CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Briefly, the current study, which is conducted in Malaysia, investigates how Malaysians refuse a wedding invitation and whether there is a difference in the choice of refusal strategies when interpersonal solidarity is taken into account. It also investigates the choice of refusal strategies made by Malaysian men and women, respectively. This chapter is an introduction to all the areas concerning this study. It covers the introduction of the field of pragmatics, Speech Act Theory, the speech act of refusal and refusals in Malaysia. Besides that, this chapter highlights the problems that needed to be researched on, the research aims and the research questions that serve as a guide for the study. The significance and limitations of the study are also elaborated here. The organisation of the research paper is also provided as a guide.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 The field of pragmatics

Pragmatics tries to explain how a speaker uses the language to get meaning across. Meaning, from a pragmatic viewpoint involves "the interaction between an expression's context of utterance and the interpretation of elements within that expression" (Horn L. R & Ward. G; n.d, p.1). Pragmatics has been defined creatively by many scholars. Pragmatics is meaning, beyond the semantic level of a particular phrase, sentence or text. It is the theory of language that takes context into account rather than relying on the meaning implied by the text. Yule (1996) fits pragmatics into four definitions; namely,

1)   *"Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning, i.e. the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader);*

2)   *Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning, i.e. the interpretation of speaker meaning in its context, since context affects what is said;*

3)   *Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said. In a communicative act, the speaker usually interacts with a listener, who is called to make inferences about what is said in order to interpret the speaker's intended meaning;*

4)   *Pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance, i.e. the physical, social, or conceptual distance (or closeness) between the speaker and the listener."*

According to Stalnaker (1972), the study of pragmatics enables the ability to match the utterances with context in which they occur (p. 383). Steve Campsall, who was quoted by Moore. A (2001) defined pragmatics as "…a way of investigating how sense can be made of certain texts even when, from a semantic viewpoint, the text seems to be either incomplete or to have a different meaning to what is really intended", with his example that pragmatic knowledge enables us to understand that the sign "Baby Sale – lots of bargains" doesn't mean that there are babies for sale but the items used for babies are on sale.

Therefore, the application of suitable pragmatic rules in everyday conversations ensures successful communications. Without pragmatic knowledge, meaning that gets across may be interpreted wrongly causing misunderstandings; just as what Bardovi-Harlig, K. (n.d; p. 2) had mentioned, "Pragmatic rules for language use are often subconscious, and even native speakers are often unaware of pragmatic rules until they are broken (and feelings are hurt, offense is taken, or sometimes things just seem a bit odd)".

The field of pragmatics includes 'speech act theory, felicity conditions, conversational implicature, the cooperative principle, conversational maxims, relevance, politeness, phatic tokens and deixis' (Moore, A., 2001). However, this study focuses only on the speech act theory.

1.1.2 Speech Act Theory

Speech acts are a part of everyday conversation and communication. People of all cultures, languages and countries participate in different speech acts in their everyday conversations. When a person speaks, he or she performs an act. Therefore, the language is used to

convey the intentions of the speaker. "Speech act theory is not the whole of pragmatics, but is perhaps currently the most important established part of the subject" (Moore. A, 2001; p.1). Speech act requires the knowledge of both language and the appropriate use of it in a particular culture or environment. The Speech Act theory is originates from the ideas of Austin (1962) and developed further by Searle (1969).

1.1.3 Refusals

The speech act of refusing is very important in everyday communication. It helps to avoid people from taking or being taken for granted by being able to say 'no' at the right moments. Refusing, from both the speaker and hearer point of view, is a negative act. Refusals occur as a response to something, for example, in responding to a request, invitation or offer. Therefore, despite its importance in everyday communication, it is generally not a preferred speech act.

Refusing a person is not an easy task. Instead of a blunt refusal, knowing how and when to refuse a person is important in order to maintain a good relationship with others. Refusing a request in a correct manner without offending the requester does not only demand linguistic understanding, but also a good pragmatic knowledge. Pragmatic knowledge enables a person to consider the surrounding, situation and the interlocutors before expressing a refusal. Therefore, pragmatic knowledge is still needed, even with a wide vocabulary in that particular language (A. Sattar H.Q et. al, 2011).

Being so, individuals generally employ consistent styles when responding to refusal situations and these strategies of refusal can be ordered on a directness-indirectness continuum (Ting-Toomey et al, 1991). For example, based on the framework of refusal

strategies developed by Beebe et al. (1990), saying just "No" as a refusal expression is considered a direct refusal whereas saying "I'm not sure if I will be around to attend your function" is considered an indirect refusal.

1.1.4 The act of refusing in Malaysia

"Malaysia is a multicultural society with a colonial history. English is spoken widely in the country, side by side with several vernacular languages." Othman. N (2011; p. 86)

To perceive how Malaysians, a collectivist society, handle refusal, Hei, K. C (2009) mentioned that "most people in Malaysia and possibly other parts of the world, find it extremely difficult to turn down a request that has come from family members, friends, colleagues, employers and in particular people with authority" and to support a statement given by Beebe and Takahashi, Hei added that "when we say 'No' to others, we may also run the risk of offending others whose 'face' may be threatened, as a result of our rejection." (p.31)

Thus, instead of saying 'no', knowing how to say 'no' is rather important in order to avoid one from being taken for granted and being stretched way past one's limits without offending or creating enmity with the others. What is needed is a sound pragmatic knowledge on how to refuse, taking into consideration that refusal strategy changes across cultures.

1.1.5 Wedding Invitations on Facebook

In Malaysia, before the existence of internet, invitations to wedding were traditionally done by giving out wedding invitation cards or through telephone conversations. This practice has developed with the existence of the internet where invitations were also sent by emails. However, the current trend is using social networks like Facebook as a medium to announce and invite people for weddings. Inviting a person to a wedding face-to-face is face-threatening because there is a risk of refusal; and refusing a wedding invitation face-to-face is also face-threatening due to the importance given to weddings by Malaysians and the risk that it might offend the person who gave the invitation. The benefit of inviting through Facebook is that more people can be reached in a short period of time. Apart from that, the face-threatening effect for both interlocutors are lesser compared to face-to-face interaction.

However, even though guests were invited through Facebook, it is known that people who are socially close to the brides and bridegrooms do receive wedding invitation cards apart from the invite on Facebook; whereas the socially distant people are invited only through Facebook. This is due to the assumption that the risk of a refusal that is lesser with people who are socially close compared to those who are socially distant.

To date, no study investigating the refusals to wedding invitations on Facebook has been done and therefore, the gap is filled by this study.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Refusal is an act which is a threat to both the speaker and the hearer's face. It is a threat to the speaker's face because a refusal is not the preferred response of the speaker and it does not fulfill the intentions of the hearer. On the other hand, refusal is a threat to the hearer's face because knowing that a refusal is not the preferred response, the listener tries to refuse with a reply that has as minimal threat as possible to the speaker's face with the risk of receiving a face-threatening response from the speaker. However, refusal strategies and intentions differ across cultures and countries. Malaysians, as a whole is a face conscious society. As Farnia et al. has mentioned, "Malaysia is an eastern non-egalitarian society where keeping face is more acceptable" (2010, p.22). So, naturally Malaysians tend to avoid face-threatening situations as much as possible.

However, just like any other speech acts, refusals are part of our everyday conversations and cannot be avoided. The expression of refusal differs from one person to the other depending on features such as settings, situations and the age difference between interlocutors.

Being so, in the context of the current study, inviting a person to a wedding is face-threatening due to the expectations the speaker places on the listener and likewise, refusing a wedding invitation is also face-threatening as the person refusing run the risk of offending the requester. Apart from that, it is also found that people who are both socially close and distant to the brides and bridegrooms are invited through a social network called Facebook. Therefore, taking the refusal expressions to those wedding invitations as data, the question raised in this study is how the closeness between two persons which is termed

as 'interpersonal solidarity' affects or influences the choice of refusal strategies made by Malaysians in the context of wedding invitations.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify and explain the choice of refusal strategies used by a group of Malaysians in refusing wedding invitations and how these choices differ when interpersonal solidarity is taken into account. Besides that, the aim of this study is also to find out the refusal strategies that Malaysian men and women use in refusing a wedding invitation, respectively.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to fulfill the aims of the research, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the refusal strategies used by Malaysians in refusing a wedding invitation?

2. What is the influence of interpersonal solidarity on the choice of refusal strategies made by Malaysians?

3.   What are the differences between the refusal strategies used by Malaysian men and women in refusing wedding invitations?

The first question is formed in order to identify the refusal strategies that Malaysians use to refuse a wedding invitation. The following question is asked in order to know whether interpersonal solidarity affects the choice of refusal strategies made by Malaysians when it comes to wedding invitations. Both questions are answered in the same analytical structure. To answer these questions, the researcher first collects information on the interpersonal solidarity between the person who invites and the person who refuses the invitation by using an Interpersonal Solidarity Scale (ISS) and then analyses the corresponding refusals by each participants based on the framework of refusal strategies adapted from Beebe et al. (1990) and Campillo, P.S (2009).

The third research question is asked because previous literature has shown that there are differences in the way men and women use speech acts (Bettencourt, B.A. & Miller, N. 1996). Therefore the aim of the questions is to find out the most frequently used strategies in the speech act of refusal, by Malaysian men and women respectively. This is done by also analysing each refusal expression based on the framework of refusal strategies adapted from Beebe et al. (1990) and Campillo, P.S (2009).

These research questions served as a guide to the selection and implementations of research methodologies and method of analysis of the present study.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The fluency or high proficiency in a language does not assure successful communication with its native speakers. It requires a sound pragmatic knowledge too; as Tanck, S. (2002) has mentioned,

> *'Speakers who may be considered "fluent" in a second language due to their mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of that language may still lack pragmatic competence; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate.'*

Studies or researches carried out in the field of pragmatics help in gaining deeper insights in successful communication and in avoiding miscommunication, especially among people of different cultures. It is evident that there are many factors that influence the choice of strategies used in refusing an invitation. The order of the factors according to their importance varies across cultures. Malaysians are generally a face conscious society (Hei 2009). They tend to at least save their face or the face of both interlocutors. The studies of refusal in and across various cultures have been looked into by many researchers (A.Sattar et al., 2011; Aliakbari & Changizi, 2012; Jiayu, 2004), but it lacks literature in the Malaysian context; especially taking the culture of Malaysians, when it comes to weddings, into consideration. There is also a deficiency in investigations pertaining how a certain issue such as interpersonal solidarity, affects the choice of refusal strategies in refusal expressions of Malaysians. Therefore, this study brings to light how interpersonal

solidarity between interlocutors influence the choice of refusal strategies; as well as to find out the most frequently used refusal strategy among men and women in a group of Malaysians in the context of an invitation to a wedding. Knowing how Malaysians refuse is as though knowing a part of the Malaysian culture. This will help others, especially those who are of different culture but living in Malaysia to comprehend how Malaysians refuse and what they mean by certain phrases in order to avoid misunderstandings. It is most expected that the findings of this study will contribute to the field of pragmatics study especially studies concerning the speech act of refusal and also in the development of communicative competence.

1.6 Limitation

There are a few limitations to this study. One of them is that these findings might only be applicable to a small group of people due to the number of respondents in this study. Results might differ when studied in a larger scale with more respondents. Besides that, refusal strategies might also vary across the Malay, Indian and Chinese cultures in Malaysia. This is due to the fact that even though people from these three main cultures live together in Malaysia as one nation, they are unique in their practices, beliefs and values. Future researchers may explore the topic and make the research more comprehensive, extensive and applicable to a wider range of population. Furthermore, the social network, Facebook, where the data for this study is taken from, is a relatively young social media. Therefore, the guests who were invited through Facebook may not comprise of the total invitations to the wedding. This is because; the people who are really close with

the hosts were not invited only through Facebook; they were invited also through other means such as invitation cards and telephone conversations, besides Facebook. In addition, if the people who are socially close to the host could not make it to the wedding; they wouldn't have refused the wedding invitation only through Facebook too.

1.7 Research Organisation

In order to provide a systematic and structured report of this study, this report is organized in the following order:

Chapter one consists of the introduction to the study. It gives a brief account of what the research is about and why it is being carried out. It includes the background of the study, the aim of the study, the research questions that guide the study, the significance and the limitations of the study.

Chapter two is the review of previous literature pertaining to the subject of this study. The researcher provides a review of the studies that have been done on the topic of refusals, the relevant theories that have been formed, the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used and also how these researches have guided and lead to the current study.

Chapter three shows how the current research will be carried out. It is the description of the methodology and procedures of the current research. This chapter is divided into sub-categories such as the population and sample of the study, instrumentation, theoretical framework, research procedure and data analysis.

Chapter four covers the analysis of the data and also the discussion of the results. In this chapter, the researcher provides tables to show the results of the analysis done according to the selected framework and also discusses the results and findings of the analysis.

