent refusal (Morkus, 2014). Table 4.3 below illustrates 6 different types of adjuncts are utilized. From the 105 students, 98 students employed it, and a total of 218 adjuncts to refusals are detected since most students employed more than one adjunct as mitigators.

Among 218 Adjuncts to refusals, 32.6% of adjuncts are 'address forms,' followed by 24.3% are 'gratitude,' 9.6% are 'closing statement.' A few other adjuncts also appear with low frequency. Meanwhile, the ‘statement of empathy’ from Beebe et al.’s (1990) framework is not found in this study. Likewise, ‘return favor’ from Al-Issa’s (2003) framework is not found in this study. Perhaps this is not normal in Bengali culture to employ these adjuncts to mitigate refusal while refusing an invitation.

This study finds ‘greeting’ and ‘closing statement’ are two of the adjuncts that are uncovered, unlike those noted by Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al. (1990). However, these two adjuncts in table 4.3 concur with Sattar et al.’s (2011) refusal study.

Table 4.3: Frequencies of adjuncts to refusals

Adjunct to refusals	Frequencies	Percentages
Address form	71	32.6%
Gratitude	53	24.3%
Closing statement	21	9.6%
Greeting	16	7.3%
Positive remark	13	5.9%
Suggestion of willingness	11	5.04%
Discourse marker	10	4.5%
Invoking God	9	4.1%
Request for consideration	9	4.1%
Removal of negativity	5	2.2%
	Total: 218	100%

(a) Address form

Address form denotes a word/title/name or some combination of these, employed (32.6%) to address someone while speaking or writing, like a term of endearment, nickname, or affectionate name as mitigators (Al-Issa, 2003), S59: “I won’t be in KL Yaar (friend).”

(b) Gratitude

This adjunct is employed (24.3%) before or after the refusal head-acts to express appreciation S8: “**Thanks for the invitation** but I already committed to my other friend.”

(c) *Other adjuncts to refusals*

The following adjuncts to refusals 43.1% are employed, the ‘**closing statement**,’ is employed (9.6%) by describing good wishes at the end of the refusal expression, S7: "I have family plan to go out during that day, can't make it dear [R], but **u have fun with everyone yeah.**"

Other adjuncts such as ‘**positive opinion**’ is employed (7.3%) to portray the refusal outcomes through positive expressions, that appeared before the refusal head-act., S24: "Thanks for your invitation. **I appreciate that** but i am sorry."

Another adjunct, ‘**greeting**’ is employed (5.9%) through an expression to attract attention at the beginning of the refusal to soften the refusal, S58: "**Hey** [R] i wish i could join but unfortunately on these dates i will not be around. Surely you will understand my situation."

Yet another adjunct, ‘**suggestion of willingness**’ is employed (5.04%) before the refusal head-acts, S13: "**I would like to** but my house is a little bit far away." "The expression of positive feeling would sound like an acceptance, without the excuse " (Beebe et al.,1990, p:57).

Another adjunct, ‘**invoking God**’ is employed (4.5%) after the refusal head-acts by providing hope in the form of religious expressions, S6: "I am now in Bangladesh. I hope to attend in future **Insha'Allah** (God willing)." This finding is also similar to the findings of Mohammad (2013) that Iranians showed their strong belief in God and utilized God-related expressions to refuse requests.

Another adjunct, ‘**request for consideration**’ is employed (4.1%) before or after the refusal head-acts by requesting the speaker to understand the speaker's dilemma, S74:

“I’m really sorry dear currently want to avoid socializing with people for some time.

Please don’t get me wrong.”

‘**Discourse marker**’ which is a word or phrase that is used to organize discourse into parts, is employed (4.1%) before the refusal head-acts by using particles as softeners, S56:

“**Wow!** i wish i could but i am going back to Bangladesh.”

Another adjunct, ‘**removal of negativity**’ is employed (2.2%) before the refusal head-acts by focusing on the speaker’s positive side to ease the adverse refusal outcomes, S103:

"That's so kind of you *Apu* (elder sister). If I don't go I may join u.”

The overview of the refusal strategies used during refusal by the students is based on Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al.’s (1990) refusal frameworks is provided in table 4.4 (see Table 4.4 **Appendix C**).

Overall, ‘excuse’ strategy (51.9%) appears to be the most applied strategy compared to other strategies. Students also employed the ‘statement of apology’ strategy (21.3%) and ‘negative willingness’ strategy (16.1%). They employed frequently particular adjuncts; e.g., 'address form' (32.6%), 'gratitude' (24.3%), and 'closing statement' (9.6%) to lessen the refusal outcomes since refusal is a face-threatening act (Beebe et al., 1990).

4.3 Frequencies of refusal sequences

Beebe et al., (1990) noted that refusal sequences can be realized as a series of the following three phases: pre-refusal, head-act, post-refusal. However, the strategies that establish the pre-and post-sequences are also known as the supportive moves (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The head-acts, pre-, and post-refusals are discussed below.

4.3.1 Head-acts

Head-acts are linguistic utterances that realize the refusal act independently. Head-acts can be recognized either as direct or indirect strategies (Beebe et al., 1990). Table 4.5 indicates that 105 students used 11 different types of head-acts. Among them, 40.3% of strategies are ‘excuses,’ 20% are ‘statement of apology,’ and 16.1% are ‘negative willingness.’ A few other strategies also occur as indirect head-acts with low frequency.

Table 4.5: Frequencies of refusal strategies as head-acts

Head-acts	Frequencies	Percentages
Negative willingness	17	16.1%
Excuse/Reason	42	40.3%
Statement of Apology	21	20%
Avoidance	8	7.6%
Promise of future acceptance	6	5.7%
Setting condition for future and past	4	3.8%
Wish	3	2.8%
Alternative	3	2.8%
Attempt to dissuade the speaker	1	0.9%
Total	105	100%

The following section presents the way these head-acts are realized linguistically:

Direct refusal strategies as head-acts

In direct strategies the utterances are clearly understood based on the linguistic structures (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989); e.g., ‘negative willingness.’ This ‘negative willingness’ is explained below.

(a) *Negative willingness*

Among 105 students, 17 refused directly by utilizing articulations that contain negations through various linguistic utterances are shown below.

The outcomes illustrate how 7 students lessened the direct refusal threat using a pre-refusal-indirect strategy before refusing directly, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(1) S84: “I’m sorry I truly can’t make it. I have plan already”

The refusal was made up by the mild expression of 'regret,' “I’m sorry,” followed by a direct refusal head-act in the form of a negation of the modal verb, 'can' as, 'can't,' to show his inability to attend the party which was internally modified with an adverbial form, 'truly.' An intensified through time-intensifier and self-oriented 'excuse,' “I have plan **already**,” externally modified this direct head-act as a mitigator.

(2) S20: “I am sorry i don't think i can make it since i plan to go back to my country.”

An expression of mild 'regret,' “I'm sorry” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by a direct refusal head-act in the form of a 'mental state predicate,' “I don't think I can it” to express the invitees' subjective opinion, and a modal verb 'can' which were employed to reduce the negative impact. The refusal ended with a post-refusal a travel-oriented 'excuse,' “since i plan to go back to my country” to reduce the refusal outcomes.

It can be stated that out of the 7 students, 6 students initiated their refusals with various apologetic forms; e.g., a brief form of an apology, “sorry,” or a mild form of an apology, “I am sorry,” to show their regret for being unable to fulfill the inviter's request to attend the party while refusing directly. All 7 students employed being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses' after refusing directly as a gesture of politeness.

The outcomes illustrate how 4 students refused straight directly without pre- or post-refusals. Perhaps they wanted to be more to the point.

(3) S34: “I can't make it.”

The refusal was realized by employing the singular first-person pronoun, “I,” followed by a negation of the modal verb 'can' as 'can't,' forming the refusal head-act in the present tense. A declarative sentence in the active voice emphasized the speaker's clear intention of not attending the party. The refuser tended to be straight without mitigating refusal.

(4) S35: “I won't be able to come.”

The refusal was realized by employing the singular first-person pronoun, “I,” followed by a negation of the modal verb 'will' as 'won't,' forming the refusal head-act in the present tense which was internally modified with the phrase, “be able,” as a mitigator.

The analysis illustrates how 4 students mitigated the direct refusal threat using three various pre-refusals, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(5) S44: “Thank you so much for the invitation dear. I would love to attend but unluckily it is not possible as i am spending *Eid* with my family. Hope you have a wonderful *eid* Ya.”

An expression of an intensified ‘gratitude’ through ‘adverbial intensifier,’ “thank you **so much** for the invitation,” introduced the refusal, followed by an ‘address form,’ “dear,” to soften the refusal. The refuser also applied a 'suggestion of willingness' through a ‘past tense form’ of a modal verb 'will;’ i.e., 'would' to mitigate the impositional pressure of the refusal and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal before realizing a face-threatening act of the refusal head-act. The refuser realized the refusal with a direct refusal head-act, “Unluckily it is not possible,” which was internally modified via an

'assessment' marker in an adverbial form, "unluckily," to state how unfortunate that the refuser was not able to be there and a 'down toner,' "possible," as a polite gesture. The refusal was externally modified through two post-refusals as mitigators: family-oriented 'excuse,' "as i am spending *Eid* with my family" to avoid the threat and a modified 'closing statement' with a particle, "Hope you have a wonderful *eid ya*" to sustain the relationship with the speaker.

It can be stated that out of the 4 students, 2 students employed combinations of 'gratitude,' "thank you" and 'address forms,' "dear" to show respect. All 4 students tended to employ family-oriented 'excuses' to avoid threats. However, only 2 students reduced the direct refusal threat by using three or four pre-refusals thus, they are not discussed.

To summarize, out of 17 students realized refusals by employing the negative particle 'not' or its elliptical form, "I can't" (e.g., 6 students), "I won't be able" (e.g., 6 students), or "I don't think" (e.g., 3 students)." A few other linguistic forms also took place infrequently. Moreover, 10 students combined it with an expression of 'regret,' "I am sorry or sorry" and 13 students combined it with a family-oriented or being away from Malaysia formed 'excuses' to reduce the directness of the refusal. This finding concurs with Beebe et al.'s (1990) statement that using direct refusals without any mitigation is considered a threat in Asian cultures. A few other strategies also occur as supportive moves with low frequency.

■■■■ Indirect refusal strategies as head-acts

Indirect strategies are used if there is an indirect correlation between the structure of the utterance and its function (Yule, 1996). An indirect response to refusal may increase the degree of difficulty, as the speaker has to choose a suitable form to alleviate the refusal

outcomes (Beebe et al., 1990). Among the 105 students, 88 students refused indirectly. The following section presents the way these indirect head-acts are realized linguistically.

(a) *Excuse*

The analysis shows that 40.3% of students employed ‘excuses’ strategy as a refusal head-act using various contents ranging among family-oriented, being away from Malaysia-oriented, self-oriented, and prior commitments travel-oriented. The following are examples from the data.

The results demonstrate how 17 students decreased the refusal threats using two pre-refusals like adjuncts before refusing via an ‘excuse’ as the refusal head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

- (6) S91: “Thank you *apu* for inviting me. Unfortunately, by the time I will be in my country. Insha allah other time.”

A mild form of ‘gratitude,’ “thank you” introduced the refusal, followed by an ‘address form’ in Bengali, “*Apu*,” which is equivalent to ‘elder sister’ in English. An intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of travel-oriented acted as the refusal head-act, “unfortunately, **by the time** I will be in my country,” which was internally modified via an ‘assessment’ marker as well in an adverbial form, “unfortunately,” to state the refuser’s inability to be there. The refusal ended with ‘invoking God,’ “*Inshallah* is similar to God willing,” followed by a ‘promise of future acceptance,’ “other time” to avoid the refusal complexity.

(7) S48: “Thank you very much for your invitation. It would be pleasure for me to join, but unfortunately, I really got tight pre-schedule for 1st day of Eid.”

An intensified form of 'gratitude' through an 'adverbial form, “thank you” introduced the refusal, followed by a 'positive remark,' “It would be pleasure” in a 'past tense form' of a modal verb 'will,' i.e., 'would,' which appeared to show acceptance at first glance. An intensified through time-intensifier and self-oriented 'excuse,' “unfortunately, I really got tight pre-schedule for **1st day of Eid**” acted as a refusal head-act, that was internally modified via an 'assessment' marker in an 'adverbial form,' “unfortunately” to state how unfortunate was that the refuser was not able to be there.

(8) S65: “*Shona*, I am truly happy for being invited but unfortunately I will be travelling on those dates.”

The refusal was introduced through an 'endearment term' in Bengali, “*Shona*,” which is equivalent to 'dear' in English, to reduce the interpersonal distance, followed by a 'positive remark' through a partial agreement which was internally intensified through a 'adverbial intensifier,' “I am truly happy for being invited.” Then came the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An intensified through time-intensifier and travel-oriented 'excuse' acted as the refusal head-act, “unfortunately I will be traveling **on those dates.**” The 'excuse' was internally modified through an 'assessment' in a form of an 'adverbial form,' “unfortunately.”

In general, out of the 17 students, 12 students employed 'address forms,' “dear” or “*apu*,” followed by 6 students employed short form of 'gratitude,' “thanks,” or 6 students employed 'positive remark,' “I am truly happy” as pre-refusals. Four students employed a 'closing statement' as a post-refusal to sustain the relationship, “Take care.” It seems Bengali generally feel to express an expression of 'gratitude,' 'positive remark,' or

'address forms' before refusing with a family-oriented or being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuse' to avoid confrontations.

The results demonstrate how 10 students decreased the refusal threats by using a pre-refusal as in adjunct before refusing with 'excuse' head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(9) S33: "Thanks for your invitation. Anyway my wife is sick. Next time *Insha'Allah* ."

A family-oriented 'excuse' acted as the head-act, "my wife is sick." The 'excuse' was internally modified via a 'downtowner' as in an adverbial form, "anyway" to come to the point, similar to the contrasting 'however.' The 'excuse' was preceded by a short utterance of 'gratitude,' "thanks," followed by a 'promise of future acceptance' to comply with the refusal conveyed through the short phrase, "next time," as in later. The refusal ended with 'invoking God' through the religious expression, "*Insha'Allah* is similar to God willing."

(10) S62: "Thanks a lot for the invitation but I will be in Bangladesh during that time. Pardon me please, hope you enjoy the party."

An internally intensified short form of 'gratitude,' "thanks a lot" via an adjective, "a lot" introduced the refusal, followed by the contrastive marker, "but" that signaled the refusal before realizing a face-threatening act of the refusal head-act. An intensified through time-intensifier 'excuse' of being away from Malaysia-oriented, "I will be in Bangladesh **during that time**" acted as the refusal head-act. By doing so, the refuser tended to avoid giving a specific time, thus diffusing the threats of the refusal. The refusal ended through an internally modified 'request for forgiveness,' "Pardon me please" to show courtesy, "pardon" with a 'politeness marker,' "please" and a 'closing statement,' "hope you enjoy the party" conveying good wishes to the speaker.

(11) S12: "I would love to join but i have some other obligations which i have to attend on that particular day. Thanks a lot for your invitation."

The refusal was introduced by a 'suggestion of willingness,' "I would love to" through a past tense form of a modal verb 'will;' i.e., 'would', as a polite gesture as it mitigated the impositional pressure of the refusal head-act, followed by the contrastive marker, "but," that signaled the refusal. An intensified through time-intensifier and self-oriented 'excuse' acted as the refusal head-act, "i have some other obligations which I have to attend **on that particular day.**" The refusal ended with an internally intensified 'gratitude' via an 'adverbial intensifier,' "thanks **a lot** for your invitation."

It can be stated that out of the 10 students, 6 students employed a pre-refusal; e.g., 'gratitude,' "thanks" while refusing through family-oriented or being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses' as mitigators. As post refusals, 3 students employed 'closing statements' or 'apologetic forms' as softeners. This result shows that while refusing an invitation offering supportive moves while refusing with an 'excuse' signifies an important part of the linguistic behavior of Bengalis.

