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Interlanguage Pragmatic Competence of University Students: An Error Analysis of Apology Speech Act Strategies in Japanese Learners

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Abstract

While acquiring a second language, learners may encounter challenges and difficulties in effectively carrying out verbal communication in the second language. Mastering the apology speech act is a challenge for L2 learners. The objective of this study is to identify the apology strategies utilized by individuals learning the Japanese language, as well as the specific types and underlying causes of errors produced during the execution of apologetic speech acts. The results of this study were gathered via the Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which encompassed a sample of 150 Japanese language learners. The gathered data were further classified using eight semantic formulas based on the research conducted by Haristiani and Sopiyan (2019), while the various types and sources of error categorization were conducted based on the theories proposed by Corder (1981) and Richards (1975). The results of this study suggest that Japanese learners utilize the same primary strategies in apology speech acts. Furthermore, the study findings indicated that learners at the intermediate level displayed a higher frequency of errors in their speech compared to learners at the beginner levels and pre-intermediate levels, particularly in the strategy of taking responsibility. The main reason for this was primarily a lack of familiarity with the conventions of sentence structures, the proper use of language, and the appropriate use of expressions. The other sources of errors in language learning are likely to be ignoring language rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, the learner's false hypothesis, overgeneralization, and language transfer. This study is anticipated to function as a point of reference for research in interlanguage pragmatics, second-language acquisition, and error analysis. Gaining comprehension of the various problems and difficulties encountered when performing the speech act of apology in Japanese can assist both learners and educators in reducing these errors.

Keywords: Apology speech act; error analysis; interlanguage; Japanese language learner; second-language acquisition

Introduction

In language learning, mistakes were considered an unwanted aspect of the learning process because they had negative effects and hindered learning progress (Lopez, 2009). However, in learning a second language, learners were hindered in their quest for perfection by making mistakes during the learning process. The errors occurs a real form of the learner's spoken or written language, which motivates applied linguists to ask the important question, "Why do learners make mistakes?" (Ellis, 1997). For applied language researchers such as Richards (1975), Ellis (1997), and James (1998), mistakes were viewed as indicators of how learners acquired their second language. Moreover, Corder (1981) emphasized three important reasons for studying learner errors. First, for educators, learner errors might indicate how far learners have progressed toward learning goals and what they still have to learn. Second, for researchers, these errors can provide evidence of how language is learned or acquired and reveal the procedural strategies learners use in language acquisition.

The research on the analysis of learner errors in learning Japanese as a second language has been conducted by numerous researchers, including those from Indonesia and other countries. These studies include analyzing errors in the use of particles (Inayah, 2020), the use of give-take verbs or "*juju doushi*" (Dewi, Saun & Putri, 2018; Ota, 2020), the use of the verbs *~iku*, *~kuru* (Fukunaga, Arinirahma, Rubenson, 2022), the *chou-on* (long vowel sound) and *sokuon* (double consonant) sounds (Wahyuni & Sutedi, 2020). However, there is a barely noticeable number that discusses the analysis of errors in the realization of Japanese language learners' speech acts. This research is urgently needed because the learners' errors, both linguistic and pragmatic, probably lead to communication breakdowns or pragmatic failure in the future.

Apology is a complex speech act. Apologies may employ a single strategy or multiple strategies concurrently (Salgado, 2011). The use of one or several strategies depends on several factors, including the level of error, the amount of regret, the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, and the acceptability of an apology in that culture. The realization of the apologetic speech act has frequently been culturally specific. Therefore, for most second-language learners, it was difficult to master the strategies (Jones & Adrefiza, 2017). Inappropriate speech act realization creates a massive gap, which leads to preponderant consequences, including misunderstandings and negative impressions from native speakers.

Some previous research on the speech act of apology shows that the apology strategies used by native Japanese speakers (JNS) and native Indonesian speakers (INS) are different. The characteristics of JNS in expressing apologies are using direct apologies, not providing explanations or reasons, and using simple apology strategies (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Haristiani, 2014). However, the characteristics of INS are using explicit expressions, giving lots of explanations, and using address terms, or *yobikake*, such as *Bu* (mam), *Pak* (sir) (Haristiani & Danuwijaya, 2017). Indonesian Japanese learners can make mistakes in the realization of the speech act of apology in L2 (second language) because of the differences between Japanese and Indonesian in the speech act.