Chapter five is the conclusion and the summary of the whole study. Besides that, it also includes the limitations and suggestions for further research by the researcher.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the important aspects that needed to be addressed in this study. The knowledge of the background of the study provides insights on the environment of the issue being studied. This study can be considered as the beginning stage of a broader study on the refusal expressions of Malaysians. It is expected that the results yielded in this study will contribute to the field of Pragmatics and can also be a reference for further research especially in the topic of refusals or speech acts. The next chapter discusses the related literature in the field of refusals as well as issues pertaining to the current study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter briefly summarises the various studies that have been done on the speech acts of refusals, respectively, followed by the theories, instruments and frameworks that have been used in these studies. The second part of the chapter highlights the influence of gender in the use of refusal strategies and also interpersonal solidarity and how it is measured. A brief description on how these previous literatures have guided the methodology of the current study is also given at the end of the chapter.

Every aspect of speech acts has been studied on. However, it is never sufficient as how people perceive speech acts and what people perceive as the correct use of speech acts varies across cultures and time. Cross-cultural and contrastive pragmatics studies are widely done because people from different countries may view pragmatic principles differently (Shaozhong, n.d).

Previous studies on the speech act of refusal mostly comprise of contrastive studies. These studies contrasts the refusal strategies employed by people of different cultures, values and practices which proves that refusal strategies varies across cultures; just as what Wolfson (1981, p. 123) who was quoted by Farnia et al. (2010), has stated "speech acts differ cross-

culturally not only in the way they are realized but also in their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and in the functions they serve". The contrastive studies on refusals are elaborated further in 2.3.

2.1 Factors Influencing the Directness or Indirectness of Interaction

There are many factors that affect the directness and indirectness of an interaction or utterance. Nguyen (1998), cited in Nguyen (2010; p. 17, 18), in his study investigating the refusal of requests by Australian native speakers of English and Vietnamese learners of English, came up with 12 factors that he claim could affect the directness and indirectness of an interaction or utterance. The factors are as listed below:

1. "Age: *the old tend to be more indirect than the young.*

2. Sex: *females prefer indirect expression.*

3. Residence: *the rural population tends to use more indirectness than the urban.*

4. Mood: *while angry, people tend to use more indirectness.*

5. Occupation: *those who study social sciences tend to use more indirectness than those who study natural sciences.*

6. Personality: *the extroverted tend to use more directness than the introverted.*

7. Topic: *while referring to a sensitive topic, a taboo, people usually opt for indirectness.*

8. Place: *when at home, people tend to use more directness than when they are elsewhere.*

9. Communicative environment/setting: *when in an informal climate, people tend to*

express themselves in a direct way.

10. Social distance: *those who have closer relations tend to talk in a more direct way.*

11. Time pressure: *when in a hurry, people are likely to use direct expressions.*

12. Position: *when in a superior position, people tend to use more directness to their*

inferiors."

These factors are said to influence speakers' utterance by causing the speakers to alter the strategies, semantic formulas and number of strategies and semantic formulas used in their expression. However, the factor that is being focused in the current study is interpersonal solidarity which in Nguyen's term, is social distance.

2.2 Refusals

Refusal is a 'face threatening act' (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989) because it opposes the expectations of the speaker. The level of threat to a person's face increases with the directness of refusals. Due to this risk, 'some degree of indirectness usually exists' (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 56).

Refusal belongs to the category of commissives, because it causes the 'refuser' not to perform an expected action (Searle, 1977, in A. Sattar, 2001; p. 71). Refusing is not an initiating act but is a response to speech acts such as invitations, offers, suggestions and requests. It is a speech act in which the speaker responds negatively to an action proposed by the interlocutor (Chen et al., 1995). Refusals occur in all languages and cultures and require a high level of pragmatic competence in order to avoid problems due to miscommunications or misunderstandings. However, the expression of refusals differ

across languages and cultures as well as when issues such as power, language proficiency and social distance is taken into account.

2.3 Contrastive Studies on Refusals

A major study on refusals was done by Beebe et al. (1990) which indicated that there are several differences in American and Japanese refusal. The study which made use of Discourse Completion Test (DCT), showed that the Japanese tend to use expressions of regret more frequently with higher-status interlocutors compared to lower-status interlocutors. The Japanese also tend to start refusing with an apology or regret and then end with an excuse or reason. When the reasons or excuses were highlighted, it was found that the excuses or reasons used by the Japanese are much less specific than Americans. Americans, on the other hand, usually use a form of indirect communication in refusing in all situations. This is a major study that contributed to the field of the speech act of refusal as Beebe et al. came up with a framework of refusal strategies that was used by most subsequent researches in this field. This framework is of several refusal utterances that have been classified as strategies by Beebe et al. Their study, comparing the refusals of Americans and Japanese, was replicated by Yamagashira, H. (2001), using the same methodology; DCT and framework of refusal strategies.

Liao and Breshnahan (1996) compared the refusal strategies of American English and Mandarin Chinese. This study was carried out by creating six situations in which the participants, who were university students of United States and Taiwan, were required to fill in how they would refuse in each situation. Their study revealed that Americans used

more strategies than Chinese in refusing but both cultures altered their strategies according to the status of the person making the request. Besides that, politeness is shown in both cultures but "the ways in which politeness is manifested reflects the modest nature of the Oriental countries and the non-self-denigrative nature of the Western countries." (Liao and Bresnahan, 1996; 703)

Another contrastive study on Chinese and American refusals was done by Jiayu. L (2004) in his paper, *A Contrastive Study of Refusal Strategies between English and Chinese*. This study is based on two basic hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that the discourse realisation patterns of refusal strategies might vary from one country to another since the Chinese are believed to be collectively oriented while the Americans are individually oriented. The second hypothesis is that the discourse realization patterns of refusal strategies might vary from one register to another. The results of this study indicated that cooperation and politeness are the biggest concerns of both cultures. However, Chinese tend to be more 'economical' in their number of refusal strategies by using "address term + apology + reasons" to restore relationships whereas the Americans tend to use what is said to be "question attentiveness" strategy where different refusal strategies were used in the pattern "I would like to + reasons + apology".

The refusals of 40 Korean speakers in Korea and 37 American English speakers in the USA were studied by Kwon (2004). A DCT with 12 situations to test **refusals to requests, invitations and offers** was used as the instrument to collect data. The data were analysed in semantic formulas according to the taxonomy provided by Beebe et al. (1990). The results of the study pointed out that Korean speakers frequently hesitated and apologized

before refusing and also tend to mitigate when refusing a person of higher status, while English speakers were not particularly status sensitive and often uttered positive opinion and expressed gratitude for the necessary action before refusing.

By focusing on the speech act of refusals, Nelson et al. (2002) investigated the similarities and differences in communication styles of Egyptian Arabic and US English. A verbal DCT which consisted of requests, invitations, offers and suggestions and tested the factor of status was used as the instrument to collect data in this study; which resulted in a total of 658 refusals. The analysis which was done by coding the refusals according to the framework of refusal strategies by Beebe et al. (1990) revealed that both Egyptians and Americans made use of similar strategies with similar frequencies but differ in the use of indirect strategies, where the Americans used more indirect strategies compared to the Egyptians.

Besides that, Farnia and Wu (2012) conducted a study to investigate the refusals of Chinese and Malaysian university students to invitations. The aims of this study were to examine how Chinese international and Malaysian university students in Malaysia refuse invitations and their perception while refusing. DCT and structured interview were the instruments used to collect data in this study. The findings of the study showed that the refusal strategies used by both Chinese international and Malaysian students were similar but they differ in the number of strategies used in a given situation.

Umale, J (2011), a PhD candidate of the Dhofar University, Oman, carried out a cross-cultural study which investigated on the refusals expressed by the British and Omanis.

Umale used DCT which was categorized into three situations of requests, three situations of offers and three situations of invitations, to collect data for the study. The study showed that the Omanis used more direct strategies compared to the British when refusing people of equal status or friends and acquaintances. The British, on the other hand, used direct strategies when refusing people of lower status. Both British and Omanis used indirect strategies when refusing people of higher status.

Contrasting three instead of two L1 backgrounds is the study carried out by Sadler and Eröz (2002) (in Campillo, P. S et al., 2009; p 143). They contrasted the English refusals by speakers of three different L1 backgrounds, namely American, Lao and Turkish. Data was collected through questionnaires and analysed according to the taxonomy proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). 30 participants from each background participated and the results illustrated that there was a similarity between the speakers of all three backgrounds. The most preferred refusal strategy was 'Excuse, Reason, Explanation' which convinced the authors to conclude that this phenomenon could be due to the high level of English proficiency the participants possess.

Refusals by people from three different backgrounds were also investigated by Al-Kahtani (2005). The participants were Americans, Japanese and Arabs, and the refusals were studied in terms of status and analysed in terms of 'order', 'frequency' and 'content of semantic formulas'. The difference of refusal realizations between native and non-native speakers are said to be due to the first language interference and also culture. Therefore, Al-Kahtani suggested that learners of English as a second language should be taught the

proper ways of refusing in the target language to be able to converse without communication errors, especially in interaction with native speakers of English.

A study that revealed an extra strategy that could be added to the framework of refusal strategies proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) is the study that compared the refusals of Persian and Kurdish speakers, by Aliabakri, M. and Changizi, M. (2012). This study which used DCT as the instrument to collect data and the framework of refusal strategies by Beebe et al. (1990) as a basis to analyse the elicited data, showed that 'swearing' was one of the semantic formulas used by the respondents in their expressions of refusal. However, this strategy is said to be 'culture-specific' and was used by the respondents to lessen the face-threatening effect that refusals cause. In addition to proving that the Persians use a larger range of refusal strategies compared to the Kurdish, the findings also showed the politeness expressed by the respondents by the use of apology as one of the semantic formulas in their refusal expressions.

Likewise, a study investigating the refusals of Iranian EFL learners was carried out by Allami, H. and Naeimi, A. (2011). The content and frequency of semantic formulas in terms of status, language proficiency and initiating devices such as requests and offers were examined in this study. The respondents of the study, who were required to respond to a DCT were 31 native speakers of Persian and 30 Persian-speaking learners of English. The elicited data, which was analysed according to the framework of refusal strategies developed by Beebe et al. (1990) was then compared to the responses of 37 American native speakers, taken from Kwon (2004), as a basis for comparison. Briefly, the findings of the study revealed that there is a positive correlation between language proficiency and

pragmatic transfer; Iranians are less specific in their explanations compared to the Americans; and also that Iranians tend to have more shifts in semantic formulas compared to the Americans.

The pragmatic transfer in refusals by English speaking native Mandarin speakers was investigated by Chang (2008) and the extent of the second language influence on their expression is also examined. The refusal expressions of Chinese and Americans were compared and the expressions were analysed in terms of the frequency and content of semantic formulas. The use of DCT on four groups of participants namely, American college students (35), English-major seniors (41), English-major freshmen (40) and Chinese-major sophomores (40); and framework of refusal strategies by Beebe et al. (1990) to analyse the expressions, revealed that all four groups handled refusal by making use of similar strategies but these groups differ in the frequency and content of semantic formula. The American were said to have used more semantic formulas in their refusal expressions compared to the Chinese and even though Excuse/reason was the most common semantic formula used by both Americans and Chinese, the excuses or reasons by the Chinese were more specific compared to that of the Americans.

By using DCT, Tanck (2002) compared the refusals and complaints of native and non-native speakers of English. It was found that there were differences between the refusals and complaints of native and non-native speakers and concluded that the component of refusals and complaints by the non-native speakers were lesser than the native speakers; and the 'quality of components' produced by the non-native speakers were less appropriate compared to the native speakers.

Besides the contrastive and cross-cultural studies done in the field of the speech act of refusals, there are also plenty of studies done, focusing on the use of refusals in one particular culture or country and speakers of one particular language or monolinguals.

Oktoprimasakti (2006) conducted a research in Indonesia, investigating the direct and indirect refusal strategies of Indonesians. The DCT used in this study is a modified version of the DCT proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) and the findings showed that Indonesians generally used indirect strategies in refusing, which explains the importance Indonesians give to the notion of 'face'. However, the strategies used were found to differ when status is taken into consideration. Indonesians are said to be more direct in refusing a person of lower status and more indirect in their effort of refusing a person of higher status.

A study that focused on monolinguals is the one carried out by Félix-Bradesfer, J. C. (2006) who investigated the refusal strategies of male speakers of Mexican Spanish in Mexico during formal and informal situations. The data for the study were collected through 80 role-play interactions by male university students whose ages ranged from 21 to 26 years, and analysed according to a modified version of the refusal taxonomy proposed by Beebe et al. (1990). The results of the study showed that indirect strategies were widely used to weaken the face-threatening effect of refusal and factors such as power and distance play an important role in determining the appropriate degree of politeness in the Mexican society.

Since refusals are speech acts produced as a response to an initiating speech act, Yang, J. (2008) who claimed that initiating acts of refusals play an important role in the choices of refusal strategies (p. 1041), investigated the initiating acts of refusals in 160 video clips of five TV series. It was found that refusals are initiated by four acts which are requests, offers, invitations and suggestions. These initiating acts were further characterized into subcategories and how the refusal strategies for each category differ is analysed. The framework of refusal strategies developed by Beet et al. (1990) was used as the frame to categorise the semantic formulas into categories. The results of the analysis showed that refusal strategies do differ according to the type of initiating acts.