The outcomes show how 8 students realized the refusals indirectly using the 'excuse' strategy without any pre-refusal strategies that prepare the refuser for a forthcoming refusal through various linguistic utterances.

(12) S32: "I'll be outside Malaysia."

The refusal had to be initiated when the student provided a being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuse,' "I'll be outside Malaysia" which acted as the refusal head-act. The refuser employed a plain 'excuse' without any mitigation.

(13) S87: "I have to see my grandparents the very first day must dear."

The refusal initiated with an intensified through adverbial modifier and family-oriented 'excuse,' "I have to see my grandparents the **very** first day must" that stresses on family matters, which also emphasized a brief 'time frame,' "first day" and a modal verb, "must" to emphasize on the refuser's 'excuse.' The 'excuse' here acted as the refusal head-act, and was mitigated by the use of an 'address form,' "dear" as a polite gesture.

It can be established that all 8 students initiated the refusals with straight family-oriented or being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses' without any pre-refusals. To mitigate the refusal outcomes, 3 students employed post-refusals through various 'address forms.' Perhaps in Bengali culture, an expression of 'excuse' is necessary to refuse an invitation as a polite gesture. Moreover, it also can be stated that they employed 'address form' to maintain and strengthen their relationship.

The results demonstrate how 15 students code-switched through 'endearment terms' with various linguistic utterances, while 'excuse' was used to refuse to mitigate the refusal consequences.

(14) S64: "*Yaar*, u know that 1st day we have to be with our family members.

Let's meet after that at Sunway park gathering with KK 12 Girls. ok?"

The refusal was realized through the use of an 'address form' like an endearment term in Bengali, '*yaar*,' which is equivalent to 'friend' in English, to reduce the effect of the refusal outcome. An intensified through time-intensifier and family-oriented 'excuse' acted as the refusal head-act, "**1st day** we have to be with our family." A 'solidarity marker,' "u know" internally modified the 'excuse.' The students provided a statement of 'alternative,' "Let's meet after that at Sunway Park gathering with KK 12 (kolej kediaman) Girls" that was used as an inclusive form, "let's," which turned the force of

utterance to a suggestion and functioned as a means of expressing involvement with the speaker which was also internally modified with 'time intensifier,' "after that." A tag question accompanied the 'alternative,' "ok?" to appeal for a mutual agreement.

(15) S94: "I am so honored to be invited *Apu*, However, during that time I will be in Bangladesh with my family. I sincerely hope you don't mind with my absence."

The refusal was introduced by an intensified 'positive remark' through adverbial modifier, "I am **so** honored to be invited" to show how thoughtful the student is, followed by an 'address form' in Bengali '*apu*' in English equivalent to an 'elder sister,' and contrastive marker, "however." The refusal head-act acted as an intensified through time-intensifier and the family-oriented 'excuse' "during **that time** I will be in Bangladesh with my family," followed by an intensified mitigating device, "I **sincerely** hope you don't mind" a request to the inviter to consider the invitee's state of being away. To make sure that the inviter does not feel offended. However, since only four and six students mitigated the refusal threats by using three and five pre-refusals respectively before refusing with an 'excuse' as the refusal head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals thus they are not discussed.

To recapitulate, 42 students gave several reasons as head-acts for having to refuse the invitation to save face in various forms to avoid threats. They employed 35 family-oriented 'excuses,' "anyway my wife is sick" and 30 being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses,' "will be in Bangladesh during that time." One possible reason may be because the Bangladeshi culture promotes social harmony over individual rights (Haque & Mohammad, 2013), thus, the students employed family-oriented content and provided the 'being away from Malaysia-oriented' content due to '*Eid al-Fitr*' since '*Eid al-Fitr*' requires family gatherings.

The following linguistic utterances occur infrequently, prior commitments, “i had another inviting from [Y] before you” and self-oriented, “my house is a little bit far away from Shah Alam.”

It was noted that 27 students employed ‘address forms,’ or 22 students ‘gratitude,’ “thank you/thanks” while refusing with an ‘excuse.’ They tended to intensify ‘gratitude’ through an adverbial form, “thank you **so much**” or ‘excuse’ through time intensifier, “I will be travelling on those dates” to stress the temporal aspect of a speech act. Perhaps it seems impolite to state a reason without an expression like ‘I am sorry’ or an expression ‘dear’ in Bengali culture. Fifteen students also tended to code-switch when using ‘address forms’ “*apu* (elder sister)” as mitigators. These expressions seem to reflect native Bengali cultural norms. A few other strategies also occur as supportive moves with low frequency.

(b) Statement of apology

The students employed a ‘statement of apology’ strategy to express regret for refusing the invitation. The analysis shows 20% of the students employed this strategy as the refusal head-act by expressing their feeling of ‘regret.’

The outcome shows how 8 students realized the refusals indirectly through an ‘apology’ strategy without any pre-refusal strategies, followed by various adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals as shown below.

(16) S81: "I'm sorry [R]. I'm not in Malaysia at that time. Maybe next time *ha*, sorry again."

An expression of mild 'regret,' “I'm sorry” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by an 'address form,' the inviter’s name, and an internally intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of being away from Malaysia-oriented, “I'm not in Malaysia **at that time.**” A 'promise of future acceptance' was provided while emphasizing time, “maybe next time

ha,” which was also internally modified with the particle, “*ha,*” which is equivalent to 'ok' in English to lower the negative refusal outcomes. The use of a modal verb, “may,” and appended with a particle in Bengali '*ha,*' is equal to 'ok' as a softener. The student closed the refusal by repeating an expression of 'regret,' “sorry again” as a mitigator.

(17) S77: “I’m extremely sorry *moni*. I have already got another invitation on that day.”

An internally intensified 'regret' through an 'adverbial' modifier, “I’m **extremely** sorry” to show sincerity acted as the refusal head-act in the beginning, followed by an endearment term, “*moni* which means in English dear” to avoid hurting the speaker, and an internally intensified through time intensifier and prior-commitment oriented 'excuse,' “I have **already** got another invitation **on that day.**”

It can be concluded that out of the 8 students, 5 students employed an intensified form, “I am **really** sorry” and 3 students initiated the refusals through a mild form 'apology,' “I am sorry” without any pre-refusals. As post-refusals 8 students employed combinations of family-oriented or being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses' and 'address forms,' “dear.” They often employed 'address form' before refusing due to their cultural influence. They employed an 'excuse' along with 'apology' that indicates the effort to appease the inviter. It can be stated that the interference of the Bengali cultures may contribute to their 'excuses' or 'apologies.'

The results demonstrate how 5 students decreased the refusal threats by using a pre-refusal as an adjunct before refusing with 'apology' head-act, followed by indirect strategies or adjuncts as post-refusals.

- (18) S93: “*Apu, shotti Sorry*. On that day, I have invited all my families and relatives to my house. I really hope it will be awesome.”

An ‘address form’ in Bengali, '*Apu*,' which is equivalent to 'elder sister' in English, introduced the refusal. A short 'apologetic' form, “*shotti* sorry,” acted as the refusal head-act, which was internally modified through an ‘adverbial’ modifier by code-switching to Bengali, “*Shotti*” is equivalent to 'truly' in English, and is expressed as a form of ‘solidarity.’ An internally intensified through time intensifier and family-oriented 'excuse,' “**On that day**, I have invited all my families and relatives to my house” was provided as a mitigator. The refusal ended through an intensified 'positive remark' through ‘adverbial’ form,’ “I really hope it will be awesome” to add value to the invitation and to strengthen the refusal.

- (19) S51: “Thank you for the invitation. I'm sorry, on that specific day as I already have plans on that day with my family.”

An expression of mild ‘gratitude’ introduced the refusal, “thank you,” followed by mild ‘apologetic’ form, “sorry” that acted as the refusal head-act, and an internally intensified through time intensifiers and family-oriented ‘excuse,’ “**on that specific day** as I **already** have plans **on that day** with my family” as softeners. The refuser emphasized on time frequently to show how severely he wanted but could not attend.

It can be established that all 5 students realized the refusals with short apologetic forms “sorry.” They tended to employ a pre-refusal in various forms of ‘address form,’ “*apu*” or ‘gratitude,’ “thank you” while refusing with an ‘apology.’ They employed post-refusals through family-oriented ‘excuses’ as softeners. This phenomenon occurs since the refuser tended to save their and the speaker’s face.

The results demonstrate how 5 students decreased the refusal threats by using two pre-refusals as in adjuncts before refusing with 'apology' head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(20) S95: “Thank you so much *Apu*, for your invitation but I am sorry cz You know my home is quite far from your place and my brothers also left to Dubai.”

An internally intensified 'gratitude' via an 'adverbial form,' “thank you so much” introduced the refusal, followed by an 'address form' in Bengali, '*Apu*,' which is equivalent to 'elder sister' in English, and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An 'apologetic' form acted as the refusal head-act, “I am sorry,” which conveyed the message of feeling guilty for being unable to comply with the inviter's invitation. A self-oriented 'excuse,' “You know my home is quite far from your place” was provided to reduce the refusal outcomes. The 'excuse' was internally modified through the expression of 'solidarity' as in “you know,” where it claimed a common point of view, followed by another family-oriented 'excuse,' “my brothers also left to Dubai.” The refuser also employed an adverb, “quite,” to emphasize the distance of the speaker and the refuser's houses as a softener.

(21) S66: “That's lovely! Thank you for the invitation. But i deeply regret to say you that we celebrate *eid* day in our village with our relatives.”

The refusal was introduced via a 'positive remark,' “that's lovely!” that signaled the refuser's agreement with the speaker, followed by an expression of mild gratitude, “thank you” to express appreciation, and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. The refusal head-act was in an intensified 'apologetic' form through an 'adverbial form,' “I deeply regret” to show that the refuser is strongly apologetic. To alleviate the refusal,

the refuser offered a family-oriented 'excuse,' "we celebrate *eid* day in our village with our relatives" where they emphasized gathering with family members.

It can be established that 5 students realized the refusals with various apologetic forms. They tended to employ two pre-refusals, e.g., 'gratitude,' intensified 'gratitude,' 'address forms,' "*apu*," or a combination any of them. As post refusals, they employed family or being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses' to mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusal. However, since only two students lessen the refusal threats by using three pre-refusal adjuncts before refusing with 'apology,' thus they are not discussed.

Findings further demonstrate how 12 students code-switched through 'endearment terms' with various linguistic utterances, while 'apology' was used to refuse to mitigate refusal consequences.

(22) S102: "*As salamu alaykum Apu, i am sorry* to say that i won't be in Malaysia by then. Please consider that. *Jazakallah khair* ."

A 'greeting' introduced the refusal through the religious expression, "*As salamu alaykum*," which is equivalent to 'hello' in English, followed by an 'address form' in Bengali, '*Apu*,' which is equivalent to 'elder sister' in English. An 'apologetic' mild form, "I am sorry" acted as the refusal head-act, followed by an internally intensified through time intensifier and being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuse,' "i won't be in Malaysia **by then**." The modal verb 'will' as 'won't' was employed in a sense the refuser will be absent in Malaysia. The student provided an internally modified 'request for consideration' with a 'politeness marker,' "please consider that." The refusal ended with a 'closing statement' through a religious expression in Arabic, '*Jazakallah Khair*,' which is equivalent to 'God bless you' in English, to decrease the refusal threat.

(23) S99: “Thanks a lot for the invitation *Apu*, but I’m very sorry because i will be out of town in that day. Wish i knew that earlier.”

An internally intensified 'gratitude,' “thanks a lot” via an ‘adverbial’ form, “a lot” introduced the refusal, followed by an 'address form' in Bengali, '*Apu*,' (elder sister'), and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. The mild 'apologetic,' “I am sorry” form acted the refusal head-act which conveyed the message of feeling guilty at being unable to fulfill the inviter's invitation. The 'apology' was further amplified by using an ‘adverbial’ modifier, “very.” an internally intensified through time intensifier 'excuse' of 'being away from Malaysia-oriented,’ “i will be out of town **in that day**” to alleviate the refusal threat. The refusal ended with a 'wish' strategy, “Wish i knew that earlier” to establish that if the invitee had known earlier, he might not have made other plans.

In general, 21 students’ refusal head-act was realized through various apologetic forms; e.g., intensified form, “I am really sorry” (e.g., 9 students), mild form, “I am sorry” (e.g., 7 students), or short-form, “sorry” (e.g., 5 students) since apologizing can restore the equilibrium between the speakers (Leech, 1983). Twenty-two students combined the apology with an ‘excuse’ or 16 students combined the ‘apology’ with an ‘address form’ as mitigators. Al-Ghamdi and Ibrahim (2019) and Alsairi (2019) also stated that to refuse without an ‘apology’ or feeling sorry is impolite in Arab culture, and also in the Bengali culture. They also tended to alleviate the refusal outcomes through code-switching mostly with address forms “*apu* (elder sister)” while refusing with an ‘apology’ since refusing the inviter is not an easy task (Beebe et al., 1990). A few other strategies also occur as supportive moves with low frequency.

(c) *Other indirect strategies as head-acts*

The analysis shows that a few other indirect strategies occur as head-acts at low frequency, i.e., 'avoidance' occurs 8 times, 'promise of future acceptance' occurs 6 times as head-acts as shown below.

A student lessened the refusal threat by using two pre-refusal adjuncts before refusing with avoidance strategy as in 'postponement' as the refusal head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

- (24) S88: "Thank you for your invitation, sweetie. However, i cannot assure for the time being and will definitely let you know soon. So till then you can eat all the puffed rice you can get."

The refusal was introduced through via an expression of mild 'gratitude,' "thank you," followed by an 'endearment' term, 'sweetie,' and the contrasting, "however," that signaled the refusal. An avoidance strategy, as in 'postponement,' "i cannot assure for the time being and will definitely let you know soon" acted as the refusal head-act to avoid embarrassment and to put off the invitee's decision to comply with the refusal. The refusal head-act was internally intensified through the 'time intensifier,' "for the time being," and a commitment indicator, "definitely," to show the refuser's dedication. To minimize the negative impact of the student employed the phrase, "let you know." The invitee translated a sarcastic Bengali expression, which was popular in Bangladesh around the time of the invitation; 'eat puffed rice' is equivalent to 'muri kha' in Bengali, which means 'get lost' (Khan, 2019). It is a common expression among friends to dismiss each other playfully and keep the environment light. It also indicated shared background/contextual knowledge between the speaker and refuser.

Three students lessened the refusal threats by using a pre-refusal adjunct before refusing with 'promise of future acceptance' as head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(25) S42: “Yes, i do accept but will join next time *Insha'Allah*.”

The refusal head-act acted in a form of ‘promise of future acceptance’ through an expression of the short form, “will join next time” which was prefaced by signals of partial agreement, “yes I do accept.” The refuser applied ‘invoking God’ with a religious expression, “*Inshallah* means God willing” which further works softens the unwanted effects of the refusals.

In general, 8 students realized the refusal through ‘avoidance strategy’: ‘repeating part of the invitation,’ “1st day in *eid*?” or ‘postponement,’ “I will try to make it” and 6 students realized the refusal with a ‘promise of future acceptance’ to acquire consent from the speaker as the head-acts, “next time” or “other time.” However, ‘wish,’ ‘future condition,’ and ‘alternative’ each occur only 3 times as the head-acts thus they are not discussed. On the contrary, these strategies are frequently utilized by the people of different cultures through various linguistic utterances as the head-acts to refuse. For instance, Arab students frequently employed ‘promise of future acceptance,’ “next time” accompanied by an ‘invoking god’ through Islamic expression, *Inshallah*, to express future acknowledgment (Al-Ghamdi & Ibrahim, 2019). Iranian students frequently employed ‘alternative,’ “Can we make it tomorrow?” (Shareef et al., 2017). Turkish students frequently employed ‘repeating part of the invitation,’ “Saturday?” (Satiç & Çiftçi, 2018). Bengali students employed these expressions infrequently perhaps these expressions are not normal in Bengali culture while refusing an invitation.

4.3.2 Pre-refusals

Pre-refusals are composed of one or more strategies that prepare the speaker for a forthcoming refusal (Beebe et al., 1990). It also modifies the head-act externally within the refusal sequence. Table 4.6 below illustrates 11 different types of pre-refusals that are utilized. Among the 105 students, 81 students refused indirectly, and a total of 158 pre-refusals are detected since each student employed more than one strategy. Among them, 31.6% are 'address forms' and 25.9% are 'gratitude.' A few other strategies are also infrequently employed as pre-refusals.

Table 4.6: Overall frequencies of strategies as pre-refusals

Pre-refusals	Occurrences	Percentages
Address form	50	31.6%
Gratitude	41	25.9%
Positive opinion	13	8.2%
Greeting	11	6.9
Suggestion of willingness	11	6.9
Discourse marker	10	6.3
Statement of apology	9	5.6
Excuse	5	3.1
Removal of negativity	5	3.1
Invoking God	2	1.2
Alternative	1	0.6
Total	158	100%

The following section presents the way these pre-refusals are realized linguistically:

Address form

The frequencies of 'address form' as pre-refusal in refusing an invitation is substantially higher 31.6% in this study. It appears with various head-acts.

- (1) S22: “Dear [R]. This time I will be in my country to visit my family members.
Insha’Allah next time ya “.

The refusal was introduced through two ‘address forms,’ “dear,” followed by the researcher’s name in a single response as a mitigator. An internally intensified through

time intensifier and family-oriented ‘excuse,’ “**This time** I will be in my country to visit my family members” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by the ‘invoking the name of God’ through a religious expression, “*Inshallah* is similar to God willing,” and a ‘promise of a future time,’ “next time” which was internally modified with a particle ‘ya’ that functioned to elicit some agreement.

(2) S98: “*As salamu alaykum Apu*, Thank you so much for the invitation. I’m extremely sorry cause Shah Alam is quite far away from the place where I reside. However, know that I am with you in spirit.”

The refusal was introduced with an expression of ‘greeting’ with a religious expression, “*As salamu alaykum*” which is equivalent to ‘hello’ in English, followed by an ‘address form’ in Bengali ‘*apu*’ in English equivalent to an ‘elder sister,’ and an intensified ‘gratitude’ form through adverbial form, “thank you **so much**.” The refusal head-act acted in an intensified ‘apologetic’ form through adverbial form, “i’m **extremely sorry**,” followed by a distance-oriented ‘excuse,’ “cause Shah Alam is quite far away from the place where I reside” as a mitigator, and the contrastive marker, “however” to come to an end to refusal. To mitigate the negative effects of refusal the student has closed the refusal with a ‘closing statement,’ “know that I am with you in spirit” through an expression of appreciating the invitation and being with the inviter though he cannot.

In general, a total of 31.6% ‘address forms’ are detected as pre-refusals through various linguistic expressions: “*apu*” (e.g., 13 times), “dear” (e.g., 13 times), or research’s name (e.g., 9 times) while refusing with various head-acts. They employed it through a family or being away from Malaysia-oriented ‘excuse’ (e.g., 23 times) or ‘apology’ (e.g., 8 times) to show respect or solidarity. Iliadi and Larina (2017) also found that British students employed various identity markers, “buddy” or “mate” as mitigators. Politeness can be observed through the usage of ‘address forms’ in Bengali culture while refusing

an invitation. The Bengali cultural norm of speaking indirectly is evident in the content of refusal strategies.

Gratitude

A total of 25.9% 'gratitude' is detected as pre-refusals. It appears with various head-acts.

- (3) S73: **“Really thanks for the invitation.** U are truly a nice person i had in my life so far with nice heart but you know ya that my family is coming by then.”

An internal intensification via an adverbial intensifier, “really,” introduced the refusal, followed by a brief 'gratitude,' “thanks,” a 'removal of negativity' by highlighting the positive side of the speaker, “u are truly a nice person I had in my life so far with nice heart.” This was internally intensified through an ‘adverbial intensifier,’ “truly,” and then the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An internally intensified through time intensifier 'excuse' of family-oriented acted as the refusal head-act, “but you know ya my family is coming **by then.**” The 'excuse' was internally modified through various internal modifiers to mitigate the negative refusal outcomes, such as 'solidarity' through the expression, “you know,” which sought to establish a common point of view, ‘time intensifier,’ “by then,” and with the particle, “ya.”

- (4) S29: **“Thank you for the invitation** but sorry I have to attend other businesses.”

An expression of mild ‘gratitude’ introduced the refusal, “thank you” and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An ‘apologetic’ form, “sorry” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by a self-oriented ‘excuse,’ “I have to attend other businesses,” which was emphasized through a modal verb, “have to,” to express the inviter’s need to attend another program.

In general, a total of 25.9% 'gratitude' is detected as pre-refusals in an intensified form, "really thanks" (e.g., 20 times), short-form, "thanks" (e.g., 9 times), or mild form, "thank you" (e.g., 6 times). They employed it while refusing through a family or being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuse' (e.g., 18 times) or 'apology' (e.g., 8 times) to maintain balance and harmony (Leech, 1983). Moreover, since 'gratitude' often occurs in the responses of the students, this politeness act as well as thanking were seen as telling others that they are grateful for being invited. This finding comes in congruence Abu-Humeid and Altai (2013) that Arab students employed 'gratitude' to reduce the refusal outcomes while refusing with an 'excuse.'

Other strategies as pre-refusals

This section displays the strategies that occur infrequently as pre-refusals. For example, 'positive remark' (8.2%), 'suggestion of willingness' (6.9%), and 'greeting' (6.9%), while refusing through various head-acts. 'Positive remark' adjunct occurs 13 times as pre-refusal, mostly 8 times through 'excuse' head-act.

(5) S85: "**I am really glad** and thank you so much for inviting me to your get-together party but we are going to abroad, sorry dear."

The refusal started off with an intensified 'positive remark' through an 'adverbial intensifier,' "I am **really** glad" to express the invitee's contentment. This was followed by an expression of 'gratitude,' "thank you so much" intensified through an adjective, "so much," and the contrastive marker, "but," before the realization of the face-threatening act. A travel-oriented 'excuse' acted as the refusal head-act, "we are going to abroad." To alleviate the face-threatening act, the student offered a quick 'apology,' "sorry," and an endearment, "dear" as softeners. Another adjunct that occurs 11 times as pre-refusal is 'suggestion of willingness' that took place 8 times while refusing with 'excuse' head-act.

(6) S14: “**I would love to go** [R] but I will be in Bangladesh at that time. I am flying back on 8th of June.”

The refusal was introduced by a 'suggestion of willingness,' “I would love to” through a past tense form of a modal verb 'will;' i.e., 'would', as a polite gesture, followed by the researcher's name, and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An internally intensified through time-intensifiers, 'excuse' of being absent in Malaysia-oriented acted as the refusal head-act, “I will be in Bangladesh **at that time.**” To soften refusal expression the refusal ended with another intensified through time intensifier, ‘excuse’ of self-oriented,” I am flying back on **8th of June.**” Another adjunct that occurs 10 times as pre-refusal is ‘greet’ that took place 5 times while refusing with an ‘excuse.’

(7) S92: “*As salamu alaykum Apu,* thank you so much for your invitation. I really appreciate it but I already made plans earlier. However, we can meet at other time convenient for both of us. Please let me know.”

The refusal head-act was prefaced by an adjunct ‘greeting’ in a religious expression, “*As salamu alaykum*” similar to ‘peace be upon you,’ (‘hello’), followed by an ‘address form,’ “*Apu*” similar to ‘elder sister,’ an intensified ‘gratitude’ form through an adverbial form, “thank you **so much**” to show the sincerity, and an intensified through adverbial modifier ‘positive remark,’ “I **really** appreciate” through recognizing the value of the invitation. An internally intensified through time-intensifier and adverbial modifier, ‘excuse’ of self-oriented, “I **already** made plans earlier” acted as the head-act and the contrasting “however” to approach towards the end of the refusal. To alleviate the refusal, an alternative statement with the assurance of meeting another time and with the phrase, “let me know” was used as a request to notify the invitee. Further, the internally modified politeness marker, “please’ helped to mitigate the threat of the refusal.

In general, 22% of the students employed 'positive opinion,' 'suggestion of willingness,' "I would love to" 11 times, or 'greeting,' "hey" 7 times or "*salam*" 5 times as pre-refusals before refusing an invitation with an 'excuse.' 'Positive opinion' or 'suggestion of willingness' was employed as a pre-refusal to appreciate for being invited. 'Greeting' was employed as a pre-refusal to attract attention at the beginning of the refusal to soften the refusal. Kamal (2018) also confirms that is common to exchange 'greetings' among Bengalis.

4.3.3 Post-refusals

Post-refusals are strategies that are employed after the head-act to alleviate the refusal sequences (Beebe et al., 1990). Table 4.7 below illustrates 14 different types of post-refusals that are utilized. Among the 105 students, 98 students refused indirectly, and a total of 153 post-refusals are detected since each student employed more than one strategy. Among them, 29.4% of strategies are 'excuse,' 13.7% are 'address forms,' 13.7% are 'closing statements.' A few other strategies are also infrequently employed as post-refusals.

Table 4.7: Overall frequencies of strategies as post-refusals

Post-refusal	Occurrences	Percentages
Excuse	45	29.4%
Address form	21	13.7%
Closing statement	21	13.7%
Gratitude	12	7.8%
Request for consideration	9	5.9%
Alternative	8	5.2%
Statement of apology	8	5.2%
Promise of future acceptance	8	5.2%
Invoking God	7	4.5%
Greeting	6	3.9%
Positive remark	3	1.9%
Setting condition for future	2	1.3%
Wish	1	0.7%
Attempt to dissuade the speaker	1	0.7%
Avoidance	1	0.7%
Total	153	100%

The following section presents the way these post-refusals are realized linguistically:

Excuse

A total of 29.4% 'excuse' is detected as post-refusals since most of the students employed more than one 'excuse' as post-refusals through various head-acts.

(1) S97: "Sorry *Apu*. **I will go to Bangladesh for *Eid***. Thank you for inviting me."

A short 'apologetic' form, "sorry" to reduce the negative impact of the refusal, followed by an 'address form' in Bengali, '*Apu*,' which is equivalent to 'elder sister' in English introduced the refusal. A being absent in Malaysia 'excuse,' "I will go to Bangladesh" acted as the refusal head-act. The refuser ended the refusal with an expression of mild 'gratitude,' "thank you," to reduce the refusal outcomes.

(2) S20: “I am sorry i don’t think i can make it **since i plan to go back to my country.**”

The refusal was introduced through an expression of mild 'regret,' “I'm sorry,” followed by a direct refusal head-act in the form of a ‘mental state predicate,’ “I don’t think I can make it” to express the invitees’ subjective opinion, and a modal verb ‘can’ which were employed to reduce the negative impact. The refusal ended with a post-refusal self-oriented ‘excuse,’ “since i plan to go back to my country” to reduce the refusal outcomes.

(3) S5: “I have an exam and **i need to take college test after that.** Thank you for the invitation though.”

The refusal was introduced through a self-oriented 'excuse' that acted as refusal head-act, “I have an exam,” followed by another intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented “i need to take college test **after that.**” To alleviate the refusal outcomes, the refuser ended the refusal with an expression of mild 'gratitude,' “thank you.”

Overall, 29.4% of ‘excuses’ were employed as post-refusals while refusing through various head-acts. They employed a family or being absent in Malaysia-oriented ‘excuses’ while refusing through ‘apology’ (e.g., 22 times), ‘negative willingness’ (e.g., 8 times), or ‘excuse’ itself (e.g., 7 times) to maintain harmony between the speakers and refusers and as a gesture of politeness. Moreover, they employed such linguistic devices to save their face. Farenkia (2019) also reported that the Canadians mostly mitigated the refusals through post-refusal ‘excuse.’

Address form

A total of 13.7% ‘address form’ was detected as post-refusals since most of the students employed more than one ‘address form’ with various head-acts.

(4) S26: “I’m sorry dear. I’d be engaged with my family as they are visiting me from abroad.”

An expression of a mild 'regret,' “I’m sorry” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by an 'endearment term,' “dear,” and a family-oriented 'excuse,' “I’d be engaged with my family as they are visiting me from abroad” where the students stressed on family reunion instead accepting the inviter’s invitation.

(5) S60: “I am now in Bangladesh working on my project for next 3 months. Sorry **dear,** *Yallah* have a blast one. Do send pictures.”

An intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of being away from Malaysia-oriented acted as the refusal head-act, “I am **now** in Bangladesh,” followed by another intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented, “working on my project **for next 3 months.**” An expression of 'regret' in the brief form of apology, “sorry” and an 'address form,' “dear” were provided. Afterward, a statement of ‘positive opinion’ was provided through an idiom, “*Yallah* have a blast,” wishing the inviter to have a great time to maintain harmony between the speaker and refuser. This 'positive remark' was internally modified through an adjective in Arabic, '*Yallah,*' which is equivalent to 'all right,' in English as softeners. To ease the refusal, a 'closing statement' was applied, “do send pictures,” conveying ‘solidarity’ by asking the inviter to share photos of the gathering.

■ Closing statement

A total of 13.7% 'closing statement' is detected as post-refusals with various head-acts.

(6) S43: “Thanks for your invitation [R]. I would love to join u but i had another inviting from [Y] before you. Hope u understand my situation. Thank you very much. **God bless you.**”

The refusal head-act was prefaced by a short form of ‘gratitude,’ “thanks for your invitation,” followed by a researcher’s name, a ‘suggestion of willingness,’ “I would love to join u,” and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. The refusal head-act was acted as a prior-commitment ‘excuse,’ followed by a ‘request for understating,’ “Hope u understand my situation” to show solidarity. To alleviate the refusal, the refusal was closed by providing an intensified ‘gratitude,’ “Thank you very much” again to intensify the sincerity. The refusal was ended with a ‘closing statement’ in a form wishing the invitee blessings, “God bless you.”

(7) S96: “Great *Apu*, but I'm sorry as I'm engaged elsewhere at that time. *Salam* and **Take care.**”

The refusal was introduced by a ‘discourse marker’ “great,” followed by an ‘address form’ in Bengali; ‘*Apu*’ is equivalent to ‘elder sister’ in English, and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An ‘apologetic’ mild form, “I am sorry,” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by an intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented, “as I'm engaged elsewhere at that time” which was internally intensified with a ‘time-intensifier,’ “at that time.” The refusal ended with a ‘greeting,’ “*salam* is similar to peace be upon you” and a ‘closing statement’ as in “take care” by showing the refuser’s concern towards the inviter.

Overall, the students employed ‘address forms,’ “*apu*” or “dear” or ‘closing statement,’ “take care” as post-refusals while refusing through various head-acts. They employed ‘address forms’ while refusing through an ‘apology’ (e.g., 8 times) or ‘excuse’

(e.g., 4 times) and ‘closing statement’ while refusing through an ‘excuse’ (e.g., 10 times) or an ‘apology’ (e.g., 6 times) as a politeness device to weaken the force of the refusal. This finding is similar to Sattar et al.’s (2011) statement that Malays tended to employ ‘address forms’ frequently after refusing. A few other strategies were infrequently used as post-refusals. These strategies were less frequently used perhaps due to the type of data collected, which is focused on invitations, and did not cover refusals to offers, suggestions, or requests. In contrast, Farenkia (2019) reported that Canadians employed frequently an ‘apology’ strategy as post refusal to mitigate the refusal outcomes. As Al-Kahtani (2005) said various cultures realize speech acts in various ways even while using the same language (e.g., English).

To sum up, Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 indicate how frequently or infrequently each strategy is employed as the head-act, pre-refusal, and post-refusal. It assisted the researcher in identifying the strategies that precede head-act to prepare for a forthcoming refusal or placed after the refusal to soften the refusal outcomes. Moreover, 76.4% of refusals were realized through an ‘excuse,’ ‘apology,’ and ‘negative willingness’ refusal head-acts through various linguistic expressions. There are a few other indirect strategies as well that infrequently occur.