Concentrating on a college community in Ghana, Sarfo. E (2011), who carried out an ethnographic research, investigated the strategies used in refusing requests in English. The aim of the study is to see how members of the Berekum Training College in Ghana refuse requests in English and how factors such as age and socio-economic status affect the refusal forms or expressions. The refusal conversations were recorded and analysed by the observer who was Sarfo himself, and the results of analysis showed that indirect refusal strategies were more frequently used compared to direct strategies and direct strategies mostly incur when the refusals come from an elder or a higher status interlocutor to a younger or lower status interlocutor while indirect refusal strategies incur in "inter- and intra-age and status". The author came up with the conclusion that direct refusals are 'vertical' while indirect refusals are both 'vertical' as well as 'horizontal'.

Besides that, Lee, C. (2008) carried out an interlanguage study in his thesis on refusals of EFL learners in Taiwan. The study investigated the performance of the speech act of

refusal by Chinese EFL learners of high and low proficiency levels and compared them to Chinese native speakers and American English native speakers, who served as a 'baseline data'. This study, which used DCT as an instrument to collect data and Beebe et al. (1990)'s refusal framework to analyse the data, involved 120 participants who were university students of Taiwan and North America. The findings revealed that there were cross-cultural differences and also a positive correlation between English proficiency and pragmatic competence.

A study which is not of a contrastive or cross-cultural nature and which studied the refusals in Malaysia is the research done by A. Sattar et al. (2011). They focused on the refusal strategies by Malay university students, and the participants were 40 Malay students of Universiti Sains Malaysia. This study employed discourse completion test as an instrument to collect data and the data were analysed according to semantic formula besides being categorized according to the framework provided by Beebe et al. (1990). The findings showed that there was a preferred pattern of refusing, and that the semantic formulas signified the influence of the Malay culture in performing refusals in English.

Generally, studies on the speech act of refusals employed the well-known taxonomy of Beebe et al. (1990) and a number of them employed a modified version of the taxonomy to suit their research aims and settings. An important factor that can be observed from the above studies is that native speakers and non-native speakers of English made use of similar strategies in refusing. But, they differ in the order of linguistics items used in their expressions of refusals. These studies on refusals help in the understanding of how refusals are carried out in different countries and cultures as well as in avoiding communication

breakdown due to misunderstandings and impolite responses, especially between people of different cultures and practices. However, a number of studies; namely the studies carried out by Al-Kahtani and Umale (2011) failed to acknowledge refusals as a response to an initiating act or termed by Allami and Naeimi (2011) as 'eliciting act'; by not considering the initiating acts. This is an important aspect that needs to be looked into as the refusal realisations as well as strategies used could differ according to the initiating acts.

In these studies, Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is widely used as an instrument to collect data. DCT was introduced by Beebe et al. (1990) in their contrastive study on the refusals of the Americans and the Japanese. A DCT is carried out by providing the participants with situations where they are required to write down how they would reply if they were placed in such situations. An advantage of using this instrument is that a large amount of data can be collected in short period of time (M. Nurani. L, 2009; p. 667). However, this method has its weaknesses. Firstly, this method could also be researcher-biased, because the participants, conscious of the presence of the researcher, would probably write down the expected reply or a reply that is considered polite or a norm to the culture instead of writing the real reply. Moreover, DCT requires the participants to convert their spoken form to written conventions. Therefore, no matter how hard one tries, spoken form cannot be written effectively. Apart from that, other important features that should be considered in investigating refusals, such as tone, hedging, pitch, hesitation, body language and facial expressions, could not be measured using DCT; just as M. Nurani (2009) has mentioned that it is not a natural data where participants would react or reply naturally and it lacks the natural elements of interaction, such as negotiation, due to the absence of real interlocutors (p. 667). In addition, the context or situation, in which the

refusal is taking place is also absent in the use of DCT. So, the reliability of the DCT is an issue that needs to be questioned. Despite the weaknesses of the DCT method, it has been adopted by many researchers (A. Sattar H.Q et al., 2011). Besides DCT, previous studies investigating refusals also employ other instruments such as questionnaires and interviews. The modified version of DCT that was used by Nelson et al. (2002), where the refusal situations were read out to the participants and the refusal of the participants were recorded, could be used as an alternative to the conventional use of DCT, as it provides the means for analysing spoken forms of refusal rather than spoken forms which are converted to written forms. In the current study, DCT is not used as the data is taken directly from the participants through a social network called Facebook. Malaysians are a face-conscious society in which DCT will not be able to elicit reliable data. The data in this study is therefore more natural and authentic compared to the data elicited from a DCT.

2.4 Relevant Theories and Framework under the Speech Act of Refusal

2.4.1 Speech Act Theory

People of all cultures, languages and countries participate in different speech acts in their everyday conversations. Speech acts, according to Searle (1969) includes apologies, requests, refusals and compliments.

Theory of Speech Acts by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), according to Yule (2003) states that an occurrence of a speech event involves three acts; a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act. Moore. A (2001, p.2) describes these acts by stating that locutionary acts are the speech acts that are carried out, illocutionary acts are

the actions that are presented by the speech and illocutionary force is the intent of the speaker in producing a particular utterance; perlocutionary acts are the effect of the speech or utterance on the listener. Illocutionary acts are further classified into five categories; declarations, directives, commissives, representatives and expressives.

Declarations are speech acts that 'change the world' by the mere mention of the utterances. For example; "I now pronounce you husband and wife". However, the speaker has to have the authority to perform such utterances for the effect to take place.

Directives are speech acts that get or make the listener to do something or to carry out an action; such as commanding and requesting. For example; "Pass me the book, please".

Commissives are speech acts that commit the speaker to future actions; such as promises, refusals and threats. For example; "I am going to buy that book next week".

Representatives state the beliefs of the speaker. For example; "The sea is blue".

And finally, expressive are speech acts that state or show the feelings of the speaker. For example; "I am extremely sorry!!"

Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) is the linguistic item in an utterance that shows what type of illocutionary act is being expressed. For example; the utterance "I order you to put the chair back at its place" shows that it is an order with the use of the word 'order'. But as pragmatics takes into consideration the context of the utterance, the presence of IFID, at times is not necessary in indicating what illocutionary act is being expressed. For example, the utterance "Is the spaghetti ready yet?" would hold different intentions when spoken at a dinner table and a cooking class.

Therefore, the speech act of refusal and the realization of illocutionary force in the refusal expressions are the focus of the current study.

2.4.2 Framework of refusal strategies

The most influential framework or taxonomy that is widely employed in the studies concerning the speech act of refusal is the one proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) in their cross-cultural study of refusals by Americans and Japanese. This framework contains the refusal strategies that are commonly used and is divided into two main categories, namely semantic formulas and adjuncts. Semantic formulas are the expressions of the refusals itself and adjuncts are the expressions that accompany a refusal but cannot stand on its own as a refusal strategy (Campillo, P.S et al., 2009; p. 141). The semantic formulas are further divided into two categories, which are direct strategies and indirect strategies. The taxonomy is as illustrated in the figure below:

Direct strategies:

1. Performative

Example: "I refuse"

2. Non-performative

Example: "I won't be able to make it"

Indirect strategies:

1. Statement of regret

Example: "I feel terrible…"

2. Wish

Example: "I wish I could come…"

3. Excuse, reason, explanation

Example: "I have exams…"

4. Statement of alternative

Example: "I can do this instead"

5. Set condition for future/past acceptance

Example: "If you had told me this earlier…"

6. Promise for future acceptance

Example: "I promise, next time I'll do it"

7. Statement of principle

Example: "I never mix business with personal issues"

8. Statement of philosophy

Example: "Once bitten twice shy"

9. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor

Example: "It won't be fun that way"

10. Acceptance that function as refusal

Example: Indefinite or a reply with lack of enthusiasm

11. Avoidance

- Non-verbal: silence, hesitation, doing nothing and physical departure

- Verbal: topic switch, joke, repetition of past request, postponement and hedge

Adjuncts:

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling of agreement

2. Statement of empathy

3. Pause fillers

4. Gratitude/appreciation

Adjuncts are said to serve as a part of a refusal expression but they cannot stand on their own as a refusal strategy and cannot perform a refusal independently.

After about 19 years, the framework of refusal strategies by Beebe et al. (1990) which was probably the most influential framework used in the studies investigating refusals, was then modified by Campillo, P.S et al. (2009) to account for the discourse perspective in refusal behavior. This framework heavily relies on the framework developed by Beebe et al. (1990). The refusals are categorised into Direct, Indirect and Adjuncts, with direct and indirect refusals being the "semantic expression indicating the refusing nature of the speech acts" and adjuncts being the "expression that accompanies the refusal but cannot by itself perform the intended function of refusing" (Campillo, P.S et al., 2009; 114-115). Below is the modified framework of refusal strategies:

Table 2.1: Framework of Refusal Strategies by Campillo et al. (2009)

REFUSALS	EXAMPLES
Direct Strategies	
1. Bluntness	*No. / I refuse*
2. Negation of proposition	*I can't / I don't think so*
Indirect Strategies	
1. Plain indirect	*It looks like I won't be able to go*
2. Reason/Explanation	*I can't. I have a doctor's appointment*
3. Regret/Apology	*I'm so sorry! I can't*
4. Alternative • Change option • Change time (postponement)	 *I would join you if you choose another restaurant.* *I can't go right now, but I could next week.*

5.	Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	*Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!*
6.	Statement of principle/philosophy	
7.	Avoidance	
•	Non-verbal: Ignoring (silence, etc)	
•	Verbal:	
o	Hedging	*Well, I'll see if I can.*
o	Change topic	
o	Joking	
o	Sarcasm	
ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS		
1.	Positive opinion	*This is a great idea, but…*
2.	Willingness	*I'd love to go, but…*
3.	Gratitude	*Thanks so much, but…*
4.	Agreement	*Fine! But…*
5.	Solidarity/Empathy	*I'm sure you'll understand, but…*

This framework of refusal strategies is similar to that of Beebe to a certain extent. Besides introducing a new term for certain strategies, a few refusal strategies have been omitted. Examples of the terms that have been changed are BLUNTNESS which was previously known as PERFORMATIVE and NEGATION OF PROPOSITION which was known as NON-PERFORMATIVE; and examples of the refusal strategies that were omitted are WISH and PROMISE FOR FUTURE ACCEPTANCE. This modified framework serves a better basis in analyzing refusal strategies as the proposed strategies are clear and overlapping can be avoided. For example, in Beebe et al. (1990)'s classifications, "I would love to come,

but…" can be either categorised as WISH or STATEMENT OF REGRET; whereas, in the modified framework, this statement serves as REGRET/ APOLOGY.

However, the framework that is used for this study is a combination of both Beebe et al. (1990) and Campillo, P.S (2009)'s frameworks. This is done in order to cater to the context of the study, which is invitation to weddings.

2.5 Gender and Refusals

Some scholars have argued for the existence of gender differences in responses to conflict and refusal situations, specifically with women using more indirect strategies compared to men (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996). Besides that, Liao and Bresnahan (1996), taking status into consideration, indicated that women tend to use more refusal strategies in refusing people of higher status, compared to men. Furthermore, in a study investigating on the effects of gender and individualism-collectivism on directness of refusal, Ang, R. P and Kuo, E. C (2003) proved that female individualists and collectivists prefer indirect strategies whereas male individualists prefer direct strategies and male collectivists prefer indirect strategies, in refusing.

Focusing on gender differences in Chinese request patterns, Hong, W. (1997), cited in Lee, C (2008), proved that men and women differ in their use of politeness in making requests. This study showed that gender differences in request patterns are closely related to social relations and the situations in which the requests take place. Men tend to use lexical modifications to increase the effectiveness of their requests whereas women were more polite in their requests to lower and equal ranked people.

Likewise, Hassani, R. et al. (2011) compared and investigated the differences in the use of refusals in English and Persian by Iranian EFL learners, focusing on gender distinction and social status. A DCT was used to elicit data from 60 Iranian learners mastering in English; 30 males and 30 females. The analysed results of the tests which were administered twice with an interval of two months, showed that more indirect strategies were used in Persian compared to English. Besides that, in Persian, more indirect strategies were used in refusing people of higher status. However, there were no significant differences in the refusal strategies used by males and females.

2.6 Sequences in Refusals

There is also a certain pattern that exists in refusal. For example, one might appropriately produce three separate speech acts in a single utterance:

(1) an expression of regret, "I'm so sorry," followed by

(2) a direct refusal, "I can't come to your graduation," followed by

(3) an excuse, "I will be out of town on business" (Chen, 1996).

This sequence in refusals has also been brought forward by Hassani et al. (2011) in their comparative study of refusals performed in English and Persian. They mentioned that the usual sequence that is found in a refusal expression is that it starts with a 'pre-refusal' strategy, followed by the 'main refusal' strategy which is also termed as the 'head act'; and ends with a 'post-refusal' strategy. The 'pre-refusal' strategy is said to function as a preparation to the refusal; the 'main refusal' strategy is the refusal itself and the 'post-refusal' strategy is said to function as a mitigation or a concluder to the refusal expression.

For example:

*Uhm, I'd really like to **(pre-refusal);***

*But I can't **(main refusal);***

*I'm sorry. I have a difficult exam tomorrow **(post- refusal)**.* (Hassani et al.; 2011)

However, a direct refusal may not have sequences but may just be of a single strategy, whereas indirect strategies may involve a sequence of three strategies or more to be carried out. (pp.38-39)

2.7 Interpersonal Solidarity

According to Wheeless (1976), interpersonal solidarity is a feeling of closeness, familiarity and intimacy between two or more people that develops as a result of shared sentiments, similarities and intimate behaviours. According to him, people with strong solidarity feelings tend to trust, like, self-disclose and spend time with each other more.