As supportive moves (pre-and post-refusals), the students frequently employed, ‘address form’ (45.3%), ‘Gratitude’ (33.7%), ‘excuse’ (32.5%), ‘closing statement’ (13.7%) with various linguistic utterances to reduce the refusal threats. These strategies reflect a socio-cultural expectation of the Bangladeshi community. It also showed that the students employed pre-refusals (158 times) more often than post-refusals (153 times). On the contrary, Putri (2014) stated that Americans’ refusal sequences mostly consisted of post-refusals. It also stated that after being direct, Americans mitigated the refusals by applying post-refusals since that would ease the outcomes of the refusal expressions

(Beebe et al., 1990). Interestingly in this study, the students employed 'excuse' and 'apology' both as supportive moves and head-acts. There are a few other strategies as well that infrequently occur as supportive moves.

However, certain adjuncts are frequently utilized by people of different cultures through various linguistic utterances as supportive moves while refusing, which are less frequently employed by the students in this study. For instance, Chinese (Jiang, 2015; Lee, 2016) and Turkish (Can & Cengizhan, 2015; Çiftçi, 2016) frequently employed 'discourse marker,' "er," "oh," or "well" to initiate the refusals as softeners. Malay students frequently used to 'greet' while directly or indirectly refusing through various linguistic utterances to get the speaker's attention and make the refusal more polite (Farnia & Wu, 2012; Ismail, 2017). Bengali students frequently employed 'greeting' in their pragmatic studies (Das & Herring, 2015). However, the current study does not entirely support this claim.

4.4 Frequencies of Internal modifiers

This section presents the frequencies of the internal modifiers that are employed to intensify or mitigate the outcomes of direct or indirect refusals. Internal modifiers are certain linguistic expressions that appear within the same speech act in order to intensify or mitigate its force, and consequently, convey politeness (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). These internal modifiers are coded according to Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) classification of internal modifiers. Table 4.8 indicates that out of the 105 students, 82 students employed internal modifiers as intensifiers or mitigators. They employed 14 different types of internal modifiers to decrease the refusals' outcomes. A total of 203 internal modifiers are detected since each student employed more than one internal modifier. Among the 203 internal modifiers, 34.5% modifiers are time intensifiers, 25.6% are

adverbial intensifiers, 9.9% are past tense forms of a modal verb. A few other internal modifiers are also employed infrequently.

Table 4.8: Frequencies of internal modifiers

Types	Number of occurrences	Percentages
Time intensifier	70	34.5%
Adverbial intensifier	52	25.6%
Past tense modal	20	9.9%
Politeness marker	9	4.4%
Particle	8	3.9%
Solidarity	8	3.9%
Assessment	8	3.9%
Mental state predicate	6	2.9%
Downtoner	6	2.9%
Expletive	5	2.5%
Appealer	5	2.5%
Commitment indicator	4	2.1%
Preparator	1	0.5%
Understater	1	0.5%
Total	203	100%

The following section presents the way these internal modifiers are realized linguistically:

4.4.1 Time intensifier

A total of 34.5% ‘time intensifier’ is detected as internal modifier since most of the students employed more than one ‘time intensifier’ with various head-act as shown below.

It occurs 18 times with ‘excuse’ head-act to increase the credibility of ‘excuses.’

- (1) S37: “Thanks for the invitation. But my family will come to visit me on that time for celebrating *Eid* with me.”

A brief 'gratitude,' “thanks” expression introduced the refusal, followed by the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal before realizing a face-threatening act of the refusal head-act. An internally intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of family-oriented, “my family will come to visit me **on that time**” acted as the refusal head-

act. It occurs 16 times within post-refusal 'excuse' after refusing through an 'apology' head-act.

(2) S21: "Please accept my apology. I have other commitments to fulfill **on the mentioned date.** I truly wish you all the best with your program."

An internally intensified 'regret' with a 'politeness marker,' "**please** accept my apology" acted as the refusal head-act, followed by an internally intensified through time intensifier 'excuse' of prior-commitment 'excuse,' "I have other commitments to fulfill **on the mentioned date.**" The refuser ended the refusal with an internally modified 'closing statement,' "I truly wish you all the best with your program," through an 'adverbial' modifier, "truly" with an expression of an expectation for everything to go well, in an attempt to strengthen the refusal. It occurs 7 times with a post-refusal 'excuse' while refusing directly.

(3) S19: "I am sorry to say that I cannot go to your place as I am in Bangladesh **now.** Thank you for the invitation."

A direct strategy acted as the refusal head-act through the negation form of the modal verb 'can' as 'cannot,' preceded by an expression of mild 'regret,' "I am sorry" as a polite gesture. To make the refuser's utterances clearer and soften; the refuser employed the phrase, "to say." The refusal head-act was further amplified by the being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuse,' "i am in Bangladesh now," and emphasis on time, "now" to minimize the imposition of weight. The refusal eased through a mild expression of 'gratitude,' "thank you." It occurs 6 times with a post-refusal 'excuse' while refusing indirectly with an 'excuse.'

(4) S14: “I would love to go [R] but I will be in Bangladesh at that time. I am flying back on **8th of June.**”

The refusal was introduced by a 'suggestion of willingness,' “I would love to” through a past tense form of a modal verb 'will;' i.e., 'would', as a polite gesture, followed by the researcher's name, and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An internally intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of being absent in Malaysia-oriented acted as the refusal head-act, “I will be in Bangladesh **at that time.**” To soften refusal expression the refusal ended with another internally intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented,” I am flying back on **8th of June.**”

To summarize, 70 ‘time intensifiers’ are detected. The students employed them along with various pre-refusals, head-acts, and post-refusals while refusing with various head-acts. It was employed 18 times while refusing with an ‘excuse’ through various linguistic utterances; “during/on that time/day,” “1st/First day,” or “already.” It was employed 16 times while refusing with an ‘apology’ through various linguistic utterances; “at/on that time,” or “already.” It was employed 6 times while refusing directly through various linguistic utterances; “on/during that time/day” or “already.” Overall, the students employed the following linguistic utterances through an ‘excuse’ to increase the credibility of ‘excuses’ frequently while refusing with various head-acts: “at/on/ during that time/day” (e.g., 19 times), “1st/First day” (e.g., 10 times), or “already” (e.g., 9 times). Siebold and Busch (2015) also reported that Spanish ‘excuses’ emphasized time lots. It can be stated that it is normal in Bengali culture to employ time intensifiers through ‘excuses’ to reduce the refusal outcomes while refusing an invitation. However, ‘time intensifier’ infrequently occurs while refusing with other head-acts.

4.4.2 Adverbial intensifier

The findings further point out that the ‘adverbial intensifier’ is the second-most noteworthy 25.6% of internal modifier utilized by the students to intensify the refusal strategies.

The students employed 19 times ‘adverbial intensifier’ while refusing with an ‘excuse.’ It occurs 12 times, out of the 19 times with pre-refusals with ‘gratitude’ (e.g., 7 times) or ‘positive remark’ (e.g., 5 times) while refusing with an ‘excuse.’

(5) S17: “I’m **really** thankful for your kind invitation, dear. I would love to but I’m in Germany on exchange program.”

The refusal was introduced through an intensified ‘gratitude’ through an ‘adverbial intensifier,’ “I am really thankful” to express the invitee’s contentment, followed by an ‘address form,’ “dear,” and an acknowledgment of the invitation which was in the form of a ‘suggestion of willingness,’ “I would love to.” The ‘excuse’ of being away from Malaysia-oriented “I’m in Germany on exchange program” acted as the refusal head-act.

(6) S94: “I am **so** honored to be invited *Apu*, However, during that time I will be in Bangladesh with my family. I sincerely hope you don’t mind with my absence.”

The refusal was introduced by an internally intensified through an adverbial modifier ‘positive remark,’ “I am **so** honored to be invited” to show how thoughtful the student is, followed by the address form in Bengali ‘*apu*’ in English equivalent to an ‘elder sister,’ and the contrastive marker, “however” which singled the refusal. The refusal head-act acted as an internally intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of family-oriented, “**during that time** I will be in Bangladesh with my family.” This is followed by a mitigating device, ‘I hope you don’t mind’ a request to the inviter to consider the invitee’s state of being away. To make sure that the inviter does not feel offended, the student

internally modified the statement by employing “sincerely.” It occurs 3 times, out of the 19 times within an ‘excuse’ head-act itself.

(7) S31: “I’m really sick can’t even move from my bed.”

The refusal had to be initiated when the student provided a self-oriented ‘excuse,’ “I’m really sick can’t even move from my bed.” The ‘excuse’ here acted as the refusal head-act which was internally modified through an adverbial form, “really.”

The students employed ‘adverbial intensifier’ 11 times while refusing with an ‘apology.’ It occurs 5 times, out of the 11 times while refusing within ‘apology’ head-act.

(8) S74: “I’m really sorry dear currently want to avoid socializing with people for some time. Please don’t get me wrong.”

An internally intensified ‘apology’ through an ‘adverbial’ modifier, “I’m really sorry” to show sincerity acted as the refusal head-act in the beginning, followed by an endearment term, “dear,” and an internally intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented, “**currently** want to avoid socializing with people for **some time.**” The student employed a ‘request for consideration’ so that the inviter does not understand the refusers’ remark wrongly, “please don’t get me wrong,” which was modified with a politeness marker, “please” to lessen the outcome of the refusal. It occurs 4 times, out of the 11 times with pre-refusals with ‘gratitude’ while refusing with an ‘apology.’

(9) S95: “Thank you so much *Apu*, for your invitation but I am sorry cz You know my home is quite far from your place and my brothers also left to Dubai.”

An internally intensified ‘gratitude’ via an ‘adverbial form,’ “thank you **so** much” introduced the refusal, followed by an ‘address form’ in Bengali, ‘*Apu*,’ which is equivalent to ‘elder sister’ in English, and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An ‘apologetic’ form acted as the refusal head-act, “I am sorry,” which conveyed the message

of feeling guilty for being unable to comply with the inviter's invitation. A self-oriented 'excuse,' "You know my home is quite far from your place" was provided to reduce the refusal outcomes. The 'excuse' was internally modified through the expression of 'solidarity' as in "you know," where it claimed a common point of view, followed by another family-oriented 'excuse,' "my brothers also left to Dubai." The refuser also employed an adverb, "quite," to emphasize the distance of the speaker and the refuser's houses as a softener.

The students employed 5 times 'adverbial intensifier' while refusing directly. It occurs 2 times, out of the 5 times, with pre-refusal 'gratitude' to intensify an expression of 'gratitude.'

(10) S63: "Thank you **very much** for the invitation *yaar* but unfortunately I will not be in the country and will be traveling for *Eid* so I don't think it is possible."

The refusal was introduced by an intensified 'gratitude' through adverbial form, "thank you **very much**," followed by an 'address form' in Bengali "*yaar*" in English equivalent is equivalent to 'friend,' and the contrastive marker, "but," that signaled the refusal. A being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuse,' "unfortunately I will not be in the country" was provided which was internally modified via an 'assessment' as in adverbial form, "unfortunately" as a mitigator, followed by another travel-oriented 'excuse,' "will be traveling for *Eid* ." The head-act appeared at the end of the refusal by offering a mental state predicate, "I don't think," and a downtowner, "possible" as a softener. Moreover, the phrase 'I don't think' expressed the refuser's opinion to portray the refusals through positive vibes. In the same way, Malay and Turkish students also tended to intensify 'gratitude' through adverbial modifiers, "very" (Hergüner & Çakır, 2017; Sattar & Farnia, 2014). It occurs 2 times, out of the 5 times, with direct head-act itself while refusing directly.

(11) S1: “**Seriously, I cannot.**”

The refusal was realized by employing the singular first-person pronoun, “I” preceded by an ‘adverbial intensifier,’ “seriously” to minimize the refusal threat. This shows a sincere manner, followed by a negative syntactic form, “cannot” as the refusal head-act is in the present tense. A declarative sentence in the active voice emphasized the speaker's clear intention.

In sum, 25.6% of adverbial modifiers were detected. The students utilized it in various parts particularly as pre-or post-refusals, or head-acts of the refusal utterances while refusing with various head-acts. It occurs 5 times while refusing directly, “very.” It occurs 19 times while refusing with an ‘excuse,’ “really,” “a lot,” or “very.” It occurs 11 times while refusing with an ‘apology,’ “extremely,” or “so much.” The finding seems to reflect the cultural tendency of Bengali to employ adverbial intensifiers to stress a certain element in the speech act and to mitigate the refusal outcomes. In general, they employed the following ‘adverbial intensifiers’ frequently while refusing with various head-acts to intensify mostly ‘apologies or ‘gratitude’: “so” (e.g., 12 times), “really” (e.g., 11 times), or “very” (8 times). However, it infrequently occurs while refusing with other head-acts.

4.4.3 Other internal modifiers

The following internal modifiers occur infrequently; e.g., a total of 9.9% of **past tense form of a modal verb** is detected where it occurs 11 times while refusing indirectly with an ‘excuse;’ e.g., S13: “I **would** like to but my house is a little bit far away from Shah Alam.” The refuser employed that since they care about the inviters’ feelings and want to display that they would have accepted the invitation if there were no complex situations.

The students employed (4.4%) ‘**politeness marker**’ “to bid for co-operative behavior” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 283); e.g., S105: “*Apu, can we rather meet at [Z]’s birthday party by 9th **please?**”*

The students employed ‘**particles**’ (3.9%) to soften the outcome of the refusals; e.g. "I'm sorry [R]. I'm not in Malaysia at that time. Maybe next time *ha* , sorry again."

The students employed ‘**solidarity**’ (3.9%) to send a message stating unity; e.g., “Hi, thank you honey. *Insha’Allah* (God willing) after *eid* must. As you know my laws family is coming to visit Malaysia.” The following internal modifiers, which are less than 4% are explained below.

The students employed ‘**assessment**’ (3.9%) to "signal the speaker's evaluation of the state of the world represented in the proposition" (Fraser, 1996, p. 180); e.g., S58: “Hey [R] i wish i could join but **unfortunately** on these dates i will not be around.”

The students employed ‘**mental state predicate**’ (2.9%) to express the subjective opinion of the invitee to minimize the impact of the refusals; e.g., S86: “I don’t think i can.”

The students employed ‘**downtoner**’ (2.9%) to mitigate the force of the refusal expression; e.g., S44: “Thank you so much for the invitation dear. I would love to attend but unluckily it is not possible as i am spending *Eid* with my family.”

The students employed ‘**expletives**’ (2.5%) to intensify the refusal expressions through showing unity; e.g., S52: “1st day in eid? [R]**What the heck** *yaar* (friend), did you forget I have family?”

The students employed ‘**appealer**’ (2.5%) to appeal to the speaker’s generous understanding; e.g., S54: “Thank you *Yaar* (friend), 1st day? We can meet up at Y’S gathering by 6th *Eid*. **What say?**”

The students employed ‘**commitment indicator**’ (2.1%) to demonstrate the speakers’ heightened degree of commitment; e.g., S40: “Well! Sounds great cutie pie. If i get free earlier from the other dinner party **surely** will join you.”

The students employed ‘**preparator**’ (0.5%) to mitigate the outcome of the refusal; e.g., S53: “Thank you buddy for the invitation. First day on *eid*? **The issue** is I am going back to Bangladesh to celebrate *Eid* with my family.”

Only 0.5% of the modifier ‘understater’ was found to be employed by the students in an adverbial form in order to lessen the imposition of the refusal; e.g., S13: “I would like to but my house is **a little bit** far away from Shahalam.”

The above internal modifiers occur at low frequency, which is why they are not discussed in the discussion section.

To summarize, students frequently employed internal modifiers as intensifiers or mitigators since refusal is a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1978). They were utilized in various parts particularly as pre-or post-refusals, or head-acts of the refusal utterances to intensify or to mitigate the refusal outcomes since refusal is complex (Beebe et al., 1990) They tended to intensify or mitigate the ‘apology’ or ‘gratitude’ through adverbial intensifier and ‘excuse’ through ‘time intensifier’ to increase the credibility of the ‘excuse’ while refusing directly or indirectly to decrease the negative implication of employing the negated form as a politeness gesture. Their performance seems to reflect student’s cultural norms.

4.5 Pattern of refusal strategies

To identify how these refusals are structured; the refusal patterns are identified. Each order or combination is referred to as a refusal pattern (Beebe et al., 1990). The analysis shows that the realization of refusals in English consisted of a combination of direct and

indirect refusal strategies arranged in many different combinations. The students further expressed the refusals by combining between two to seven strategies to mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusal. Table 4.9 reveals that the students mostly employed the combination of three refusal strategies (26.7%), followed by a combination of four refusal strategies (25.7%). The other combinations occur infrequently.

Table 4.9: Frequencies of refusal patterns

Types	Frequencies	Percentages
Three-strategy combination	28	26.7%
Four-strategy combination	27	25.7%
Five-strategy combination	15	14.3%
Six-strategy combination	14	13.3%
Two-strategy combination	9	8.9%
Single strategy	7	6.7%
Seven-strategy combination	5	4.8%

4.5.1 Combination of three refusal strategies

The findings show that 26.7% of students refused by combining three refusal strategies. The following patterns are frequently utilized by the students while refusing an invitation in three refusals.

Pattern 1: Based on the findings, 11 students tended to combine an ‘address form’ and ‘excuse’ together (statement of apology + excuse), while refusing in three refusal strategies through various head-acts; e.g., through ‘apology’ (e.g., 7 times) or ‘negative willingness’ (e.g., 3 times) to avoid hurting the speaker.

(1) S23: “I would love to **but i am sorry, i am actually having a gathering at my home as well on eid.**”

The refusal was introduced by a 'suggestion of willingness,' “I would love to” through a past tense form of a modal verb 'will;' i.e., 'would', as a polite gesture, followed by the

contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An 'apologetic' form acted as the refusal head-act, “I am sorry,” which conveyed the message of feeling guilty for being unable to comply with the inviter's invitation. An intensified self-oriented ‘excuse’ through an assessment marker, “i am **actually** having a gathering at my home as well on *eid*” as a mitigator.

(2) S82: “**Sorry can’t join. Got a meeting.**”

The refusal was made up by the expression of 'regret' in the brief form, “sorry,” followed by a direct refusal head-act in the form of a negation of the modal verb 'can' as 'can't' to show his inability to attend the party. A self-oriented ‘excuse,’ “got a meeting” externally modified this direct head-act as a mitigator.

Pattern 2: Based on the findings, 10 students offered more than a simple ‘excuse.’ They tended to provide a combination of ‘excuse,’ and an expression of ‘address form’ (address form + excuse) (e.g., 7 times) in three refusals to avoid the refusal outcomes. This pattern can be attributed to the Bengali cultural norm.

(3) S38: “**Dear, I’ll be busy with my family, sorry.**”

This example illustrates how refusal was introduced through an expression of ‘address form,’ “dear,” followed by a family-oriented ‘excuse,’ “I’ll be busy with my family” which acted as a refusal head-act. The refusal ended through a short expression of regret, “sorry” to comply with the refusal for his inability.

(4) S11: “I would like to join you [R] **but I have family gathering at the same day.**”

'Suggestion of willingness' introduced the refusal through a ‘past tense form’ of a modal verb 'will,' i.e., 'would,' that made the refusal polite and seemed like acceptance at first glance, “I would like to,” followed by an ‘address form,’ ‘researcher’s name’ to

insinuate familiarity and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An intensified ‘excuse’ of family-oriented through time intensifier, “but I have family gathering **at the same day**” acted as a refusal head-act and to show the inability is real. This finding concurs with Farnia & Wu, (2012) where it claims that the Malaysians frequently employed this adjunct to ease the refusal utterances so the Bengali also. A similar conclusion was reached by Jiang (2015) that Chinese students frequently employed ‘address form’ (e.g., “boss”) while no American employed it while refusing a request.

Pattern 3: Based on the findings, 7 students are likely to offer more than a simple ‘excuse.’ They tended to provide a combination of an ‘excuse,’ and an expression of ‘gratitude’ (gratitude+ excuse) in three refusals to avoid the refusal outcomes.

(5) S16: “**Thank you for the invitation.** It would be great if I could join. **However, I will be outside of Malaysia on the said date.**”

A mild form of ‘gratitude’ as pre-refusal introduced the refusal, “Thank you for the invitation” to express appreciation for being invited, followed by a ‘positive remark,’ “It would be great if I could join” in the ‘past tense form’ of the modal verb ‘will,’ i.e., ‘would,’ modal verb ‘can’ as ‘could’ as a gesture of politeness and seemed like acceptance at first glance as in, and contrasting “however” that signaled the refusal. An intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of being away from Malaysia-oriented acted as a refusal head-act, “I will be outside of Malaysia **on the said date.**”

(6) S48: “**Thank you very much for your invitation.** It would be pleasure for me to join, but unfortunately, **I really got tight pre-schedule for 1st day of Eid.**”

An intensified ‘gratitude’ through adverbial form, “thank you **very much**” introduced the refusal, followed by a ‘positive remark,’ “It would be pleasure” in a ‘past tense form’ of a modal verb ‘will,’ i.e., ‘would’, which made the refusal polite and appeared to show

acceptance at first glance, and the contrastive marker, “but” that signaled the refusal. An intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented “unfortunately, I really got tight pre-schedule for **1st day** of Eid” acted as a refusal head-act, that was internally modified via an ‘assessment’ marker in an adverbial form, “unfortunately” to state how unfortunate was that the refuser was not able to be there.

4.5.2 Combination of four refusal strategies

The outcome shows that 25.7% of students refused by combining four refusal strategies. The following four combination patterns are frequently utilized by the students while refusing with various head-acts.

Pattern 1: Based on the findings, 13 students offered a combination of ‘excuse’ and expression of ‘gratitude’ (gratitude + excuse) in four refusals to avoid the refusal outcome while refusing through various head-acts; e.g., ‘excuse’ (e.g., 6 times), ‘apology’ (e.g., 3 times), or ‘negative willingness’ (e.g., 2times). In other words, the students preferred to express the refusals indirectly by finding appropriate expressions to soften the negative effects of a refusal.

(7) S6: **“I am now in Bangladesh.** I hope to attend in future *Insha'Allah*. **Thanks for the invitation.”**

An intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of being away from Malaysia-oriented, “I am **now** in Bangladesh” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by the expression of ‘promise of future acceptance,’ “I hope to attend in future” to comply with the refusal, which conveyed a hope to attend in the future, and ‘invoking god’ through a religious expression, “*Insha'Allah* is similar to God willing.” The utilization of this expression reflected the refusers' sincerity. The refuser eased the potential threat by providing a short expression of ‘gratitude,’ “thanks” at the end.

(8) S25: “**Thank** you dear, but sorry I will be busy.”

An expression of mild ‘gratitude’ introduced the refusal, “thank you,” followed by an endearment term, “dear,” and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An ‘apologetic’ form, “sorry” acted as the refusal head-act, followed by a self-oriented ‘excuse,’ “I will be busy.”

(9) S27: I am sorry, I can’t visit. Actually, during that time I would not be in this country. Thanks for the invitation though.

A direct strategy acted as the refusal head-act through the negation form of the modal verb ‘can’ as ‘cannot,’ preceded by an expression of mild ‘regret,’ “I am sorry” as a polite gesture. An intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of being away from Malaysia-oriented ‘excuse,’ “Actually, **during that time** I would not be in this country,” which was intensified with an ‘assessment marker’ “actually” as a mitigator. The refusal eased through a short form of ‘gratitude,’ “thank you.”

Pattern 2: Based on the findings, 13 students tended to provide a combination of an ‘excuse’ and an expression of ‘address form’ (address form+ excuse) in four refusals to avoid the refusal outcome while refusing through various head-acts; e.g., ‘excuse’ (e.g., 6 times) or ‘apology’ (e.g., 5 times).

(10) S91: “Thank you *apu* for inviting me. Unfortunately, by the time I will be in my country. Insha allah other time.”

The refusal was introduced by a mild ‘gratitude,’ “thank you,” followed by an ‘address form’ in Bengali, “*Apu*,” which is equivalent to ‘elder sister’ in English. An intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of travel-oriented acted as the refusal head-act, “unfortunately, **by the time** I will be in my country,” which was internally modified via an ‘assessment’ marker in an adverbial form, “unfortunately” to state the refuser’s inability to be there. The refusal ended with ‘invoking God,’ “*Inshallah* is similar to God

willing” followed by a ‘promise of future acceptance,’ “other time” to avoid the refusal complexity.

(11) S74: "I'm really sorry dear **currently want to avoid socializing with people for some time**. Please don't get me wrong."

An internally intensified 'apology' through an 'adverbial' modifier, “I'm **really** sorry” to show sincerity acted as the refusal head-act in the beginning, followed by an endearment term, “dear,” and an intensified through time intensifiers ‘excuse’ of self-oriented 'excuse,' “**currently** want to avoid socializing with people for **some time**.” The invitee sought the ‘solidarity’ of the inviter by soliciting his sympathy, through such expression., “please don't get me wrong,” which was modified with a politeness marker, “please” as a polite gesture.

Pattern 3: Based on the findings, 6 students are likely to offer more than a simple ‘excuse’ they tended to provide a combination of an ‘excuse’ and ‘suggestion of willingness’ excuse’ (suggestion of willingness+ excuse) in four refusals to avoid the refusal outcome.

(12) S30: "**I would love to** dear **but i have a deadline to submit on a date after that** i wish you have fun will surely join on upcoming occasions.”

The refusal was realized by acknowledging the invitation, which was in the form of a 'suggestion of willingness,' “I would love to,” followed by an 'endearment term,' “dear,” and the contrastive marker, “but” that signaled the refusal. An intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented 'excuse' acted as the head-act, “i have a deadline to submit **on a date after that**.” The ‘excuse’ was accompanied by a 'positive remark' through the phrase, “I wish you have fun.” This enabled the positive face of the refuser to be preserved, subsequently the expression of 'future possibilities,' “will surely join on,” which was internally modified with a 'commitment indicator,' “surely” to show his

sincerity. It is comparable to American English speakers, where they also tended to utilize ‘suggestion of willingness’ before refusing indirectly, mostly through an ‘excuse’ (Al-Shboul & Huwari, 2016; Jiang, 2015) to show respect towards the invitation. A linguistic practice that is habitually attributed to American culture. On the contrary, Lee (2016) noted that Chinese people tended to avoid using ‘suggestion of willingness’ since it looked like acceptance at first glance.

In general, 52.4% of students combined frequently three or four strategies to alleviate the outcome of the illocutionary force of the refusal while refusing an invitation to avoid offending the speaker. It seems the students tended to employ more refusal strategies to save their faces from the speaker. It can be stated that Bengalis practice politeness through employing more than one strategy when making refusals to an invitation.

4.5.3 Combination of other refusal strategies

The following combinations took place infrequently. For instance, 14.3% of students refused by combining **five refusal** strategies; e.g., S7: “I have family plan to go out during that day (excuse), can't make it (negative willingness) dear (address form) [R] (address form), but u have fun with everyone yeah (closing statement).”

The outcomes show that 13.3% of students refused by combining **six combinations** of refusal strategies; e.g., S76: “Hey (greeting), dear (address form). Thank you so much for the invitation (gratitude), i will be celebrating the eid with my family in my hometown (excuse). We shall meet after i come back (promise of future acceptance). Do take care (closing statement).”

The outcomes show that 8.9% of students refused by combining **two refusal strategies**; e.g., S87: “I have to see my grandparents the very first day must (excuse) dear (address form).

The outcome shows that 4.8% of students refused by combining **seven refusal strategies**; e.g., S45: “Oh (discourse marker), thank you for inviting me (gratitude),
sweety (address form), you are so nice (removal of negativity)! If I know it early, I must book the air ticket later (past condition), but I already did on 15th June (excuse).
Jazakillah khair (closing statement).”

The above combinations of refusal strategies occur with low frequency, which is why they are not discussed in the discussion section.

Interestingly, nine students employed the combination of a statement of apology + negative willingness + excuse while they refused directly in different combinations of refusal strategies. It can be anticipated as Brown and Levinson (1978) reported, direct refusals are risky to the ‘face’ of both the speaker and the hearer thus, students often precede and/or follow "I cannot" with the expressions of ‘regret,’ ‘excuse,’ ‘address form’ or combinations of any of them to be polite. Amirrudin and Salleh (2016) also stated that Malaysian students employed this brief form of inability, "cannot," and it mostly co-occurs with other indirect strategies (‘excuse/apology’), adjuncts (‘gratitude’), or any combinations of the strategies.

Overall, 42 students realized refusals with ‘excuse’ as it seems to be a polite way among Bangladeshi people to provide an ‘excuse’ while refusing an invitation. This finding echoes an earlier statement by Grice (1975) that providing reasons is a sign of good cooperation between a speaker and a hearer. Instead of only providing a simple ‘excuse’ they tended to combine that with the expression of ‘gratitude,’ ‘address form,’ ‘suggestion of willingness’ or combinations of any of them as a polite gesture. They tended to provide ‘gratitude,’ which is associated with politeness in Bengali culture (Kamal, 2018) and they also tended to apply ‘address forms’ as those show a sign of respect or solidarity.

Twenty-one students realized refusals with 'apologies,' since such apologetic expressions are essential acts of politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978). They also accompanied apologies mostly through an 'excuse,' 'address form,' 'gratitude,' or a combination of any of them. The regret also served as a politeness device to soften the force of rejection in the context. This 'excuse' strategy is found in nearly all patterns while refusing with an 'apology.' The most frequent combination in this pattern was to combine an 'excuse' through various adjuncts or other indirect strategies. These strategies are shaped by cultural norms that prioritize the values of strong family bonds and politeness in Bengali society.

The accompanying patterns were the most common primary patterns while refusing with different head-acts; e.g., (address form+ excuse) (e.g., 56 times), (sorry+ excuse) (e.g., 36 times), (gratitude+ excuse) (e.g., 38 times), or (suggestion of willingness +excuse) (e.g., 11 times). It appears it is mandatory for them to refuse an invitation with an 'excuse' since that strategy can be seen almost at all patterns. Thus, it can be established that these patterns are common to employ to reduce the impacts of the refusal outcomes in Bengali culture to refuse an invitation. Overall, the students were able to apply a wider variety of indirect strategies, mitigation devices, and adjuncts to mitigate the illocutionary force. They employed more than one strategy to alleviate the outcome of a refusal and save the relationship.

4.6 Positions of refusal strategies

To identify how these refusals are structured; the positions of refusal strategies are investigated. It is noted that the students further expressed the refusals by applying refusal strategies in different positions to decrease the outcome of the refusal. The sequence of strategies concerns the typical order of refusal strategies (Al-Kahtani, 2005). Beebe et al.,

(1990) noted that refusal sequences can be realized as a series of the following three phases: pre-refusal, head-act, post-refusal.

4.6.1 Head-acts

Head-acts can be recognized either as direct or indirect strategies (Beebe et al., 1990). The following section presents the way these head-acts are realized in different positions by the students.

Direct strategies as head-acts

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) stated that directness through the speaker's explicitness articulates the actual purpose of the refuser's words, for instance, 'negative willingness' which is explained below.

(a) *Negative willingness*

The findings indicate that among 105 students, 17 refused directly by utilizing articulations that contain negations. It is observed that direct head-act 'negative willingness' occurs through different positions, appearing most often at **second position**. This is followed by initial and fourth positions. It is in the third (1 time) and fifth positions (1 time) that direct head-acts occur less frequently. The following are examples from the data.

Seven students lessened the refusal threat through using a pre-refusal-indirect strategy before realizing through direct head-act in the **second position**, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(1) S28: “Sorry I don't think its possible dear. On the following next day, I have an important meeting. Sorry again and thanks for your invitation.”