Since interpersonal solidarity is a subjective matter and hence is difficult to measure, Wheeless (1976) came up with a scale called the Interpersonal Solidarity Scale (ISS). The first version of ISS consisted of 10 Likert-type scale of questions. It was then modified by adding another 10 closeness-related questions to improve the scale's content validity where the scale appeared to be 'unidimensional' and reliable. The ISS was used with a seven point Likert-type scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree and took less than 3 minutes to complete. This scale had been adapted and used to measure group and teacher solidarity.

For the present study, the number of questions as well as the number of options for the Likert-type scale is changed to suit the context of research. An example of the ISS that is used for this study can be found in Appendix A.

2.8 The Language of Facebook

The language used in computer-mediated communication (CMC) is different from the conventional use of language in real-life spoken and written discourse. CMC, defined by December, J. (n.d), is the process of exchanging information using 'network telecommunication system' and is said to have 'extended and enhanced relationships apart from the traditional face-to-face communication' (Otemuyewa, A.; 2011, p.61). This includes computers as well as communication through Short Message Service (SMS). For example, conversations that takes place in chat rooms, emails, SMS, social networks, blogs (web-log), online forums and also communicative websites. The focus of the present study is on the language used in a social network called Facebook.

Facebook is created by Mark Zuckerberg and is one of the largest social-networking sites that connect friends, family and business partners from all over the world. Facebook users are able to have conversations which are verbal, non-verbal as well as instantaneous, through chatting, commenting on "friend's" posts and also sharing of documents, notes, videos and songs. Besides sharing of news reports and formal announcements, the language of Facebook is generally informal.

The language used in Facebook by its users is yet to be studied on in depth. However, the language used in Facebook is similar to the language used in other online based networks, such as messengers, blogs (web-log), online forums, chat rooms, Twitter and Friendster.

Activities in Facebook mostly involve writing. However, the writing in social networks such as Facebook and other online sites is said to be "deviant from traditional norms" (Omar, A, 2012; p. 16). The language used over these mediums is usually simple and brief and similar to the language used in spoken conversation, which was termed by Crystal (2001) as "netspeak" (p. 18)

In an investigation on coherence of chat room conversations, Greenfield and Kaveri (2003) quoted Herring (1999) who claimed that "chat room conversations are synchronous form of communication because participants communicate with each other in the room by writing and reading their own and others' messages in real time" which shows that the nature of the conversation is different from those of emails and blogs.

The use of these language forms saves the time and effort taken to type complete and grammatically correct sentences or replies. Besides that, they are also used because they give a sense of belonging to a certain society or group, shows solidarity and also to create a social boundary (E. Sillence, C. Baber; 2004, p. 95). For example, the use of the tag, 'lah' represents the societies in countries like Malaysia and Singapore and sometimes Malaysians use 'lah' when communicating with other Malaysians but not when communicating with a person from other parts of the world.

Previous literatures have identified a variety of distinct features of CMC. Rafi (2009), who analysed SMS language, came up with a few features that could also be generalised to the language use in Facebook. These features include

1. written representations of sounds

   Example: Katie – *kt*

2. compressions/ abbreviations

   a) combinations of letters or letters and numbers

   Example: See you – *CU*

   You too – *U 2*

   b) compression of words

   Example: understand – *undrstnd*

3. Emoticons

   Example: *=), =(*

4. Phonetic spellings

   Example: *hehehe* (laughter)

5. No capitalization

   Example: *i gave steve the books.*

Besides that, many other researches on the linguistic features of SMS language were done. Thurlow, C. (2003) identified emerging linguistic features such as shortening, acronyms, letter / number homophones, misspellings, non-conventional spellings and accent stylization. Similar categories were identified by Bieswanger, M., (2007) in his

investigation on abbreviations of SMS language; namely, initialisms (NY – New Year), clippings (gettin – getting), contractions (dont – do not), letter/ number-homophones (b – be, 2 – to/too), phonetic spellings (nite – night) and word-value characters (x – kiss) (p. 4). However, the 'phonetic spellings' defined by Rafi and Bieswanger differs. Bieswanger describes 'phonetic spellings' as words that have the same pronunciation but different spellings, similar to homophones but the new spelling doesn't have a meaning on its own. For example, the original word, *night* may be spelled as *nite*.

Furthermore, Farina & Lyddy (2001) quoted Crystal (2008), Dresner & Herring (2010), Bieswanger (2008), Thurlow & Brown (2003) and Plester et al. (2009) in highlighting a few features of text language, which can also be generalised to other CMC. The features were emoticons (:-), <3), typographic symbols (zzzz - sleep, x – kiss), letter/number homophones (la8r – later), shortenings (Feb – February), contractions (hmwrk – homework), clippings (goin – going, wil – will), acronyms (radar – radio detection and ranging), initialisms (OMG – oh my God), non-conventional spellings (sum – some) and accent stylizations (wanna – want to, gonna – going to).

Apart from that, Coposescu (n.d), who employed 'culturally contexted conversation analysis' in investigating how 'cultural identity' is used in spoken conversation, used Membership Categorisation Devices (MCD); a term created by Sacks (1972), which refers to words that are used by people to represent themselves in the same social groups or community; to analyse her data. MCD is widely used by Malaysians too. This is due to the variety of social and ethnic groups in Malaysia and also the various culture-specific words that exist. For example, 'thambi' which refers to little brother in Tamil, is also used by the

Chinese and Malays to refer to a younger Indian boy. The use of MCD can also be seen in CMC.

The language used in the expressions of refusal by the participants in this study is investigated with reference to the medium used, which is Facebook. The findings of previous researches in this field serve as the basis for the analysis.

Facebook is an online social networking site. Facebook users get to keep in touch with "friends", or other Facebook users by being updated with the current issues related to their lives. However, users also get to make new friends through Facebook; which means that there could be strangers in the friends list of a Facebook user. Friendships over Facebook could develop into serious relationships or remain stagnant at the first level. Therefore, the notion of 'friend', in Facebook, could also refer to cousins, aunt, uncles, parents and acquaintances, which is not the same as the notion of 'friend' in real life. Taking this phenomenon into consideration, the hosts of the wedding events in this study are interviewed to know the social relationship between them and the guests who were invited. Apart from that, to invite for a wedding, it is the norm in Malaysian culture that wedding invitations in the form of wedding invitation cards are sent out by post or given personally. Thus, the wedding invitations through Facebook serves and are considered as a secondary invitation only and the people who are socially close to the hosts might also be invited through other means as well. To those who are socially distant or acquaintances, it could be a polite way of letting them know that there would not be a personal invitation. This issue is addressed through the interviews that are conducted in this study.

2.9 Current Study

Variables to most speech acts situations were classified by Brown and Levinson (1987) into Power, Distance and Ranking of Imposition. In general, current literature illustrates the factors that influence choice of refusal strategies as social status, gender, age, social distance, power, level of education, culture and language proficiency. However, in this study, the focus is on the interpersonal solidarity factor and how it influences the choices of refusal strategies used by Malaysians to refuse a wedding invitation as well as the most frequently used strategies by Malaysian men and women respectively. In order to realise the aim of this study, an adapted version of ISS is used to distinguish the interpersonal solidarity and a framework of refusal strategies adapted from the ones proposed by Beebe et al. (1990) and Campillo, P.S (2009) is used as a basis to analyse the refusal expressions. Besides that, the language use and realization of illocutionary force in the refusal expressions as well as invitations are also looked into.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has given an overall view of the previous literatures, definitions and use of theories, strength and weaknesses of instruments and frameworks that are related to the current study. On the whole, the speech act of refusal has been widely researched on in many cultures as well as cross-cultures. This information gives the knowledge needed to carry out a valid and reliable study. The current study is conducted in hope that it will

contribute by providing some input on how a selected group of Malaysians refuse wedding

invitations. The following chapter discusses the methodology of the current study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter encompasses the theories and methods used to collect and analyse the data. These methods are chosen based on the previous literatures and also the nature of the data that is collected for this study. The research design of the current study is both quantitative and qualitative. The analysis done in order to find out the interpersonal solidarity between the host and their guests; and the most frequently used strategy for Malaysian men and women is done quantitatively, whereas the analysis on the expression of the refusals in terms of the strategies used and linguistic items are done quantitatively. This chapter gives a thorough explanation on the background of the participants and also examples on how the analysis is done.

3.1 Data Types

3.1.1 Data

The data for this study is taken from a social network called Facebook. Facebook provides the means for natural conversation. This is because, the conversations that occur in Facebook can be both verbal and non-verbal as well as spontaneous; through sharing of songs, the use of emoticons and also chatting facilities. Facebook users are able to create an event and invite their friends and relatives to the event. The events include birthday parties, open house invitations, private parties, family gatherings, engagement ceremonies and wedding invitations. Those who were invited are expected to state whether they will be attending the event by clicking one of three options; 'join', 'maybe' and 'decline'. Besides that, guests or those who were invited are also able to leave their comments, if preferred, on the event page.

The events chosen for this study are five wedding invitations. The data of the current study is these comments which function as refusals directed to the hosts, who are the bride and bridegroom. This is because; considering the importance given to weddings in the Malaysian culture, most of the guests preferred leaving their comments instead of just clicking the 'decline' option. For the purpose of this study, the comments are called 'reply entries'. These reply entries were taken as the raw data for this study. Out of 342 reply entries, 200 were refusals where the guests who were invited could not make it to the wedding. The remaining 142 reply entries were just well wishes and future discussion of the weddings. Therefore, 200 entries were analysed and 142 entries which contained mere wishes were omitted. Below are examples of the reply entries:

1.   M40

Hey guys, thanks so much for the invite. I have informed the bride, I'm in Chennai right now and will not be around to attend this reception. Wish I could anyway. All the best wishes for both of you people. =)

2.   W50

I'm sorry dear... Can't make it to ya wedding reception cos I'll be away to a relative's wedding too that weekend in Penang. But still my heartiest congrats to both of u lovey-dovey-newly-wed couple :-)

The reason why replies to wedding invitations were considered is the importance given to a wedding ceremony in the Malaysian culture. In Malaysia, wedding ceremony is considered one of the most happiest and memorable ceremony for the family, especially for the bride and bridegroom. Therefore, knowing this, and also taking into consideration that Malaysians are grouped under face-conscious society, it would be interesting to observe how the guests or the expected guests refuse the invitation and how the strategies used differ when interpersonal solidarity is taken into account.

3.1.2 Background of participants

The participants for the present study are all Malaysian Facebook users and comprise of mostly Indians followed by Malays and then Chinese. The intercultural differences were ignored and they were seen as a group of Malaysians who share the same cultures and beliefs in the context of weddings.

The participants can be grouped into two categories; the hosts and the guests. The guests are the persons who leave comments for the event and therefore are directly involved in this study. On the other hand, the hosts are the persons who created the events. They are not directly involved in this study, but they contribute to the study by completing the Interpersonal Solidarity Scale (ISS) which confirms the interpersonal solidarity between them and their guests. For the purpose of this study, interpersonal solidarity refers to the closeness between two or more persons.

The age range of the participants is from 23 to 35 years old. There were 200 participants as guests and 10 participants as hosts. Since gender difference is one of the areas that are looked into, the gender of the participants were kept in track and there were a total of 92 men and 108 women. All the guests who were invited to the wedding are known to the hosts.

Due to ethical reasons and privacy of the participants, each participant is given a code based on their gender. For example, M1, M2, M3… and W1, W2, W3… and so on. 'M' stands for men and 'W' stands for women. The numbers are given randomly; they are not arranged in order according to the weddings or hosts they belong to. Besides that, the

names and addresses that were mentioned on the reply entries were also kept confidential by replacing them with 'XXX'.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Internet and Facebook

By using the internet, the data for this study were collected from a social network called Facebook. Therefore, Facebook is the data-source for this study. All reply entries were manually copied and organized under each host respectively as raw data, for the reference of the researcher.

3.2.2 ISS

The ISS is introduced and was first used by Wheeles.R (1976). The scale has been adapted and used to measure group solidarity and teacher solidarity. It contains ten to 20 questions in a seven point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questions test on the closeness and closeness issues between two or more persons.

For the current study, the ISS has been adapted by altering the questions and number of questions in order to suit the nature of this study and also to fit into the Malaysian context. The ISS that is used for this study contains 10 questions in a five point Likert-type scale.

Each answer to a positive question is given marks according to the number of the option. The marks are reversed for the answer of a negative question. For example:

Table 3.1: Example of ISS Questions

NO	QUESTION	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1	We are very close to each other.					√
2	We do not really understand each other.				√	

The mark given for question 1, which is a positive question, is 5 whereas the mark given for question 2, which is a negative question, is 2.

The total marks are then calculated to determine whether the participant falls in the 'close' or 'distant' category. The range of marks for the 'close' category is 30-50 and the range for the 'distant' category is 10-29, as the minimum marks is 10.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the study to test the reliability of ISS and the results of the pilot study proved that the adapted ISS is reliable. The respondents of the pilot study who were six close friends and four classmates, who are not very close, took less than two minutes, respectively, to complete the scale. Three pairs attained scores between 30 to 50 points which shows that they are socially close, and two pairs attained scores between 10 to 29 which show that they are not socially close, or in other words socially distant.