The refusal to the invitation was made up by the expression of 'regret' in the brief form, “sorry” to diminish the inconvenience of the refusal, followed by a direct refusal head-act in the form of a ‘mental state predicate,’ “I don’t think its possible,” **at second position** to express the invitees’ subjective opinion and a ‘down toner,’ “possible” by showing hope that one might be able to attend. Four post-strategies externally modified this direct head-act, ‘address form,’ “dear,” followed by an intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented 'excuse,' “On the following next day, I have an important meeting,” an ‘apology,’ “sorry again,” which was repeated for the invitees' failure to acknowledge the invitation, and a short expression of 'gratitude,' “thanks for your invitation.” The refusal was initiated and ended with 'apologies' to lighten the face-threatening act. Four students realized refusal directly in **the initial position**.

(2) S86: “I don’t think I can.”

A direct refusal head-act in the form of a ‘mental state predicate,’ “I don’t think I can it” **at initial position** to express the invitees’ subjective opinion, and a modal verb ‘can’ which were employed to reduce the negative impact. A declarative sentence in the active voice emphasized the speaker's clear intention.

Four students who employed direct head-act in the **fourth position** mitigated the threat through using three pre-refusals, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(3) S69: “Hey sweetie, I must go to Bangladesh so **I am unable to manage.** I hope you get that.”

A quick 'greeting' introduced the refusal, “hey,” and an 'endearment term,' “sweetie,” to show solidarity, followed by a being away from Malaysia 'excuse,' “I must go to Bangladesh.” The negative form of an adjective ‘able’ as in, “unable” acted as head-act in the **fourth position**. The refusal ended with a ‘request for consideration,’ “I hope you get that” by appealing to the speaker to understand the refuser’s situation.

In general, the students employed direct head-act through different positions mostly through the second position to decrease the impact of the refusal. In other words, they reduced the direct refusal threat by using one, two, or three pre-refusals before refusing directly to mitigate their direct refusals and as a gesture of politeness. They also employed post-refusals to soften the refusals. They tended to offer an ‘apology’ before refusing directly, and ‘excuse’ after refusing. It can be stated that Bengalis start off with such strategies to soften the illocutionary force and to display as well their unwillingness to refuse if the situations were unlike.

Indirect strategies as head-acts

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) stated that indirectness would refer to the evasiveness of the speaker in conveying the intended meaning through the structure of the words. Among the 105 students, 88 students refused indirectly. The following section presents the way these head-acts are realized at different positions:

(a) *Excuse*

The 'excuse' strategy in declining an invitation is substantially higher than the other strategies in this study. The analysis shows that 40.3% of students employed ‘excuse’ as a refusal head-act to refuse the invitation. It is observed that ‘excuse’ as head-act occurs

at different points to soften the outcome of the refusals, appearing most often at third position, followed by second, and initial. It occurs infrequently in the fourth (e.g., 4 times) and fifth (e.g., 3 times) positions.

Seventeen students decreased the refusal threats by using two pre-refusals as adjuncts before refusing with an 'excuse' in the **third position** as the refusal head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(1) S68: “Hey dear, **I am truly getting crazy on editing some of my paper** that need to be submitted by the end of this month.”

A quick 'greeting' introduced the refusal, “hey,” followed by an 'endearment term,' “dear,” to show solidarity, a self-oriented 'excuse,' “I am truly getting crazy on editing some of my paper” acted a head-act in the **third position**, and a post-refusal in a form of another an intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented, “that need to be submitted **by the end of this month**” to reduce the impact of refusal.

Ten students decreased the refusal threats by using a pre-refusal as in adjunct before refusing with 'excuse' in the **second position** as the refusal head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(2) S9: “Thanks for your invitation. **I will be in Bangladesh for data collection from 22 may to end of the August.**”

The refusal to the invitation was made through an intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented as head-act, “I will be in Bangladesh for data collection from **22 may to end of the August**” in the **second position**. The 'excuse' was preceded by a short utterance of 'gratitude,' “thanks” to show appreciation for being invited.

Eight students realized the refusals indirectly through the 'excuse' strategy as the refusal head-act at an **initial position**.

(3) S90: I will be in Bangladesh with my family by then.

The refusal had to be initiated when the student provided an intensified through time intensifier 'excuse' of being absent in Malaysia, "I will be in Bangladesh with my family **by then**" at **initial position**. The 'excuse' here acted as the refusal head-act. However, since the students infrequently mitigated the refusal threats by using three or five pre-refusals (e.g., 4 and 6 students respectively) before refusing with an 'excuse' as the refusal head-act, followed by post-refusals. Thus, they are not discussed.

In general, the students employed 'excuse' head-act through different positions mostly through the third position to decrease the impact of the refusal since failure to refuse properly may hurt the speaker. In other words, they reduced the refusal threat by using supportive moves to weaken the refusal outcomes. It also can be viewed as echoes of the characteristics of the Bengali culture.

(b) *Statement of apology*

The students employed a 'statement of apology' strategy to express regret for refusing the invitation. The analysis shows 20% of the students employed a 'statement of apology' as the refusal head-act to refuse the invitation by expressing their feeling of 'regret.' It is observed that 'statement of apology' as the head-act occurs at different positions to soften refusal outcomes. It appears often at an initial position, followed by the second and third positions. It occurs infrequently in the fourth (e.g., 4 times) and fifth (e.g., 3 times) positions.

Eight students realized the refusal indirectly through ‘apology’ strategy as refusal head-act at an **initial position**, followed by various adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

- (4) S79: “**I’m so sorry.** I’m no longer in KL. I will be celebrating ‘Eid in Bangladesh. *Salam* dear.”

The refusal head-act acted at **initial position** through an intensified through an adverbial modifier an expression of ‘regret,’ “I’m **so** sorry,” followed by a being absent in Malaysia-oriented ‘excuse’ and another being absent in Malaysia-oriented ‘excuse,” I will be celebrating ‘Eid in Bangladesh.” The refuser offered a ‘greeting,’ “*Salam*” which is equal to peace be upon you” expressed through a religious expression and an ‘address form,’ “dear.”

Six students mitigated the refusal threats by using a pre-refusal adjunct before refusing with ‘apology’ as the refusal head-act in the **second position**, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

- (5) S93: “*Apu* , **shotti Sorry.** On that day, I have invited all my families and relatives to my house. I really hope it will be awesome.”

An ‘address form’ in Bengali, '*Apu*,' which is equivalent to 'elder sister' in English, introduced the refusal. A short 'apologetic' form, “*shotti* sorry,” acted as the refusal head-act in the **second position**, which was internally modified through an ‘adverbial’ modifier by code-switching to Bengali, “*Shotti*” is equivalent to 'truly' in English, and is expressed as a form of ‘solidarity.’ An internally intensified through time intensifier ‘excuse’ of family-oriented, “**On that day**, I have invited all my families and relatives to my house” was provided as a mitigator. The refusal ended through an intensified 'positive remark' through ‘adverbial’ form, “I **really** hope it will be awesome” to add value to the invitation.

Five students lessened the refusal threats by using two pre-refusal adjuncts before refusing with an ‘apology’ in the **third position** as the refusal head-act, followed by adjuncts or indirect strategies as post-refusals.

(6) S95: “Thank you so much *Apu*, for your invitation **but I am sorry** cz You know my home is quite far from your place and my brothers also left to Dubai.”

An internally intensified 'gratitude' via an ‘adverbial’ form, “thank you **so much**” introduced the refusal, followed by an 'address form' in Bengali, '*Apu*,' which is equivalent to 'elder sister' in English, and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An 'apologetic' form acted as the refusal head-act, “I am sorry” in the **third position**, which conveyed the message of feeling guilty for being unable to comply with the inviter's invitation. A self-oriented ‘excuse,’ “You know my home is quite far from your place” was provided to strengthen the refusal. The 'excuse' was internally modified through the expression of ‘solidarity’ as in 'you know,' where it claimed a common point of view, followed by another family-oriented ‘excuse,’ “my brothers also left to Dubai.” The refuser also employed an adverb, “quite,” to emphasize the distance between the speaker and refuser’s houses to mitigate the refusal outcomes.

The analysis shows that ‘avoidance’ occurs 8 times, 'promise of future acceptance' occurs 6 times, and 'wish,' 'future condition,' and 'alternative' each occurs 3 times as the head-acts. These strategies occur as the head-acts at different positions with low frequency, which is why they are not discussed.

In general, twenty-one students’ refusal head-act was realized by ‘apology’ strategy through various positions mostly at an initial position, and in particular eight times. It seems Bengali students feel comfort to initiate the refusals with an ‘apology’ to avoid overt confrontation. It seems polite to them to start a refusal with an ‘apology.’ It was

also seen that they just didn't employ an 'apology' by itself but rather combined it mostly with an 'excuse' or 'address form' or a combination of them.

4.6.2 Pre-refusals

Pre-refusals are composed of one or more strategies that prepare the speaker for a forthcoming refusal (Beebe et al., 1990). It also modifies the head-act externally within the refusal sequence. Table 4.6 indicates that students used 11 different types of strategies as pre-refusal; a total of 158 strategies are detected since each student employed more than one strategy. Among them, 31.6% are 'address forms,' 25.9% are 'gratitude,' and 13.8.2% are 'positive remark.' A few other pre-refusals strategies are also employed but at a lower frequency. The following section presents the way these pre-refusals are realized at different positions:

Address form

The analysis shows that 'address form' as pre-refusal occurs, appearing 38 times through the **second position** as softeners. It less frequently occurs in the following positions, initial followed by third, and fourth. It co-occurs through various head-acts but mostly with 'excuse' 22 times, 'apology' 8 times, and 'negative willingness' 5 times. It co-occurs less frequently with other head-acts. The following are the examples from data:

(1) S71: "Great *yaar*, but my family is waiting for me on that day. I truly hope you won't mind."

The refusal was introduced by a 'discourse marker' "great," followed by an 'address form' in Bengali; '*yaar*' is equivalent to 'friend' to show solidarity in the **second position**, and the contrastive marker, "but," that signaled the refusal. An intensified through time intensifier 'excuse' of family-oriented "my family is waiting for me **on that day**" acted as the head-act. To alleviate the face-threatening act, the student requested for

consideration to understand the refuser's dilemma and his inability to comply with the invitation which was internally modified through an adverbial modifier, "truly" to intensify the refusal.

(2) S99: "Thanks a lot for the invitation *Apu*, but I'm very sorry because i will be out of town in that day. Wish i knew that earlier."

An internally intensified 'gratitude' via an 'adverbial' form, "thanks a lot" introduced the refusal, followed by an 'address form' in Bengali, '*Apu*,' (elder sister') in **the second position**, and the contrastive marker, "but," that signaled the refusal. The mild 'apologetic,' "I am sorry" form acted the refusal, that conveyed the message of feeling guilty at being unable to fulfill the inviter's invitation. The 'apology' was further amplified by using an 'adverbial' modifier, "very." The student offered an intensified through time intensifier 'excuse' of 'being away from Malaysia,' "i will be out of town **in that day**" to alleviate the refusal threat. The refusal ended with a 'wish' strategy, "Wish i knew that earlier" to establish that if the invitee had known earlier, he might not have made other plans.

In general, the students employed 'address forms' through various positions, but 38 times in the second position as pre-refusals. It also can be stated that they mostly tended to employ 'address form' after other pre-refusals; thus, it can be concluded that the students heavily relied on their culture. They employed mostly dear or "*Apu*" regardless of age since this term has extended a more generalized usage, which is employed to address a female regardless of age (Inden & Nicholas, 2005) to show respect or friendly relationship. It seems pre-facing face-threatening acts with an 'address form' marks of politeness in Bengali culture.

Gratitude

A total of 25.9% ‘gratitude’ was detected as pre-refusals. As pre-refusal ‘gratitude’ occurs through different positions as mitigators, appearing 30 times at an **initial position**. It did occur infrequently in the third and fifth positions. It co-occurs through various head-acts mostly with ‘excuse’ 18 times and ‘apology’ 8 times. It co-occurs infrequently with other head-acts.

(3) S8: “**Thanks for the invitation** but I already committed to my other friend.”

The refusal was introduced by an expression of a short form of gratitude, “thanks” as a mitigator in the **initial position**, followed by the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. A prior-commitment-oriented ‘excuse’ acted as the refusal head-act, “I already committed to my other friend.”

(4) S78: **Thanks bunch** dear, you are really thoughtful but sorry ya. Let’s meet after that please. Can we?

The refusal was introduced with an intensified ‘gratitude’ through a noun “**thanks bunch**” at **initial position**, followed by an ‘address form,’ “dear,” ’removal of negativity by highlighting the good side of the invitee, “you are thoughtful,” which was internally intensified with an adverbial form, “really,” a contrastive marker “but,” and the refusal head-act acted in an intensified ‘apologetic’ form by accompanying a particle, “sorry ya” to soften the refusal. An alternative statement was provided, “Let’s meet after that please” in a suggestive tone as a polite gesture to mitigate the negative effects of refusal which narrows the force of the utterance to a suggestion. By employing, “Let’s” the inviter sought agreement to the invitee which shows their solidarity. This strategy functioned as a means of expressing involvement with the speaker. ‘Statement of alternative’ was intensified through time-intensifier, ‘after that,’ and further amplified by modifying

internally via a politeness marker, “please” and co-occurred with a tag question as in, “Can we” applier that asks for the interlocutor’s confirmation.

In general, the students employed an expression of ‘gratitude’ strategy through various positions mostly at **an initial position** as pre-refusals to show their appreciation for being invited. Moreover, it seems impolite in Bengali culture to refuse an invitation without appreciation. Thus, they often expressed ‘gratitude’ at an initial position to appreciate being invited.

Other strategies as pre-refusals

This section displays the strategies that occur less frequently as pre-refusals. For example, ‘positive remark’ (8.2%), ‘suggestion of willingness’ (6.9%), and ‘greeting’ (6.9%), through various head-acts at different positions. ‘Positive remark’ adjuncts occur 13 times as pre-refusal, 8 times with ‘excuse’ head-act mostly in the **second position**.

- (5) S41: “Ehh. **Sounds great** but I have a prior appointment that day. If possible, let's meet after that in KSA, I guess I will be here for 3 months. What do you say?”

The refusal began with a 'discourse marker,' “ehh” a common prefacing before a disagreement, followed by a 'positive remark,' “sounds great” at **second position**, expressed to avoid the effect of the refusal, and a contrastive marker was provided, “but,” before the face-threatening act. An intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of self-oriented acted as the head-act, “I have a prior appointment **that day.**” An 'alternative' statement, “let's meet after that in KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia),” was provided in the form of a suggestion by using an inclusive expression, “let’s,” which included both the refuser and speaker. This strategy was also internally modified by employing the politeness modifier, “possible,” embedding a condition, “if,” and ‘time intensifier,’ “after that.” A self-oriented 'excuse' was provided again to alleviate the refusal outcomes

through an opinion, “I guess I will be here for 3 months,” accompanied by a ‘closing statement’ in the form of a wh-question, “what do you say?” to mitigate the refusal consequences. Another adjunct that occurs 11 times as pre-refusal is ‘suggestion of willingness’ that took place 8 times with ‘excuse’ mostly at an **initial position**.

(6) S11: “**I would like to join you** [R] but I have family gathering at the same day.”

‘Suggestion of willingness,’ “I would like to” introduced the refusal in the **first position** through a ‘past tense form’ of a modal verb ‘will,’ i.e., ‘would,’ that made the refusal polite and seemed like acceptance at first glance, followed by an ‘address form,’ ‘researcher’s name’ to insinuate familiarity and the contrastive marker, “but,” that signaled the refusal. An intensified through time-intensifier of family-oriented “I have family gathering **at the same day**” acted as a refusal head-act to show the inability is real. Another adjunct that occurs 10 times at an initial position as pre-refusal is ‘greet’ where it took place 5 times with ‘excuse’.

(7) S61: “**Hey** [R], you know how first day of *eid* in our family, I have to be in Bangladesh. If possible let's meet up once I am back. I hope you can understand.”

A quick ‘greeting’ introduced the refusal, “hey” at **initial position**, followed by an ‘address form’ i.e., the inviter's name. A family-oriented ‘excuse’ made up the refusal head-act, “you know how first day of *eid* in our family.” The ‘excuse’ was internally modified with a ‘solidarity marker,’ “you know,” which indicated the mutual understanding between the speaker and refuser. This is modified by citing the time, “first day,” and being away from Malaysia-oriented ‘excuse,’ “I have to be in Bangladesh.” To alleviate the face-threatening act, the student provided an ‘alternative,’ “If possible let's meet up once I am back” where the inclusive form, “let's,” turned the force of the utterance to a suggestion, and functioned as a means to express the involvement of the

inviter. The response was internally modified with a 'downtoner, "possible" as a polite gesture, embedding a condition, "if," and afterward, a mitigating device in the form of a 'request for consideration,' "I hope you can understand" was applied to appeal to the inviter to accept the invitee's absence. In other words, the invitee sought the 'solidarity' of the inviter by soliciting his sympathy, through such expression.

In general, the students employed 'positive remark' (8.2%), 'suggestion of willingness' (6.9%), and 'greeting' (6.9%), through various head-acts at different positions. They didn't employ them frequently; perhaps these expressions are not common among Bengali students while refusing an invitation. On the contrary, Das and Herring (2015), Kamal (2018) in their politeness study Bengali participants employed 'greeting' and 'compliments.' The contradiction may have taken place due to the different data instruments or participants' different linguistic behaviors. A few other strategies took place as pre-refusals in which only 7 % were 'discourse marker,' 'statement of apology,' 'excuse,' 'removal of negativity,' 'invoking god,' 'Alternative.' Thus, they are not discussed here.

4.6.3 Post-refusals

Post-refusals are strategies that are employed after the head-act to alleviate the refusal sequences (Beebe et al., 1990). Table 4.7 indicates that students used 14 different types of strategies post-refusals, a total of 153 strategies are detected since each student employed more than one strategy. Among them, 29.4% of strategies are 'excuse,' 13.7% are 'address forms,' and 13.7% are 'closing statements.' A few other strategies are also employed as post-refusals. The following section presents the way these post-refusals are realized at different positions:

Excuse

A total of 29.4% 'excuse' was detected as post-refusals since most of the students employed more than one 'excuse.' The analysis showed 'excuse' as post-refusal and appeared in the third position 19 times. It appears less frequently in the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth positions. It co-occurs through various head-acts but mostly with 'sorry' 22 times, 'negative willingness' 7 times. It co-occurs less frequently with other head-acts.

(1) S80: "I am extremely sorry love. **You know ya by then we must have to be with our family.**"

An internally intensified 'regret' via an 'adverbial' modifier, "I am **extremely** sorry" acted as the refusal head-act to lessen speech act's imposition, followed by an 'address form,' "love." To soften the refusal, a family-oriented 'excuse' "You know ya by then we must have to be with our family" was provided in the **third position**. The 'excuse' was internally modified through various internal modifiers, like 'solidarity' through the expression, "you know," which indicated a mutual understanding between the speaker and refuser, emphasized time, "by then," and emphasized a modal verb, "must" to convey a sense of being obliged to.

(2) S82: "Sorry can't join. **Got a meeting.**"

The refusal was made up by the expression of 'regret' in the brief form, "sorry," followed by a direct refusal head-act in the form of a negation of the modal verb 'can' as 'can't' to show his inability to attend the party. A self-oriented 'excuse,' "got a meeting" externally modified this direct head-act to mitigate refusal consequences.

In general, the students employed the 'excuse' strategy through various positions mostly in the **third position** as post-refusals while refusing directly or indirectly. Interestingly, they employed the 'excuse' strategy heavily as head-acts or post refusals.

Thus, Bengalis tended to mitigate the refusal by means of ‘excuse.’ This concern reflects the influence of Bengali norms. The students employed ‘excuse’ as post-refusal to avoid the negative refusal outcomes.

Address form

A total of 13.7% of ‘address forms’ were detected as post-refusals. The analysis shows that ‘address form’ most often appeared in the **third position**. It occurs less frequently in the second, fourth, and fifth positions. It co-occurs through various head-acts but mostly with ‘apology’ (8 times).

(3) S100: “Oh, I’m sorry *Apu*, during the *Eid* i will be traveling back to my country.”

The refusal head-act was prefaced by a ‘discourse marker’ as in, “oh” followed by a mild regret form, “I am sorry” that acted as refusal head-act. The ‘apology’ head-act was amplified with two post-refusals: an ‘address form’ in the **third position** in Bengali, '*Apu*,' which is equivalent to 'elder sister' in English, and an intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of travel-oriented “**during the *Eid*** i will be traveling back to my country” to soften the refusal outcomes.

Closing statement

A total of 13.7% 'closing statement' was detected as post-refusals. The analysis shows that 'closing statement' as post-refusal occurs in the **sixth position** (10 times) to soften refusal outcomes. It occurs less frequently in the third, fourth, fifth, and seventh positions. It co-occurs through various head-acts but mostly with ‘excuse’ 10 times and ‘apology’ 6 times. It co-occurs less frequently with other head-acts.

- (4) S70: “Oh thank you dear. I am already with my family in bd. How about we meet on BSUM gathering? **Is that ok?**”

The refusal was introduced with a ‘discourse marker’ as a mitigator, followed by an expression of mild gratitude, “thank you,” and an endearment term, “dear.” The refusal head-act was in the form of an intensified through time-intensifier ‘excuse’ of family-oriented “I am **already** with my family in bd.” An alternative statement was provided to meet in a gathering, known as BSUM (Bangladeshi students of University Malaya) in a suggestive tone accompanied by a question, “is that ok” in the **sixth position** to affirm as well as to elicit the illocutionary force.

In general, the students employed ‘address forms’ or ‘closing statement’ as post-refusals while refusing through an ‘excuse’ or an ‘apology’ as a politeness device to weaken the force of the refusal. The following section discusses the major findings.

4.7 Discussion

This study outlined the refusal strategies employed by Bangladeshi postgraduate students when refusing an invitation. It further explores how these strategies are linguistically and structurally realized.

In Bangladeshi culture, invitations are kind gestures, hence the students were careful to use several face-saving indirect strategies (e.g., 88 students) rather than direct strategies (e.g., 17 students) when refusing an invitation. The purpose is to ensure that the relationship between the inviter and invitee remains cordial and warm. This is similar to other Asian cultures since they also found that their selected respondents employed mostly indirect strategies, such as the Chinese (e.g., Jiang, 2015) and the Malaysians (e.g., Amirrudin & Salleh, 2016; Ismail, 2017). While American students tended to be clear, explicit, and forthright, they mostly employed direct strategies (Beebe et al., 1990).

Therefore, it can be established, as Haque and Mohammad's (2013) study reports, the Bengalis value indirectness when refusing because it conserves good relationships within the society as a whole, and it also saves the speaker's and refuser's face at large.

Moreover, 40.3% of students employed 'excuse,' 20% employed 'statement of apology,' 16.1% employed 'negative willingness' as refusal head-acts through various linguistic utterances. As the other head-acts occur less frequently, they are not presented in this section. The students also often employed external modifiers as in the pre-and post-refusals (311 times) and internal modifiers (203 times) to explain the refusals along with these head-acts and in turn to reduce the illocutionary force of the refusals.

From the 105 students studied, only 16.1% students offered **direct refusals** the negative particle 'not' or its elliptical form, "I can't" (e.g., 6 students), "I won't be able" (e.g., 6 students), or "I don't think" (e.g., 3 students)." Then students frequently downgraded the force of refusals to be polite through the expression of 'apology' (e.g., "I am sorry or sorry") before refusing directly. After refusing directly, 13 students employed family-oriented or being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses.' Thus, it can be said that as a gesture of politeness they did not employ direct strategy by itself but rather combined it with an expression of 'regret' or an 'excuse' to reduce the impact of refusal outcomes.

Further, 40.3% of students gave several '**excuses**' as head-acts to refuse the invitation to save face from the speaker and to maintain harmony. They employed 35 family-oriented 'excuses,' "u know that 1st day we have to be with our family members" and 30 being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses,' "I have to be in Bangladesh." It also can be said that the frequent use of family 'excuses' seems to focus on interpersonal harmony than on the individual's desire in Bengali culture. Since, family and kinship are central to social life in Bangladesh (Haque & Mohammad, 2013). This outcome is contrary to the

fact that Americans mostly employed self-oriented reasons where they prioritized their privacy, as explained by Jiang (2015).

The following refusal strategies were often used as supportive moves by the students while refusing with an 'excuse,' such as 27 students employed 'address forms,' "dear," followed by "apu," or "the researcher's name," or 22 students employed 'gratitude,' "thank you/thanks" while refusing with an 'excuse.' While refusing with an 'excuse,' they tended to intensify 'gratitude' (e.g., 7 times) through an adverbial form, "thank you so much" or 'excuse' through time intensifier (e.g., 18 times), "I will be travelling on those dates" to stress the temporal aspect of a speech act. As Shareef et al., (2017) also reported to alleviate the refusal, the Iranian participants mostly employed 'gratitude' before refusing through an 'excuse' as a softener. Furthermore, the students mostly employed 'closing statements,' "I hope you have a wonderful time" or "take care" as post-refusals while refusing with an 'excuse.' It seems Justifying the refusal through an 'excuse' is must in Bengali culture. In other words, it is polite to refuse an invitation through an 'excuse.'

Additionally, 11 students tended to employ 'suggestion of willingness,' before refusing through an 'excuse' to please the inviter. As Beebe et al. (1990) also explained, "without the excuse, the expression of positive feeling would sound like an acceptance" (p. 57). Beebe et al., (1990) also found that the Japanese usually tended to realize the refusals through an 'apology' but not with an adjunct such as 'suggestion of willingness,' "I would like to..."

Apologizing was another strategy that (20%) occurs frequently as head-acts in the students' responses. It was found that intensified form, "I am really sorry" (e.g., 9 students), mild form, "I am sorry" (e.g., 7 students), or short-form, "sorry" (e.g., 5 students) were the most popular forms of 'apology' among them to soften the outcome of

the face-threatening refusal act on the inviter at having an invitation refused. The following refusal strategies were often used as supportive moves by the students while refusing through an 'apology', such as 'address form' (e.g., "*apu*" or "dear"), 'gratitude' (e.g., "thanks" or "thank you"), and 'excuse' (e.g., family-oriented). While refusing with an 'apology,' they tended to intensify 'apology' itself (e.g., 11 times) through an adverbial form or 'excuse' through time intensifier (e.g., 16 times). The students hardly employed an 'apology' by itself but rather combined it with an 'excuse,' another indirect strategy, or adjunct to reduce the impact of the refusals as possible mitigation. As Searle (1969) noted, the indirect strategy itself works as a mitigation device. It can be stated that the contents of their refusal strategies demonstrated the impact of their culture.

It is also apparent that given **pre-and post-refusals** combined as **supportive moves**, students employed various indirect strategies and adjuncts as supportive moves to tone down the refusal impositions. The following adjuncts, like **'address form,' 'gratitude, and 'closing statement,'** were frequently utilized as supportive moves to alleviate the outcome of the refusals.

31.6% of the students employed **'address forms'** before or 13.7% of the students employed after 'negative willingness,' 'excuse,' and 'apology' head-acts through different linguistic utterances (e.g., "dear," "*apu*," or "researcher's name") to show politeness and downgrade the refusal expressions. 'Address form' was employed as pre-refusals higher than post-refusals. Perhaps the students tended to employ it MORE before employing the face-threatening act since refusals are risky to the 'face' of both the speaker and the hearer (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Moreover, Bowe and Martin (2006, p. 32) also cited that "in Asian cultures, the expression of respect is almost mandatory with addressees." This finding shows the impact of Bangladeshi cultural background.

Amirrudin and Salleh (2016) also reported that Malaysian students frequently employed 'address forms, "dear."

Another adjunct that the students mostly (25.9%) employed is '**gratitude**' (e.g., "thanks" or "thank you," or "thank you so much") as pre-refusal appearing most with 'excuse' and 'apology.' It can also be explained that the students uttered an expression of 'gratitude' to the speaker before expressing face-threat refusal acts, as a mitigating strategy that softened the refusals' unwanted effects. This expression works as a gesture of politeness. As for post-refusals, the expression of 'gratitude' took place 7.8%, appearing often with 'negative willingness.' It can also be explained that they refused in that manner to protect the inviter's feelings since 'gratitude' helps to recognize someone's favor (Nelson et al., 2002).

In general, similar to most previous studies (e.g., Ismail, 2017; Izadi & Zilaie, 2015; Sattar et al., 2011), 'address form' and 'gratitude' were the most frequent adjuncts in this study. These adjuncts can be considered as a universal feature of refusals to an invitation. Thus, it can be established that people from various cultures mostly employed these adjuncts to refuse different linguistic realizations. One can conclude that providing 'address form' and 'gratitude' are other prominent features of refusals in Bangladeshi culture.

29.4% of students also tended to employ '**excuse**' as a post-refusal while refusing with an 'apology,' 'negative willingness,' or 'excuse' itself to mitigate the refusal outcomes. Thus, the students weakened the impact of the refusal by employing the 'excuse' after the main refusal to ease the refusal outcomes. Similarly, Malaysian English speakers also tended to employ 'excuse' as a post-refusal (Ismail, 2017). Moreover, eight students employed '**apology**' as a post-refusal while refusing directly to mitigate the refusal.

Interestingly, in this study students employed ‘excuse’ or ‘apology’ both as head-acts and supportive moves.

Another linguistic marker that was used by the students to show politeness in indirect refusals is the use of ‘**closing statement**’ (13.7%) (e.g., “I hope you have a wonderful time” or “take care”) to express their good wishes at the end of their conversations, which is meant as an acknowledgment of the inviter’s attempts to invite them. Malaysian students also frequently employed a ‘closing statement’ to refuse an invitation (Sattar et al., 2011). Bengali students frequently employed a ‘closing statement’ which shows their cultural norm (Das & Herring; 2015)

Additionally, since refusing an invitation is not a social expectation, the students frequently used **internal modifiers** while refusing directly or indirectly. The most common linguistic expressions analyzed as internal modifiers included time intensifiers, followed by adverbial intensifiers, and past tense modals. Consequently, it might be worth highlighting that the use of these internal modifiers softened the refusal head-acts employed by the students to a great extent.

In this study, a total of 34.5% ‘**time intensifiers**’ are detected. The students employed them along with various pre-refusals, head-acts, and post-refusals while refusing with various head-acts. They employed it 36 times while refusing with an ‘excuse’ through various linguistic utterances; “during/on that time/day,” “1st/First day,” or “already.” They employed it 16 times while refusing with an ‘apology’ through various linguistic utterances; “at/on that time,” or “already.” They employed it 6 times while refusing directly through various linguistic utterances; “on/during that time/day” or “already.” Similarly, Russian English speakers also frequently employed a time intensifier, “already” along with an ‘excuse’ (Iliadi & Larina (2017). Overall, the students employed the following linguistic utterances through an ‘excuse’ to increase the credibility of

'excuses' frequently while refusing with various head-acts: "at/on/ during that time/day" (e.g., 19 times), "1st/First day" (e.g., 10 times), or "already" (9 times).

Based on the findings, 25.6% of students employed **adverbial modifiers**. The students employed them along with various pre-refusals, head-acts, and post-refusals while refusing with various head-acts. It occurs 5 times while refusing directly, "very." It occurs 19 times while refusing with an 'excuse,' "really," "a lot," or "very." It occurs 11 times while refusing with an 'apology,' "extremely," or "so much." The following linguistic utterances were employed frequently: "so" (e.g., 12 times), "really" (e.g., 11 times), or "very" (8 times). Jautz (2013) demonstrated that intensifiers were employed quite regularly by Americans while employing an expression of 'gratitude.' The students also frequently employed the adverbial intensifiers to intensify an expression of 'positive remark' before refusing indirectly through an 'excuse.' This result reflects the findings of refusal studies, like Saad et al. (2016), and Sattar and Farnia (2014), who discovered that Malay English learners tended to intensify their apologies with the following linguistic forms (e.g., "so," or "really") to heighten their effect. Thus, the students weakened the impact of the refusal by using 'adverbial modifier' to heighten their effect, because invitations are highly valued in Bengali culture.