The hosts, brides or bridegrooms were met to be given this scale and to find out their interpersonal solidarity with their guests. They are the individuals who created the events and who invited their friends and family.

A sample of the adapted Interpersonal Solidarity Scale can be found in Appendix A.

3.2.3 Interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted during the time the hosts take to write down their answers in the scale. There are three questions asked for each participant or guest (question 1, 2 & 3) and two questions which are asked once for each host (question 4 & 5). These questions were asked in order to determine the age of the participants, the social relation between the guests and them and also how and why the invitations were sent through Facebook. The questions that were asked are:

1.   How old is XXX?

2.   How are you related to XXX?

3.   Do you categorise your relationship as close or distant?

4.   Why did you choose Facebook to send out your invitations?

5.   Generally, who are the people you invite through Facebook and who are those you did not invite through Facebook? Why?

The answers for these questions were written down by the researcher manually. The answer to the second and third question can be compared to the results of the ISS to strengthen its claim.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Theory of Speech Acts as refusals are one of the speech acts. This theory states that an occurrence of a speech event involves three acts; a locutionary act, an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is the basic act of producing a linguistic utterance that is meaningful. Illocutionary act is an expression that is produced in order to fulfill certain intentions. Perlocutionary act is the effect of the utterance on the listener. The realisation of illocutionary force in the invitation to the wedding as well as the expressions of refusal is observed in this study.

A framework of refusal strategies is used in this study as a basis to analyse the data. This adapted framework is a combination of the framework of refusal strategies developed by Beebe et al. (1990) and the framework developed by Campillo, P.S (2009). The framework is as follows:

Table: 3.2 Revised Framework of Refusal Strategies

REFUSALS	EXAMPLES
Direct Strategies	
1. Bluntness	*No. / I refuse*
2. Negation of proposition	*I can't / I don't think so*
Indirect Strategies	
1. Plain indirect	*It looks like I won't be able to go*
2. Reason/Explanation	*I can't. I have a doctor's appointment*
3. Regret/Apology	*I'm so sorry! I can't*

4.	Alternative	
•	Change option	*I would join you if you choose another restaurant.*
•	Change time (postponement)	*I can't go right now, but I could next week.*
5.	Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	*Under the current economic circumstances, you should not be asking for a rise right now!*
6.	Statement of principle/philosophy	
7.	Avoidance	
o	Hedging	*Well, I'll see if I can.*
o	Change topic	
o	Joking	
o	Sarcasm	
ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS		
1.	Positive reaction	*I'm so happy for you, but…*
2.	Willingness	*I'd love to go, but…*
3.	Gratitude	*Thanks so much, but…*
4.	Agreement	*Fine! But…*
5.	Solidarity/Empathy	*I'm sure you'll understand, but…*
6.	Promise for future acceptance	*I promise I will make it up to u..*

The framework above relies heavily on the framework developed by Campillo, P.S et al. The changes that have been done is adding 'Promise for future acceptance' to the adjuncts to refusals and changing the adjunct 'Positive opinion' to 'Positive reaction'. The 'Promise for future acceptance' strategy was previously an indirect strategy in the framework provided by Beebe et al. (1990). In the context of wedding, this strategy cannot by itself serve as a refusal; but as an adjunct to refusal.

3.4 Procedure

The hosts, who were brides and bridegrooms, were first informed about the study to ask their permission to proceed with the study by taking their information as the data. They were also informed that their identities as well as the identities of the respondents will be kept confidential. Once the permission was given, the data was taken from their events which were wedding invitations. They were then met by the researcher to be given the Interpersonal Solidarity Scale for each participant. A structured interview was also conducted during the time taken to answer the questions in order to find out the age of the participants and the relationship between the hosts and the participants. Based on the findings of the ISS, the interpersonal solidarity between the hosts and their guests are labeled as close or distant and the reply entries are placed accordingly in two tables respectively. The reply entries are then analysed according to the adapted framework or refusal strategies to observe how the refusal strategies used differ according to interpersonal solidarity between the hosts and their guests and each strategy identified is stated in the table itself. Besides tabulating the data according to the interpersonal solidarity, the data is also tabulated according to the framework of refusal strategies in two groups; men and women. This is done to identify the most frequently used refusal strategies by Malaysian men and women. The reply entries are further observed and studied in depth to look for any additional observations in terms of language use, that are worth pointing out as a finding to this study.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data is then collected, classified and analysed according to the feedbacks given by the hosts and also the results of the ISS. The data is divided into two sections based on interpersonal solidarity and refusal strategies; and two tables based on 'close' and 'distant' groups respectively.

The interpersonal solidarity between the hosts and their guests were determined by the answers given by the hosts in the ISS. The reply entries in each category were then closely analysed to observe the similarities and differences with reference to refusal strategies, in and across categories.

An example on how the data is tabulated in both groups according to interpersonal solidarity:

Table 3.3: Example of Analysis (close)

NO.	CLOSE	REFUSAL STRATEGIES
M90	macha…really tot i cud make it…sorry macha…will cum 4 d reception k! congrats.	1. Regret/ apology 2. Alternative
W51	Gal i cant make it! If you have a reception in Kl do lemme noe k! I will definitely come! All the best dear..	1. Plain indirectness 2. Alternative

Table 3.4: Example of Analysis (distant)

NO.	DISTANT	REFUSAL STRATEGIES
M52	sorry XXX,im workin on dat dy	1. Regret/ apology 2. Reason/ explanation
W41	couldnt go coz jz came bck frm kl..	1. Plain indirectness 2. Reason/ explanation

Besides that, the data is also coded based on the framework of refusal strategies to spot the most used strategy by Malaysian men and women. Example on how the analysis is done:

- A refusal statement is categorized as PLAIN INDIRECTNESS and REGRET/APOLOGY, when the refusal is stated with negative willingness or ability and with an apology statement. For example:

  1. M10

     *Congratz man!!! happy always. **sorry that not able to attend**.*

2. W46

*congratulations dear! i'm really **very sorry.. won't e able to make it..** wish both of u a lifetime happiness and blessings....*

- A refusal statement is categorized as AVOIDANCE-HEDGING when there is an unspecific or indefinite reply or even when there is a lack of enthusiasm in the reply. For example:

1. M2

Congrat cik XXX.....
if x da pape I'Allah sye dtg*...*

(Congrats Miss XXX…. If there is nothing on, God willing, I will come)

2. W63

*Congratulations!!!Happy to receive ur invitation, **I will arrange my schedule and will inform you ya!** Anyway, Happy Married Life...take care*

- A refusal statement is categorized as REASON/EXPLANATION when an explanation is provided why one could not attend the occasion. For example:

1.   M47

*sorry bro, I cant mke it 2 ur wedn...**it wil b my grandmas 60th bday lar**..anywayz congrats n live a happy life!*

2.   W84

hi XXX..congrats la.

*so sorry. **will be in Medan that time. really cant come back and exams around the corner.***

neway best wishes to both of u. God bless u. am so glad to hear this good news from u.

- A refusal statement is categorised as ALTERNATIVE when the participant expresses the refusal but at the same time gives an alternative solution to that situation. For example:

1.   M86

*Congrats HERO...im happy 4 u...i know ur future wife too....good choice...I hav to bless u both from far becoz im out of town...**aunty will be coming...will see you when I get back.***

2.   W94

*snr!! congratulations…hehehehe…so many weddings happenin lar…sory snr,I wnt b able to cum 4 ur weddin….***bt ur dinner will b in ipoh rite?? will dfntly cum k!** *huggss….congrats agn!*

In addition, the refusal expressions were also analysed in terms of linguistic forms, IFID, features of the language used, pre-refusals and post refusals.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the background of the participants by stating who the participants are and why they were selected for this study. It has also clarified how the data is collected followed by explanations and examples on how the data is analysed. The following chapter displays and discusses the findings of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The aim of the study is to explain how the choice of refusal strategies used to refuse a wedding invitation differs when interpersonal solidarity is taken into account as well as to find out the strategies frequently used by men and women in refusing. This chapter reports the results obtained from the analysis and also a discussion on what the results portray. Specifically, 4.1 discusses the initiating act, which is the wedding invitations, 4.2 covers the results obtained from the use of the Interpersonal Solidarity Scale (ISS) to discover the interpersonal solidarity between the hosts and guests of the weddings. 4.3 discusses the strategies used by both 'close' and 'distant' groups; followed by 4.4, which illustrates the refusal strategies used by Malaysian men and women. The next sub-chapter, 4.5 discusses the language and linguistic items used in the refusal expressions, followed by 4.6 on pre and post refusals that could be identified in the data as an additional finding of the study; and finally 4.7 summarises the findings of the study.

4.1 The First Move: Wedding Invitations

As it had been stated before, refusal is not an initiating act but an act that is carried out as a response to an initiating act. Therefore, the initiating acts in this study, which are wedding invitations, are also looked into before analysing the corresponding refusal expressions. The wedding invitations can be found in Appendix B

Based on the analysis that was done, it can be seen that all five invitations have an Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) which is expressed clearly by the hosts. The IFID gives the idea of what speech act is being realized in the text. Below are a few examples:

1. *Sukacita saya sekeluarga ingin **menjemput** Tuan/Puan/Encik/Cik untuk menghadiri majlis perkahwinan…*

   (My family and I are pleased to **invite** Mr/Mrs/Miss to the wedding of…)

2. *We would like to **extend our invitation** to you in joining us to celebrate our coming together as man & wife.*

Besides that, the hosts also set an obligation on the guests, by stating how much their presence is valued and also by requesting for confirmation of attendance. For example,

1. *your presence will make my day meaningful....* (value placed on attendance)

2. *I'd appreciate a kind reply to confirm your attendance.* (confirmation of attendance)

Based on the invitations, it could be deduced that it is not the Malaysian culture to invite people to a meaningful event through Facebook. All the invitations were described as not the original and invitation cards will be sent if requested. This can be seen in each invitation. For example,

1. *Kepada mereka yang inginkan kad, sila PM nama penuh dan alamat.*

   (To those who wish for a card, please personally message me your full name and address)

In the example above, it could be seen that the host treats this invitation via Facebook as an alternative due to the large number of invites that could be sent in a short amount of time.

2. *We are trying our very best to invite each and every one of you personally, but just in case if we don't due to the time constrain, please accept this as our personal invitation.*

In the example above, the host addresses that inviting the guests personally is the proper way of inviting to a wedding by mentioning that they are trying their best to invite each guest personally. Therefore, to avoid misinterpretation or misunderstandings, they request that this invitation is accepted as personal invitation if time does not allow them to sent invitation personally.

Apart from that, there is also a certain structure that could be observed, followed by the host in organizing the invitations. The wedding invitations begin with greetings or addressing the guests, followed by stating the purpose of the invitation, the providing details of the event and end with statements of hope and gratitude. However the structures of the invitations do not occur strictly in this order. For example,

1. *Assalamualaikum wbt dan salam sejahtera* (**greetings**)
   (Assalamualaikum wbt and warmest greetings)

   Sukacita saya sekeluarga ingin menjemput Tuan/Puan/Encik/Cik untuk menghadiri majlis perkahwinan (**statement of purpose**)
   (My family and I are pleased to invite Mr / Mrs / Mr / Ms to attend the wedding of)

   XXX
   ♥
   XXX

   bertempat di   (at)
   XXX

   *pada (*on)

XXX   **(details of event)**

Semoga kehadiran Tuan/Puan/Encik/Cik dapat memeriahkan lagi majlis perkahwinan kami. **(statement of hope)**
(May the presence of Mr / Mrs / Mr / Ms will enliven our wedding ceremony)

Kepada mereka yang inginkan kad, sila PM nama penuh dan alamat.
(To those who wish for a card, please personally message me your full name and address)

Sebarang pertanyaan, sila hubungi XXX di 013-XXX
(Any queries, please call 013-XXX at XXX)

Terima kasih **(gratitude)**
(Thank you)

2.   *My dearest friends and relatives...* **(greetings)**

Please treat this message as a personal invitation for our wedding ceremony in XXX on XXX at XXX... **(statement of purpose, details of event)**

I would love to be in the company of all you dear friends on our special day...I'd appreciate a kind reply to confirm your attendance. Your presence would be our pleasure and I am looking forward to seeing you guys there! **(statement of hope)**

add :XXX. Thank u.. See you there... **(gratitude)**

The examples above show that an invitation needs to fulfill certain genres to be considered and categorised as a wedding invitation.

4.2 Interpersonal Solidarity Scale (ISS)

Through the interview that was conducted, the relationship between the hosts and their guest were identified. It can be concluded that the hosts know each of the guests who were invited to their wedding and this was done by selecting the guests manually and the relationships between them can be categorised as classmates, schoolmates, working colleagues, course mates, cousins, distant relatives, neighbours, acquaintances or childhood friends. According to the hosts, a person is said to be close when they still keep in touch and are up-to-date about each other, they meet often and they share a lot of experiences and ideas together. On the other hand, a person is said to be distant when they do not keep in touch often, they have remained just friends for a long time, they don't have much in common, they possess a formal relationship and also when they are just known to each other. Besides that, it was also known through the interviews conducted, that the people who were socially close to the hosts were also invited personally by handing them a wedding invitation card, besides being invited through Facebook. Thus, to these people, the Facebook invitation is just a secondary invitation. But, most of the socially distant guests were invited only through Facebook and invitation cards are only sent to them upon request. This is done because Facebook is said to be the easiest and the fastest way to let a big group of people know about the event as well as to invite them for the event.

The results of the ISS that was given to be filled up by the hosts of the weddings, distinguished those who were socially close from those who were distant. This was obtained by the calculation of the marks given for each question. The summary of the results are as in the table below:

Table 4.1: Results of ISS

HOST	SOCIALLY DISTANT RELATIONSHIPS (10 – 30 marks)	SOCIALLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS (31-50 marks)
Host 1	19	21
Host 2	25	15
Host 3	23	17
Host 4	21	19
Host 5	24	16

Based on the results, for Host 1, there were 19 socially distant and 21 socially close people who refused the invitation to their wedding. For Host 2, 25 socially distant and 15 socially close people refused and for Host 3, 23 socially distant and 17 socially close people refused. Out of the 40 participants who couldn't attend the wedding of Host 4, there were 21 people who were socially distant and 19 people who were socially close. And 24 socially distant participants and 16 socially close participants refused the invitation of Host 5.

4.3 The Influence of Interpersonal Solidarity on Choice of Refusal Strategies

The data was tabulated according to the framework of refusal strategies which was adapted from Beebe et al. (1990) and Campillo, P.S et al. (2009); based on the interpersonal solidarity between the host and guests, which were known through the results of the ISS. The analysis showed that, generally, participants from both groups tend to use a combination of strategies, rather than just one strategy in expressing their refusals. However, the order, combination of and preferred strategies for both groups, as in 'close' and 'distant', differ.

4.3.1 The 'close' group

The findings of the analysis showed that the participants in the 'close' group often used a combination of refusal strategies in their refusal expressions, instead of using just one. The combination of refusal strategies that occurred most often in the data is 'REGRET/ APOLOGY + PLAIN INDIRECT + REASON/ EXPLANATION'. This combination can be seen in the following examples:

1. M47

   sorry bro, I cant mke it 2 ur wedn…it wil b my grandmas 60th bday lar..anywayz congrats n live a happy life!

2. M69

    Sorry sweetie i wont be able to make it because I'm in sarawak. All the best.

3. W17

    congrats.. may god bless u both. I cant make it since my cousin is getting married on the same day n same time.. sorry.. have a wonderful life ok.:)

4. W21

    sorry i won't be able to attend ur big day XXX, but I wish I can. i'll be sumwhere else on the exact date. Wish u the happiness u've always wanted with the love of ur life.Congratulations :)

The examples above show one of the combinations that occurred in the refusal expressions of participants in the 'close' group. However, the order of the strategies in this combination varies. The orders that occurred were 'REGRET/ APOLOGY + PLAIN INDIRECT + REASON/ EXPLANATION', 'PLAIN INDIRECT + REGRET/ APOLOGY + REASON/ EXPLANATION' and 'PLAIN INDIRECT + REASON/ EXPLANATION + REGRET/ APOLOGY'. This combination covers 15.91% of all reply entries in this group.

Besides that, the refusals were also expressed in the following combinations:

1. REGRET/ APOLOGY + PLAIN INDIRECT

   Example: W46

   congratulations dear! i'm really very sorry.. won't e able to make it.. wish both of u a lifetime happiness and blessings....

2. REGRET/ APOLOGY + REASON/ EXPLANATION

   Example: W57

   so sorry buddy...i wont be in town....advance wishes...Happy married life...will meet u soon

3. REASON/ EXPLANATION + PLAIN INDIRECT

   Example: W98

   XXX, so great that u still remember us! woo.....Congratulation of being in the most happiness thing! sincerely wish u.... but i'm currently far away from Kedah, unable to attend the great time! .....

   Enjoy!.......

It is observable from the data that, when the guest has a close relationship with the host but couldn't make it for the wedding for some reasons, they tend to be very apologetic, provide detail explanation and followed by their wishes. The replies tend to be longer (Example 3), involving more lexical items and sometimes portraying some elements of shared background knowledge or experiences. Besides that, there is a presence of intensifiers (Example 2) such as 'very' and 'so' and endearments (Example 1) such as 'dear', 'sweetie', 'darling' and 'da' (Tamil). Some even made jokes (Example 4); which portrays the level of solidarity they share. They can be seen clearly in the examples below:

1. W28

    *Thanks for invitation but sorry **dear** I cant make it. May god bless you both in your married life.* (endearments)

2. W105

    *congrats gal!!I'm **so extremely** sorry babe, i can't attend your wedding dinner; I wud **relly rlly** luv to..bt i already have plans for that evening n it invovls my inlaws 2….hop u undrstnd dear...* (intensifiers)

3. *W60*

    DearXXX,

    I am so sorry that I couldn't make it to your wedding dinner as I am needed to

be at the Graduation Exhibition at Time Square this coming Sunday, it is a

whole day event. I think i will be very tire and busy this coming Sunday. Wish

you all the best in your marriage life!

Ms. XXX!! (lengthy reply and detailed explanation)

4. M88

   matikittiye macha….nalle vele na athe paarke varale*…party pannuvom!*
   (joke)
   (You are trapped 'macha'. Luckily I'm not coming to see you 'trapped'. Let's
   party!)

   *macha – endearment in Tamil

4.3.2 The 'distant' group

There are no significant differences between the 'close' group and 'distant' group in choice of refusal strategies used. The combinations that are prevalent in the refusal expressions in this group are as follows:

1. REGRET/ APOLOGY + REASON/ EXPLANATION

Example: M8

sorry bro... exam week... neway congrats to u guys... mgb..

2. REGRET/ APOLOGY + PLAIN INDIRECTNESS

Example: M14

Congrats Fren. Sorry I couldn make it.. May GOD bless U always.!

3. REGRET/ APOLOGY + NEGATION OF PROPOSITION

Example: M5

Congratz bro...! but sorry cnt cum...

4. HEDGING + REASON/ EXPLANATION

Example: M38

*XXX, congratulations... ^^*

i not sure i can go or not coz i having exam dat time....

Besides that, there were also a number of refusals that were expressed through a single strategy. For example:

1. M29

   pada tarikh sama,sy ada di singapore.(REASON/ EXPLANATION)

   (I will be in Singapore on that date)

2. M28

   i will try my level best to attend seetha.....anyway best wishes for both of u.............. (AVOIDANCE-HEDGING)

3. W55

   Sorry (REGRET/ APOLOGY)

When the guest does not have a close relationship with the host, the difference can be seen in the use of lexical items and the style to refuse the invitation. These entries tend to be shorter, more formal and direct. Hence, the linguistic forms include honorific terms, or just mere mention of the name of the host, and more formal wishes such as 'blessed' and

'great'. They tend to use trivial matters as reasons or excuses and sometimes don't provide any reasons. But, they try to make it sound pleasing so as to avoid being thought as rude. For example:

1. M12

   Cant make it but congrats to both of you. (short and direct)

2. W25

   Congraz .. Im sorry i might not able to make it . (no reason)

3. W85

   *Hello there, thanks for the invitation! Unfortunately, I will not be able to attend as I have exams around the corner. Anyways, wish you two a great future ahead and t.c always...Cheers^^* (trivial reasons)

4.3.3 Refusal strategies of the 'close' and 'distant' groups

The refusal strategies were coded according to the framework of refusal strategies and the frequencies of each strategy for both groups were recorded. The distribution of refusal strategies with the percentage of usage in both groups is illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Refusal Strategies of 'close' and 'distant' Groups

NO	REFUSALS	PERCENTAGE (%)	
		CLOSE	**DISTANT**
	Direct Strategies		
1.	Bluntness	-	-
2.	Negation of proposition	5.19	5.82
	Indirect Strategies		
3.	Plain indirect	23.38	21.16
4.	Reason/Explanation	27.92	28.57
5.	Regret/Apology	32.46	34.92
6.	Alternative	2.60	1.06
7.	Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	-	-
8.	Statement of principle/philosophy	-	-
9.	Avoidance	8.44	8.47

The table shows that the difference in the choice of refusal strategies between both groups is not significant. Based on the table, no participants used the BLUNTNESS strategy as their preferred way to express their refusal, as just a blunt "No" is considered rude in the Malaysian culture, especially in regards to a wedding invitation. Based on the percentages given, REGRET/APOLOGY is the highest used strategy for both groups. This strategy is considered important as it shows that the participant feels sorry or regrets that they could not make it for what is considered one of the most important and memorable event in a person's life. The REASON/EXPLANATION strategy is in the second rank with a total usage of 27.92% and 28.57% in the 'close' and 'distant' group respectively. This strategy acts as a justification to the refusal that is made by the participants. Participants tend to provide reasons or explanations on why they could not make it to the wedding to justify their decisions as well as to gain the consideration and a fair judgment from the host. Besides that, reasons and explanation for the complication is provided in order to mitigate the face threatening effect of a refusal or in other words to sound less rude and avoid offending the listener. The PLAIN INDIRECT strategy received a considerably high percentage too, with 23.38% in the 'close' group and 21.16% in the 'distant' group. However, as it can be seen in the previous analysis, this strategy does not occur on its own, as it can sound direct or rude; but occurs together with strategies such as REGRET/APOLOGY or REASON/EXPLANATION which lessens the face-threatening effect. A small percentage for the three strategies, namely, NEGATION OF PROPOSITION, ALTERNATIVE and AVOIDANCE, shows that these are not the preferred strategies by the participants in this study. There were no records of usage for the STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE/PHILOSOPHY and DISAGREEMENT/ DISSUASION/ CRITICISM strategies because the usage of these strategies as refusals is irrelevant to the context of weddings.

On the whole, the refusal strategies used by the participants of this study are skewed towards indirect strategies. This explains the culture of Malaysians who are conscious in maintaining the face of the interlocutors in communications. The analysis of the refusal expression from both groups answers the first research question on the influence of interpersonal solidarity on the choice of refusal strategies made by Malaysians. It can be seen that interpersonal solidarity does not affect the choice of refusal strategies made by the participants. However, the semantic structures as well as the lexical items used in the refusal expressions do differ in both groups. This will be elaborated further in 4.5.

4.3.4 Adjuncts to refusals

Adjuncts are a part of refusals but cannot function as refusals on its own. In this study, adjuncts are also widely used by participants from both groups. The adjuncts that were used by the participants in this study are Gratitude, Positive reaction and Promise for future acceptance. The most preferred adjunct by participants in both groups is Gratitude. For example:

1. M24

   *Sorry am not in msia at d time. **tq fr d invite anyways** XXX. Congratulations on ur union :).. all d best n gd luck .. god bless dude. cheers.*

2. W16

   Hi XXX...congratulation to you! ***Thanks a lot for the invite*** *but sorry dear,i wont*

   be able to attend. Anyway all the best and welcome to married life soon..:)

Besides that, Positive reaction is also used in the refusal expressions, but occurs more in the refusals of the participants in the 'close' group. Positive reaction refers to the expression of positive feeling. There were only two instances in the 'distant' group compared to eight in the 'close' group. Below are a few examples:

1. M6

   I ***am*** ***really*** ***happy*** ***that*** ***u*** ***both*** ***are*** ***getting*** ***married!!!***
   I am afraid that I can only send my best wishes from Japan :)
   Have a wonderful life together XXX & XXX!!!

2. M86

   Congrats HERO... ***im happy 4 u*** *...i know ur future wife too....good choice...I hav*

   to bless u both from far becoz im out of town...aunty will be coming...will see you

   when I get back.

Considering the importance Malaysians give to a wedding, the person who refuses a wedding invitation should be very careful in the way he or she expresses it, as it is deemed a sensitive issue. By not offending the listener or the speaker, one is able to avoid misunderstandings and complications that can affect the social relationship between them. In this way, the solidarity between both the interlocutors is maintained. Adjuncts, in this

study serve as mitigation to the refusal. Even though a direct strategy is used to refuse the invitation, the face-threatening effect of the refusal is lessen or mitigated by using adjuncts or even refusal strategies such as REGRET/APOLOGY and REASON/EXPLANATION. This also shows why a few participants go to the extent of giving a promise for future acceptance due to their refusal just to gain an approval or a favorable reception from the hosts.

4.4 Choice of Refusal Strategies by Malaysian Men and Women

Since there is a study that proved men and women handle conflict differently (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996), the third research question aims to investigate the most frequently used refusal strategy and if there were differences in the strategies Malaysian men and women use in their expressions of refusal with regards to wedding invitations. The results are as portrayed in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Percentage of Refusal Strategies Used by Malaysian Men and Women

NO	REFUSALS	PERCENTAGE (%)	
		MEN	**WOMEN**
	Direct Strategies		
1	Bluntness	-	-
2	Negation of proposition	7.97	3.56
	Indirect Strategies		

1	Plain indirect	21.74	20.44
2	Reason/Explanation	25.36	27.56
3	Regret/Apology	34.06	30.67
4	Alternative	1.45	1.78
5	Disagreement/Dissuasion/Criticism	-	-
6	Statement of principle/philosophy	-	-
7	Avoidance	9.42	7.56

Based on the table above, the refusal strategy that is most frequently used by both men and women is the same, REGRET/APOLOGY. The order of the preferred strategies is also the same for both men and women. This shows that the findings of this study are not in line with that of Bettencourt & Miller (1996) which claims that men and women handle conflict differently. However, the findings of this study are in line with that of Hassani, R. et al. (2011)' study which states that there were no significant differences in the refusal strategies used by males and females in Iran.