The students also employed the past tense form of a modal verb as a gesture of politeness that reduced the negative effect of refusal mostly within 'suggestion of willingness' while refusing through an 'excuse.'

To summarize, students frequently employed internal modifiers as intensifiers or mitigators since refusal is a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1978). They were utilized in various parts particularly as pre-or post-refusals, or head-acts of the refusal utterances to intensify or to mitigate the refusal outcomes since refusal is complex (Beebe et al., 1990). They mostly tended to intensify or mitigate the 'apology' or 'gratitude'

through adverbial intensifier (“so”) or ‘excuse’ through ‘time intensifier’ to increase the credibility of the ‘excuse’ while refusing directly to decrease the negative implication of employing the negated form as a politeness gesture. It also can be stated that Bengalis consider internal modifiers as a means to get compliance since they felt obliged to use mitigation devices to soften the face-threatening effect of their refusing an invitation.

The findings further revealed that the students often tended to **code-switch** when they used ‘address forms’ (e.g., “*apu*” and “*yaar*”) while refusing through an ‘excuse’ (e.g., 15 times) or an ‘apology’ (e.g., 12 times) to mitigate the negative effects of the refusals. It can be concluded that students are bilingual and having the advantage of knowing multiple languages, the students chose to code-switch within the sentence using three languages (Arabic, English, and Bangla). By doing so, students indirectly lessened the face-threatening impact of the refusal. It can also be stated that to show solidarity, the students intentionally code-switched. Furthermore, Bangladeshi people habitually code-switch as they are mostly bi- or multilingual (Obaidullah, 2016). Thus, code-switching in the refusal expression highlights the Bangladeshi people’s communication style.

Based on the findings, 52.4% of students are likely to **combine** more than three or four refusal strategies while refusing because of the nature of refusals as face-threatening acts. This might stand for a general feature of Bangladeshi culture. It was clear that certain patterns frequently occur in the students’ responses while refusing directly or indirectly refusing an invitation: The students frequently combined an ‘excuse’ and an ‘address form’ (**excuse + address form**) (e.g., 56 times) while refusing directly or indirectly.

Another pattern that emerged is the combination of the expression of ‘gratitude,’ and an ‘excuse’ (**gratitude + excuse**) (e.g., 38 times). The students mostly employed ‘gratitude’ before refusing directly or indirectly. Additionally, an expression of ‘gratitude’ mostly co-occurs through ‘address form,’ and by other head-acts. Most Arab English speakers

frequently combined an 'excuse' head-act with 'gratitude (excuse + gratitude) to show their appreciation (Abu-Humeid & Altai).

It was also evident that the students frequently combined a 'suggestion of willingness,' and an 'excuse' (**suggestion of willingness+ excuse**) (e.g., 11 times). It was also seen that, in a single response, 'address form' or 'excuse' was repeated by the students to refrain from hurting the speaker while refusing through an 'excuse.' The students were likely to offer more than a simple 'apology,' 'excuse' or other strategies.

The students also tended to combine an expression of 'regret' with an 'excuse' (**apology + excuse**) while refusing directly or indirectly (36 times). It was also obvious in data that an expression of 'apology' as the head-act mostly co-occurs through an 'excuse' as a gesture of politeness. Interestingly, Americans also expressed 'regret' before refusing directly, in contrast, the Chinese frequently provided their 'excuses' before refusing directly (Jiang, 2015). Also, Rahayu (2018) said that direct and indirect refusals by the Indonesian people were initiated through an 'apology.' It can be stated that Bangladeshi students were more likely to use their cultural norms when making refusals in English.

These two strategies can be considered as universal features of refusals. Thus, it can be established that people from various cultures mostly employed these two strategies to refuse different linguistic realizations. One can also conclude that providing 'reason' and expressing 'regret' are two prominent features of refusals in Bangladeshi culture. They also very commonly appeared together.

It was clear that certain patterns frequently occur in the students' responses while refusing directly. They (e.g., 9 students) tended to combine an expression of 'regret' with a direct refusal head-act and an 'excuse' (**apology + negative willingness + excuse**).

The students (e.g., 37 times) also tended to employ frequently contrastive marker, **'but'** before refusing directly or indirectly to signal or prepare the refusal (e.g., “S71: Great *jaar*, **but** my family is waiting for me on that day”).

Based on the findings, the students are likely to employ refusal strategies in different positions to decrease the impact of the refusal. For instance, ‘negative willingness’ head-act appears often at **second** position 7 times. ‘Excuse’ head-act appears often at **third position** 17 times. ‘Apology’ as head-act appears often at **an initial position** 8 times.

‘Address form’ as pre-refusal appears often 38 times through the **second position**. ‘Gratitude’ as pre-refusal appears often, as much as 30 times **at an initial position**. ‘Address form’ as post-refusal appears often 21 times through the **third position**. ‘Excuse’ as post-refusal appears often 19 times in the **third position**. ‘Closing statement’ as post-refusal appears often 10 times in the **sixth position**.

It also helps out to discover how the students mostly initiated the refusals to mitigate their refusals. They often tended to initiate the refusal by employing ‘gratitude’ in the initial position (30 times) as pre-refusal or an ‘apology’ (16 times) in the initial position as pre-refusal or head-act. Thus, it can be stated that stating a refusal to an invitation with an expression of ‘gratitude’ to show an appreciation or an expression of regret was commonly accepted among the students as a gesture of politeness.

Overall, the students often employed ‘excuse,’ ‘statement of apology,’ and ‘negative willingness’ as refusal head-acts with various linguistic utterances. They employed either direct, indirect strategies or combinations of them to perform refusals. The findings show that the act of refusing is rarely realized in a single act, but rather co-occurs with other refusal strategies. It means that the head-act is accompanied by other acts, all of which soften the utterance's negative force. As mentioned earlier, accepting an invitation among

Bangladeshi people is the norm. Nevertheless, in the case of refusing, it was observed that they employed a variety of supportive moves or internal mitigation to make the refusal more polite and applicable.

4.8 Summary

In sum, this study addressed two research questions: 1) What refusal strategies are employed by Bangladeshi postgraduate students in refusing an invitation in English? 2) How are these refusals structured and realized linguistically?

Bangladeshi students frequently employed indirect strategies than direct strategies. They expressed the refusals through 'excuse,' 'statement of apology,' and 'negative willingness' through various linguistic utterances as the head-acts.

A supportive move 'address form,' 'gratitude,' or 'excuse' that appear before or after the refusal head-acts helped to mitigate the effect of the refusals. This demonstrates that in Bangladeshi culture, 'address form,' 'gratitude,' or 'excuse' are essential features in communication to show politeness, and this shaped their refusals. In the case of refusing an invitation, it is worth stating that Bangladeshi students employed intensifiers as mitigators, particularly time intensifiers and adverbial intensifiers.

Refusing an invitation is exceptionally troublesome (Ismail,2017). It can be face-threatening (Beebe et al., 1990). That is why to refuse the invitation; Bangladeshi postgraduates in Malaysia expressed refusals indirectly as a sign of politeness. They utilized a noteworthy number of strategies. Refusal strategies hardly appeared alone but in combination with the other strategies. It also appears in different positions to mitigate the illocutionary force of the refusal. The students also employed the refusal strategies in different positions in an attempt to reduce the impact of the refusal. The Bangladeshi

cultural norm of indirectly communicating is apparent in the content of refusal strategies they utilized.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This study examined the types of refusal strategies employed by Bangladeshi students in Malaysia to refuse an '*Eid al-Fitr*' function, and how these strategies were realized linguistically and structurally. The data collected were in the form of written responses made on WhatsApp. The refusal responses were coded according to the refusal classification proposed by Al-Issa (2003) and Beebe et al. (1990). The refusal sequences were also examined. The categorization of the internal modifiers was also adapted from Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) to identify internal modifiers. This chapter includes the following: summary of the refusal strategies and recommendations for future research.

5.2 Summary of the refusal strategies

Refusing an invitation is slightly uncommon in the Bengali culture (Jamil, 2007) because inviting someone is associated with showing him/her respect. However, when an invitation is refused, it involves various types of strategies (Kwon, 2004) because a refusal is a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In order not to risk threatening the face of the inviter, Bangladeshi students are careful to use several face-saving strategies.

The analysis indicates that from the 105 students, 17 students refused directly, and 88 students refused indirectly as politeness. 83.1% of students often employed external and internal modifiers with direct or indirect strategies to reduce the illocutionary force of the refusals. 40.3% of students often realized the refusals with 'excuse,' 20% of students employed 'statement of apology,' 16.1% of students employed 'negative willingness' as head-acts with various linguistic utterances.

Direct strategies were used by only 16.1% of students, who refused using a brief expression of inability, such as "can't." They frequently downgraded the force of the direct refusals through the expression of 'apology' (e.g., "sorry/I am sorry") and 'address

form' (e.g., "dear") as a gesture of politeness before refusing. They often provided 'excuse' (e.g., family-oriented or being away from Malaysia) and 'gratitude' (e.g., "thanks/thank you") after refusing directly as mitigators. It is also clear that certain patterns frequently occur when refusing directly. For instance, the students combine the expression of 'regret,' followed by direct refusal head-act and 'excuse' (apology + negative willingness + excuse). Such tendency proves their willingness to employ less direct refusals.

On the other hand, indirect strategies with '**excuse**' (40.3%) were found to be the most utilized strategy. Bangladeshi students gave several reasons for having to refuse the invitation, and these reasons were obviously given to save their faces and to maintain harmony. This result underlines the fact that in the Bangladeshi culture to refuse by offering a reason is considered polite.

35 students provided family-oriented 'excuses' and 30 students employed being away from Malaysia-oriented 'excuses.' Several linguistic markers were used when refusing with an 'excuse' to avoid refusal threats, such as 'address forms,' "dear," followed by "apu," or "the researcher's name," expressions of gratitude, "thank you so much," "thank you" or "thanks" as pre-refusal 'excuse', and 'closing statement' as post-refusals, "I hope you have a wonderful time" or "take care."

They are likely to combine two or more refusal strategies while refusing with an 'excuse' because of the nature of the refusals as face-threatening acts. As such these combinations help to avoid embarrassment, which is a general feature of the Bangladeshi culture when refusing an invitation. It is observed that 'excuse' as a strategy occurs extensively in combination with other strategies. The following patterns frequently occur while indirectly declining with an 'excuse.' For example, the students frequently combined the 'excuse' head-act with an 'address form' (excuse + address form). Another

pattern that emerged was the combination of an expression of 'gratitude,' followed by an 'excuse' (gratitude + excuse). They also employed 'address form' or 'excuse' repeatedly in a single response to abstaining from slighting the inviter.

In 20% of the data, **apologizing** was another strategy used. "I'm sorry" or "sorry" are the most popular forms of 'apology' among students. The aim was to soften the outcome of the face-threatening refusal acts on the inviter for having his/her invitation refused. Several linguistic markers were used when refusing with an 'apology' to avoid refusal threats, such as 'address form' and 'gratitude' as pre-refusals and 'excuses' as post-refusal. This 'excuse' strategy was found in nearly all patterns while refusing with an 'apology.'

This study also showed that refusing with an 'apology' is less frequently realized in a single act, and more frequently found to occur with other speech acts. It means that the head-act is accompanied by other strategies, all of which mitigate the threat. In other words, students are more likely to offer a simple 'apology' with an 'excuse' or with other strategies to avoid offending the inviter. An expression of 'apology' as the head-act mostly co-occurs with an 'excuse' (apology + excuse). They also often combined an 'apology' head-act, followed by an 'address form' and an 'excuse' (apology + address form + excuse).

Nevertheless, given **pre-and post-refusals** combined as supportive moves, it is noted that Bangladeshi students employed various indirect strategies and adjuncts as supportive moves to tone down the impositions of the refusals.

For example, as pre-refusal 'apology' mostly co-occurs with direct head-act., As post-refusal 'excuse' mostly co-occurs with 'negative willingness,' 'excuse,' or 'apology'. The adjunct as in 'address form' tended to co-occur mostly before or after 'negative willingness,' 'excuse,' or 'apology' head-acts through different linguistic utterances (e.g.,

“dear”, “*apu*”, or “researcher's name”). Additionally, the expression of ‘gratitude’ (e.g., “thanks” or “thank you”) also tended to occur as pre-refusal with ‘excuse’ and ‘apology’. As a post-refusal, an expression of ‘gratitude’ appeared often with ‘negative willingness.’ ‘Closing statement’ mostly tended to co-occur as post-refusal with ‘excuse’. The students employed pre-refusals more than post-refusals, which may be due to their familiarity with the inviter.

The most common linguistic expressions as internal mitigators in this study included adverbial intensifiers, time intensifiers, and the past tense form of a modal verb. The students mostly employed adverbial intensifiers (e.g., “so”, “really”, “very”, or “a lot”) to intensify ‘apologies or ‘gratitude’ when refusing with ‘excuse,’ ‘negative willingness,’ or ‘apology’ head-acts.

The students mostly employed time intensifiers (e.g., “already,” “on that particular day”, “now”, and “on the same day”) to increase the credibility of the 'excuses' when refusing with an ‘excuse,’ ‘apology’ and ‘negative willingness’ head-acts. They employed past tense forms of a modal verb as a politeness marker that reduced the negative effect of the refusal within the ‘suggestion of willingness’ when refusing with an ‘excuse.’

The students often tended to **code-switch** through endearments (e.g., “*apu*” (elder sister), “*yaar*” (friend). Saying a direct ‘No’ is considered impolite in Bangladeshi culture. This finding concurs with the statement of Beebe et al. (1990), that using direct refusals in Asian cultures would be a threat. In general, external modifiers as supportive moves and internal modifiers in refusal strategies are employed to make a refusal, more polite and applicable.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

Future research could investigate a range of other speech acts, such as offer, request, and suggestion. The analysis of this study did not focus on gender, age, language proficiency, among the other factors, nor did it investigate cross-cultural communication. Future studies can fill up these gaps. The outcomes of this study can also be used as comparative data obtained naturally, intra-culturally, or cross-culturally.

5.4 Summary

In sum, this study investigated the types of refusal strategies that were used by Bangladeshi native speakers and how these refusals were performed in English. The analysis revealed how Bangladeshis largely employed indirect strategies compared to direct strategies.

The students frequently used 'excuse,' an expression of 'regret,' and 'negative willingness,' as the head-acts to realize the refusals through various linguistic utterances. Regarding the use of adjuncts that lessened the effect of refusals, head-acts such as 'address form', 'gratitude', and 'closing statement' that appeared before or after the refusal head-acts. They employed indirect strategy 'excuse' or 'apology' as supportive move as well or external modifier. The students employed adverbial intensifiers and time intensifiers as softeners or internal modifiers. As Beebe et al. (1990) indicated, such softeners are expected to save the face of the speaker, hearer, or both.

Bangladeshi direct or indirect refusal head-acts are mostly realized in a combination of three (26.7%) or four (25.7%) refusal strategies to show their considerations of the inviter's face. They also employed the refusal strategies at different positions to reduce the illocutionary force of the refusals.

Therefore, it can be stated that the presence of Bangladeshi cultural values is reflected in their responses. As Beebe et al. (1990) emphasized, the speaker's culture influences his linguistic choices. These findings mirror the many Asian cultures to a great extent and concur with past studies on Asian communities (e.g., Malaysians, Farina & Wu, 2012; Ismail, 2017). The literature review in the context of refusals also concurs with the current study on the use of indirect strategies (e.g., Beebe et al., 1990). Hong (1998), for instance, reached a similar conclusion, stating that East Asians emphasized more on indirectness, just as much as the Bangladeshi culture is reflected through their responses that are similar to other Asian cultures.

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