Considering the structures and lexical items used in the expression of refusals, men and women are also similar. This can be seen in terms of lexical items such as "congrats", "happy married life", and "God bless you"; and the reasons or explanations provided. For example:

1. M13

   congrtaz bro....i will not able to make it on that day cause my cousin wedding is on the same day...good luck n wishing u all the happiness....

2. W17

   congrats.. may god bless u both. I cant make it since my cousin is getting married on the same day n same time.. sorry.. have a wonderful life ok.:)

However, this phenomenon occurs due to the context of refusals to weddings. It may differ if studied in relation to other contexts such as job offers or help requests.

Therefore, this sub-chapter has answered the third research question on the refusal strategies used by Malaysian men and women by proving that they both use the Regret/apology strategy most often.

4.5   Language Use

4.5.1 IFID

Based on the refusal expressions, it could be deduced that each of the expressions contain an IFID. This IFID gives the host an idea that the expression is a refusal. However, the

position of the IFID is not constant. It is either in the beginning of the refusal expression, in the middle or at the end. For example,

1. M46

   *hey, congratss!! finally ur gettin married.i appreciate ur invtn bt **i cant come** lar cz will b in kl.*

2. M68

   *Sorry sweetie **i wont be able to make it** because I'm in sarawak. All the best.*

3. W31

   *Hi XXX thanks for the invitation, Heartiest congrats from me. Sorry **unable to make it**, but wish u all the best*

However, IFID is not necessary in the realisation of a refusal. This can be seen as a number of refusal expressions in this study did not have an IFID but does serve the function of a refusal. For example,

1. W23

   i have family function to attend

2. W43

   got my finals my dear...so sorry

3. W36

   ja oh sgt la... nway, selamat pengantin baru.. (=

   (So far lar…anyway, happy married life... (=)

4. W55

   sorry

Example 1, 2, 3 and 4 above does not contain an IFID but functions as a refusal. This is due to the context of the utterance itself. The utterance is expressed as a reply to a wedding invitation and therefore serves the function of refusal.

4.5.2 Linguistic forms

Based on the analysis, the linguistic forms used by participants from both groups are significantly similar. The linguistic forms were observed, extracted and categorized according to their respective functions. The results were tabulated as in Table 4.4

Table 4.4: Linguistic Forms in the Expression of Refusals

No.	Category	Expression / Form	Functional / Contextual Significance
1	Intensifiers	so, very, extremely, too, really, heaps	Used to strengthen or stress on how apologetic they are.
2	Use of address terms / status markers	sir, senior	Being formal and giving the due respect and honour.
3	Use of endearments	sweety, macha, da, dear, doinkz, babe, gal	Informal context, an alternative in the way the host is addressed (more closely with close associates or friends)
4	Use of greetings	all the best, congrats, God bless you	Are mostly used in the wishes and at the same time to mitigate the refusal.

The table above shows the linguistic forms that were used in the expressions of refusal in this study. The use of linguistic forms such as address terms/status markers and endearments signifies the interpersonal solidarity between the hosts and their guests. The use of endearments such as 'sweety' and 'dear' shows an informal and close relationship whereas the address term 'sir' depicts a more formal relationship. Therefore, this shows that Malaysians, regardless of race and gender, tend to be more polite in their refusals by altering their choice of linguistic forms, especially when there is a need to maintain a good relationship between the interlocutors.

4.5.3 Language of Facebook

The language used in the refusal expressions were observed closely to perceive how it differs from the normal writing convention. It could be seen that the language used and style of writing are similar to the style and writing convention of conversations in chat rooms, messengers, text messages and other computer-mediated communications. The features that could be highlighted are emphasis/stress, abbreviations, phonetic representations, code-switching, emoticons, clippings, accent stylisation and Membership Cetegorisation Devices (MCD).

4.5.3.1 Emphasis/stress

Emphasis, in spoken conversation is normally done through rising of pitch or tone of a certain word, body language or by stretching the vowel sound. Emphasis is usually done in order to bring others' attention to a particular issue or word and to stress how much something is meant. In this study, emphasis, or stress could be seen in the expressions of refusal. Besides using intensifiers such as 'very', 'really' and 'so', emphasis/stress is also shown through the use of punctuation, capitalization and also repetition of letters or words. This can be seen in the examples below,

1. M6

   I am really happy that u both are getting married!!!
   I am afraid that I can only send my best wishes from Japan :)
   Have a wonderful life together XXX & XXX!!! **(punctuation)**

2. W8

   Congratulationssss XXX!!!! *Sorry I can't make it, anyways enjoy e day and may*
   happiness be w u :) **(punctuation & repetition of letters)**

3. M48

   i wont b ther dear,i have some urgent matters 2 look into. **CONGRATS***!*

   (capitalisation)

4. W22

   Mmtak maaf **banyak2** MAKSU x dpt p kenduri, DEMAM la plak....smpi x

   bgun2....**(repetition of words)**

   (I'm really sorry I can't make it to the dinner, having fever…till I'm not able to

   get up)

It can be concluded that the participants used emphasis or stress for a few reasons. The first reason is to express how happy they are to hear the news of the wedding and the second reason is to express how sorry they are that they could not make it to the wedding ceremony. Besides that, the face-threatening effect of their refusal is also indirectly softened by the use of emphasis or stress so that the interpersonal solidarity between the hosts and their guests goes unaffected.

4.5.3.2 Abbreviation

Abbreviations were also widely used in the expression of refusal by the participants of this study. Examples of abbreviations used are as in table 4.5,

Table 4.5: Abbreviations

NO.	ORIGINAL WORD	ABBREVIATED FORM
1.	thing	thg
2.	invitation	invtn
3.	back	bck
4.	there	ther/thr
5.	work	wrk
6.	tidak dapat (could not)	xdpt
7.	datang (come)	dtg
8.	pictures	pics
9.	cousin	cuz
10.	senior	snr
11.	thank you	tq
12.	better	bttr

These abbreviations could be used due to the context in where the refusal is taking place and also the nature of the language used in online communication. It also could be due to

time constraint the participants might have and the informal nature of Facebook communication.

4.5.3.3 Phonetic spellings

This term was introduced by Bieswanger, M. (2007) and the use of phonetic spellings could be seen in the refusal expressions in this study. Phonetic spellings are words that are spelled to sound like the intended word but differ in spelling and the phonetically spelled word does not carry meaning on its own. Examples of phonetic spellings that could be found in the data are as follows:

Table 4.6: Phonetic Spellings

NO.	ORIGINAL WORD	PHONETIC SPELLING
1.	thought	tot
2.	you	u
3.	are	r
4.	be	b
5.	might	mite
6.	i'm	am
7.	kalau (if)	kalo
8.	tahun (year)	taun

| 9. | kahwin (marriage/wedding) | kawen |
| 10. | for | 4 |

Phonetic spellings were used in the refusal expressions as it creates a sense of informality in the expressions. This is a norm in computer-mediated communication and occurs due to the informal setting of Facebook. Besides that, the sense of informality also helps in lessening the face-threatening effect of refusals by creating an informal closeness or interpersonal solidarity between the hosts and guests.

4.5.3.4 Code-switching

Code-switching is the act of switching between languages in a single utterance, sentence or phrase. The data of this study shows various examples of code-switching. The languages involved are English, Malay and Tamil. The main language of the refusal expression depends highly on the language of the wedding invitation as well as the language the hosts and guests usually converse in. The data shows two types of code-switching namely, code-switching between/within words and code-switching of phrases or sentences. Below are a few examples,

1. Code-switching between/within words

   a) M3 - **congrats** *babe! tp* **sooooory** *sangat sangatt! jauh ak tak leh* **travel**.. *huhu~* **condition** *badan tak mengizinkan.. huhu~* **anyway**, *ak doakan semoga hubungan korang kekal hingga ke dalam syurga.. amin~ :')*

   b) W9 - *Congratulations XXX. Wish you all the very best and happy married life! Sorry ya I can't come coz am working this weekend can't take leave as most of my colleagues still* **sambuting** *raya!!!* (**sambut + -ing**)

   c) M88- *matikittiye macha....nalle vele na athe paarke varale...***party** *pannuvom!*

   (You are trapped 'macha'. Luckily I'm not coming to see you 'trapped'. Let's party!)

2. Code-switching of phrases/sentences

   a) M7 - **Congrats bila hang kawin??** *Anyway we wont be able to come cuase i have function in ipoh. Im doing photoshot on that event.*

   b) W32 - *XXX..sorry cnnot come.* **Keje rini**..*huhu..*

   (XXX...sorry cnnot come. Working today..huhu..)

The switches that occur in the refusal expressions depict the Malaysian culture where bilinguals or multilinguals are the majority as well as the cultural background they share. Besides showing the effects of being bilinguals or multilinguals, it also creates a sense of solidarity between the host and guests. By code-switching and creating bonds by doing it, the guests indirectly lessen the face-threatening effect of their refusals.

4.5.3.5 Emoticons

It is quite noticeable that most participants from both the categories made use of emoticons to soften the face threatening effect of refusal. The word 'emoticon' is derived from the word emotion and icon. Emoticons are representations of the body language, mostly, facial expressions that are conveyed or expressed using punctuations, digits and also letters. In online communication, emoticons play a very important role. Moreover, conversations on the internet or computer mediated conversation, are often nearly spontaneous where the speakers tend to type what comes on their minds. This happens especially in chat rooms and social networks. These conversations, therefore, are similar to face-to-face interaction where information is passed across swiftly without complications, with the help of non-verbal cues. However, having the nature of face-to-face conversation but with the absence of non-verbal communication and actual face-to-face interaction, misinterpretation happens easily. Thus, emoticons functions as the actual non-verbal behavior or reactions that occur in face-to-face interaction. In online conversations, emoticons are usually used to indicate the tone, mood or intention of the speaker, or in this sense, the person who

types. The following example demonstrates the difference emoticons can make in a statement:

Without emoticon: *I am going to sue her for what she did!!*

With emoticon: *I am going to sue her for what she did!! =D*

The first statement without an emoticon gives the idea that the speaker is serious and meant what she or he typed. However, in the second statement, with the presence of the emoticon, the reader is aware that the speaker meant it as a joke or exaggeration. Being aware of this difference, the participants made well use of emoticons in their refusal expressions. For example,

1. M3 (distant)

    congrats babe! tp sooooory sangat sangatt! jauh ak tak leh travel.. huhu~ condition badan tak mengizinkan.. huhu~ anyway, ak doakan semoga hubungan korang kekal hingga ke dalam syurga.. amin~ :')

    (a smile with a tear; an emoticon which shows that he is happy for the host but at the same time is emotional)

2. M35 (close)

    Congratulations guys..We will be missing it :(

(a sad emoticon showing that he is sad that he will be missing out)

3. W6 (distant)

    Sorry can't make it, going back to my kampuungggg.. Congrats to both of u, very

    happy for u, God bless =)

    (a happy n smiling emoticon which shows that she is happy for the hosts)

4. *Congratulations anneh! :D Johor!! :D Will tryna make my wayy if possible! :D*

    HAPPY MARRIED LIFEE! ♥ Sooo happy for you! :-*

    (three emoticons with a wide smile shows her happiness for the host, a heart-
    shaped emoticon which shows her love and also an emoticon with an asterisk which
    shows a kiss)

4.5.3.6 Clippings

Clipping is done by dropping the end sounds of a word and occur quite often in the data.
Speed and brevity could be the reason for these observations. But, taking into
consideration that there might not be time constraint on the participants, this phenomenon

could be due to style of writing in CMC and also the informal nature of Facebook communication. Below are examples of clippings and misspellings,

Table 4.7: Clippings

NO	ORIGINAL WORD	CLIPPING
1.	getting	gettin
2.	wedding	weddin
3.	happening	happenin
4.	working	workin
5.	kidding	kiddin

4.5.3.7 Accent stylisation

Accent stylisation, in this study, refers to the spellings which do not resemble the pronunciation of the original word but are accepted as a replacement to that particular original word. Examples of accent stylisation that could be seen in the data are:

Table 4.8: Accent Stylisation

NO	ORIGINAL WORD	ACCENT STYLISATION
1.	the	da/d/e
2.	let me	lemme
3.	try and	tryna
4.	selepas ini (after this)	pasni
5.	anyway	niway

Plester et al. (2008), quoted in Farina & Lyddy (2011) categorised accent stylization as 'youth code. Accent stylisations are done either to save time and effort taken to type an utterance or to create a sense of solidarity between the interlocutors who are of the same age group.

4.5.3.8 Membership Categorisation Devices

MCD, in this study, refers to the common words or tags that are used which resembles the society. Besides 'la/lah' there are a few other forms which signifies the Malaysian culture or a particular society in Malaysia, and these forms are also evident in the data of this study. For example,

Table 4.9: MCD

NO	MCD	Meaning
1.	hang	Means 'you' in the Malay language but is only used by the Malaysians from northern states of Malaysia.
2.	le	Used an alternative to 'la/lah' and normally used in the Malay language.
3.	macha	Literally means 'brother in law' in Tamil but is used widely by Malaysians as a symbol of solidarity.

Malaysians, as a whole are known to use the tag 'la/lah' in their utterances, especially when speaking Malaysian English (Manglish). These words are used by the participants to categorise themselves in the same social or ethnic groups.

4.6 Pre-refusals and Post-refusals

This study proves what has been said, that a huge number of Malaysians tend to be indirect, as a face-saving effort, when they need to turn down a request (Hei, 2009). This can be seen in the refusal strategies used by the participants in this study. Even though men largely tend to sound more direct when it comes to refusals compared to women, but these direct strategies are 'cushioned' by semantic formulas that function as a mitigation. Both

men and women, no matter in close or distant socially, tend to start their reply mostly with good wishes, followed by the expression of refusal using one or more strategies and ending with an adjunct. These good wishes and adjuncts are not refusals, but semantic formulas or speech actions which are functional with regards to invitations and refusals. Examples of Good wishes are "all the best!", "God bless you" and examples of Adjuncts are "I'm very happy" and "I'm surprised!" They act as pre and post-refusals which function as a pre-amp or to prepare the listener for the upcoming refusal; and to mitigate or as a concluder to the refusal expression, respectively (Hassani, R. et al, 2001; p.39). However, these semantic formulas do not occur strictly in this pattern; it differs in its order. For example:

1. M13

   congrtaz bro.... **(Good wishes)**

   i will not able to make it on that day cause my cousin wedding is on the same day... **(Refusal)**

   good luck n wishing u all the happiness.... **(Good wishes)**

In Example 1, the participant uses good wishes for both pre and post refusal.

2. M6

   I am really happy that u both are getting married!!! (**Adjunct - Positive reaction**)

   I am afraid that I can only send my best wishes from Japan :) (**Refusal**)

   Have a wonderful life together XXX & XXX!!! (**Good wishes**)

In Example 2, the participant uses Positive reaction as pre-refusal and Good wishes as post-refusal

3. W1

   tahniah XXX.. (**Good wishes**)

   maaf le xdpt dtg cz kite buat mjlis selang sehari.. (**Refusal**)

   semoga ikatan perkahwinan yg terikat akan terpatri hingga akhir hayat.. amin.. (**Good wishes**)

   (congratulation XXX..

   sorry I can't come because our events are on two consecutive days..

   Hope your marriage last til death does you apart…amen)

In Example 3, the participant uses good wishes as pre and post refusal.

4. W45

   Congratulations dear!!!!! (**Good wishes**)

   im very sorry i wil not be around for your wedding... (**Refusal**)

   keep smiling and thanks for d invitation!!! (**Adjunct - Gratitude**)

In Example 4, the participant uses Good wishes as pre-refusal and Gratitude as post-refusal.

Besides that, there are also refusal expressions that make use of either a pre-refusal or a post refusal. For example:

1. M21

   Hey XXX... Unfortunate reasons I'm unable to attend ur wedding with others (**Refusal**)
   but from the bottom of my heart... I wish u all the best and hope god shower his choicest blessings on you and ur wife on this special day of your life... Amen !!! (**Good wishes**)

2. W9

   Congratulations XXX. Wish you all the very best and happy married life! (**Good wishes**)

Sorry ya I can't come coz am working this weekend can't take leave as most of my colleagues still sambuting raya!!! **(Refusal)**

The examples present how the participants in this study make use of semantic formulas as pre and post-refusal, to soften the face-threatening nature of refusals with regards to wedding invitations. This finding further strengthens the claim that Malaysians tend to be indirect in expressing refusal to wedding invitations.

4.7 Conclusion

The findings have confirmed that Malaysians make use of both direct and indirect strategies in order to convey their message in refusing a wedding invitation but are more prone in using indirect strategies or a combination of direct and indirect strategies. Based on the findings, it could be deduced that interpersonal solidarity does not play a significant role in the choice of refusal strategies made but does influence how a person refuse an invitation, with regards to the choice of lexical items. It also proves that the most frequently used strategy by men and women is Regret/apology. Both, direct and indirect strategies were employed but 94.77% of the overall participants were more inclined towards using indirect strategies. Malaysians, in general, prefer to maintain the face of the hearer, by refusing indirectly in order to avoid future misunderstandings. Besides that, patterns in the structure of the refusal expressions and language use in CMC are also evident. The following chapter concludes this study by providing a summary of the

findings, implications of the study and also suggestions on how further researches in this area of study can be conducted.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to investigate the refusal strategies used by Malaysians to a wedding invitation and how the choices they make differ when interpersonal solidarity is taken into account. Besides that, this study is also conducted to find out the most frequently used refusal strategy by Malaysian men and women. This chapter, which summarises the major and additional findings of the current study, serves as a concluding chapter. The limitations and implications of the study are also mentioned. This chapter is concluded by providing recommendations for further research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Based on the results obtained from the ISS, the participants could be categorised into two groups; 'close' and 'distant'. The results showed that there were a total of 88 participants in the 'close' category and 112 participants in the 'distant' category. This result was further used to analyse the corresponding refusal expressions.

5.1.1 First research question

It inquires the refusal strategies used by Malaysians in refusing wedding invitations. To answer this question, the refusal expressions that were collected as data for this study, were analysed according to the framework of refusal strategies which was adapted from Beebe et al. (1990) and Campillo, P.S et al. (2009).

The analysis proved that, 82% of overall participants used a combination of refusal strategies instead of using a single strategy, to refuse the wedding invitation. The combinations that were used in the refusal expressions are

1. REGRET/ APOLOGY + PLAIN INDIRECT + REASON/ EXPLANATION

2. REGRET/ APOLOGY + PLAIN INDIRECT

3. REGRET/ APOLOGY + REASON/ EXPLANATION

4. REASON/ EXPLANATION + PLAIN INDIRECT

5.   REGRET/ APOLOGY + NEGATION OF PROPOSITION

6.   HEDGING + REASON/ EXPLANATION

However, the three most frequently used strategies are REGRET/ APOLOGY followed by REASON/ EXPLANATION and PLAIN INDIRECT. All three strategies are under the category of indirect strategies. The choice of refusal strategies made by the participants of this study shows that Malaysians are generally indirect in expressing refusals. It is also evident that the participants made use of pre-refusals and post refusals, which are also indirect strategies, in their expressions. This was done in order to ensure that the refusal is expressed politely without offending the host. Therefore, the findings have answered the first research questions by showing the strategies that are used by Malaysians in refusing a wedding invitation.

5.1.2 Second research question

The second research question investigates on the possibility of the choice of refusal strategies that Malaysians make, with regards to wedding invitation, being influenced by interpersonal solidarity. To answer this question the hosts of the weddings were first given the ISS and are then interviewed to find out the interpersonal solidarity between them and their guests.

Based on the results of the ISS, the refusal expressions were tabulated according to the framework of refusal strategies which was adapted from Beebe et al. (1990) and Campillo, P.S et al. (2009).

The results of the tabulation according to the framework of refusal strategies, adapted from Beebe and Campillo; showed that there were no significant differences in the choice of refusal strategies between both the 'close' and 'distant' group. This shows that Malaysians are face-conscious and interpersonal solidarity does not affect the way they refuse a wedding invitation. This finding supports and adds to the claim by Hei (2009) that Malaysians are generally indirect in their refusals regardless of the status difference of the interlocutors. The second research question is therefore, answered by the statement that interpersonal solidarity does not influence the choice of refusal strategies made by Malaysians in the context of wedding invitations.

5.1.3 Third research question

The third research question asks on the refusal strategies used by Malaysian men and women respectively. This question is asked because there are previous studies which indicated that men and women respond to conflicts differently (Bettencourt & Miller; 1996), and therefore, it needs to be investigated in this study, with regards to refusals to wedding invitation to perceive if men and women differ in their choice of refusal strategies.

The results of the analysis showed that both men and women used the REGRET/APOLOGY strategy the most; 34.06% and 30.67% respectively. Besides that the order of preferred refusal strategies for both men and women are also the same and the difference in percentage is not significant. This shows that the findings of this study are not in line with that of Bettencourt & Miller (1996) which claims that men and women handle conflict differently. However, the findings of this study are in line with that of Hassani (2011)'s study which states that there were no significant differences in the refusal strategies used by males and females in Iran.

5.1.4 Additional findings

Besides answering the research questions, an obvious observation that could be made is the language and linguistic items used by the participants in the wedding invitations as well as the refusal expressions.

In the wedding invitations, knowing that the Facebook invitation serves as a secondary invitation, the hosts sets an obligation on the guests in responding to their invitations by stating how much their presence is valued, asking for confirmation of attendance and requesting that the invitation is accepted as personal. The presence of the Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) in each wedding invitation shows the initiating speech act of inviting.

Due to the nature of Facebook and the language used in Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), features of what is termed as 'netspeak' by Crystal (2001) could

be identified in the refusal expressions. Even though the language of the wedding invitation is formal, the features, which are emphasis/stress, abbreviations, phonetic spellings, code-switching, emoticons, clippings, misspellings, accent stylization and Membership Categorisation Devices (MCD); show that the context of the invitation matters. Since the guests were invited through Facebook, a social networking site, the language used habitually becomes informal, with the use of 'netspeak'.

Besides that, a sequence in the refusal expressions of the participants is also identified in this study. The refusal strategies, being direct or indirect, are 'cushioned' with other semantic formulas such as good wishes and adjuncts. This proves how Malaysians, who are face-conscious and aware of the face-threatening effect of refusals, handle refusal. Therefore, good wishes and adjuncts are used in order to soften the face threatening effect on the listener as well as to maintain the solidarity between the hosts and the guests.

5.2 Implications of the Study

The current study proves that various strategies are employed by Malaysians in expressing refusal. This is because; the speech act of refusal is face-threatening and one has to be careful in expressing it in order to avoid miscommunication or even offending the listener. The findings of the study which showed that Malaysians generally prefer making use of indirect refusal strategies in expressing their refusal to a wedding invitation, illustrates the Malaysian culture where most people prefer to be indirect no matter if they are a close or distant person to the requester. The expressions of refusal by the participants in this study are structured with various refusal strategies that express regret and provide justification

for the refusal, which function as a mitigation to the refusal. This is done as an effort in reducing the face-threatening effect on the interlocutors as well as to maintain the relationship between them. Besides that, the current study also proves that men and women do not differ in the choice of strategies they use in refusing a wedding invitation. Both men and women preferred being indirect in their refusals by employing indirect strategies.

Refusal expressions, strategies and its functions differ across cultures. What seems like an indirect refusal in the Malaysian culture may be a direct refusal in other cultures; or it might not function as a refusal at all. Therefore, refusing can be considered as one of the main issues that arise in intercultural communication. Knowing how Malaysians refuse is as though knowing a part of the Malaysian culture. Therefore, it is expected that the findings of this study will help others to know how Malaysians refuse, especially those of a different culture.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

The current study focused on the refusal strategies of Malaysians as a whole. However, the results could not be generalised to all Malaysians due to the small number of participants involved in this study. Therefore, further research can consider a much bigger sample which might generate new findings.

As Malaysia is a multicultural country, studies on the speech act of refusal strategies can also be conducted by focusing on a selected community or culture in Malaysia. For example; the Chinese, Malay and Indian culture as well as the eastern Malaysians.

One of the statement that Bardovi-Harlig et al. (2008; p. 127) concluded their study with was that "participants respond differently to individual scenarios even when the same speech acts are used". The current study investigated the refusals to a wedding invitation due to the importance given to weddings in the Malaysian culture. Besides invitations to a wedding, refusals to other invitations, requests and also offers could be investigated. For example, refusal to job offers, help requests and formal invitations. This is because; the way of refusing or the strategies used in refusing might differ when the context of refusal is different.

The influence of interpersonal solidarity on the choice of refusal strategies is the focus of the current study. Therefore, further researches can test on other factors such as power, age, gender, ranking of imposition, language proficiency and social status.

The data for the current study is obtained from Facebook. This data is more natural, authentic and reliable compared to data elicited from DCT. However, a more authentic data could be studied in future researches by collecting data such as spoken refusals in real-life conversations. Even though this method is easier said than done, the data collected is reliable as it depicts real-life, unplanned and spontaneous refusals along with non-verbal expressions such as gestures and facial expressions.

5.4 Conclusion

This study has identified the various strategies that Malaysians employ in refusing a wedding invitation. It also showed that interpersonal solidarity does not affect the choice

of refusal strategies, and the participants preferred being indirect in their expression of refusals no matter if they are socially close or socially distant to the host. Likewise, Malaysian men and women do not differ in their choice of refusal strategies too. Besides that, this study also proves what has been said by Hei (2009) that Malaysians are generally a face-conscious society where face-saving efforts in face-threatening speech acts such as refusals, are evident. This chapter has provided a summary of the major findings of this study as well as the implications of the study and suggestions on how further researches in this field can be conducted in future. Further researches in this area should be done nationally so that the findings can be generalised to all Malaysians which will also help people of other culture to comprehend a part of the Malaysian culture. It is much anticipated that the findings and information that are obtained from this study will serve as a basis or input for further researches in this field of speech act.