Savanna and Meisa (2021) investigated the apology speech acts of Japanese language learners from Indonesia. This study analyzed the apologies that are used and how they relate to the values of politeness in the learners' native languages, especially Sundanese and Javanese. However, this study does not address the errors made by learners when performing apology speech acts in their target language, namely Japanese.

This research is an attempt to fill some of the gaps in error analysis and L2 or second-language acquisition, especially in the realization of L2 learners' speech acts. This study seeks to

investigate the apology strategies used by Japanese language learners at the beginner, pre-intermediate, and intermediate levels. To fulfill the objectives of second language acquisition research, this study also looks into the types and causes of errors made by L2 learners.

Literature review

Interlanguage pragmatic

The concept of interlanguage is highly valuable within the realm of second-language acquisition. Interlanguage possesses distinct attributes that differentiate it from the language employed by individuals who are native speakers of a particular language (Fauzi, 2021). Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is an emerging discipline that integrates the study of pragmatics and interlanguage in its analysis. Pragmatics, as defined by Bardovi-Harlig (2010), is the systematic examination of all facets of language conduct that pertain to contextual significance. Hence, the concept of interlanguage pragmatics should not be excessively distant from the L2 learner's comprehension of employing language following the given situation. According to Kasper and Rose (2002), interlanguage refers to the capacity of non-native speakers to comprehend and execute tasks in the target language, as well as its language development. ILP is a field of research that focuses on individuals who are learning a second language (Tatsumi, 2012). Although this domain includes a wide range of topics, researchers frequently focus on investigating how learners express their intentions through speech in the language they are learning, to improve their ability to use language appropriately in different contexts.

The primary focus of cross-linguistic ILP researchers has been on the speech acts performed by individuals who are non-native speakers (NNS) of different languages. ILP research has expanded into several areas, such as politeness strategies, conversational implicatures, turn-taking, and discourse markers. Nevertheless, the majority of the body of study has concentrated on the speech acts performed by individuals who are not native speakers (NNS) of different languages. Predominantly, the studies have concentrated on examining requests and apologies, as evidenced by the works of Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) and Trosborg (1995). Speech acts are complex and require proficiency in language, communication, and social interaction abilities (Shleykina, 2019). When creating a speech act, a second language learner (L2) depends on the rules of phonetics, phonology, morphology, semantics, and syntax, as well as the correct application of these rules and interactional norms. To communicate effectively in the current socio-cultural environment and beyond, a learner needs to acquire communicative, pragmatic, and interactional abilities (Savignon, 2018).

The objective of contemporary second-language learning is to facilitate efficient communication between individuals who possess distinct linguistic backgrounds and cultural origins. Previous research has analyzed the problems that second language (SL) and foreign language (FL) learners at different levels of proficiency have had when trying to adopt L2 communication and pragmatic norms (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Thomas (1983) explains that learners often make errors in applying the pragmatic (language forms) and sociopragmatic (social, cultural, and contextual norms) principles of their first language (L1) to their second language (L2).

Past studies have indicated that increasing language proficiency does not guarantee the same pragmatic performance as native speakers. The impact of proficiency varies depending on the specific pragmatic features being examined, such as the type of speech act (including directness and conventionality). Other factors that influence pragmatic performance include the modality of communication (comprehension and production), and social variables like social status, social

distance, and power relations. Furthermore, the impact of competence is influenced by contextual factors, such as the duration of time spent in the community where the target language is spoken (e.g., Shardakova, 2005; Taguchi, 2011, 2013; Xu, Case, & Wang, 2009; Asrianti & Reskyani, 2022; Ibrahim, Abduh, & Korompot, 2023).

The second-language acquisition and the error analysis

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is a major field of applied linguistics that focuses on researching and applying its findings in diverse disciplines, including linguistics, psychology, and sociology. It is a young and growing subject of study. Academic institutes have undertaken numerous studies on SLA. The field is currently in the process of improving (Gass and Selinker, 2008:1; Krashen, 2018; Van Patten, 2017). SLA, an interdisciplinary field, largely focuses on the acquisition of a non-native language, often known as L2, rather than the original language, or L1. Second-language research is a more extensive subdiscipline compared to first-language acquisition research. It includes not only the gradual elements of first-language acquisition but also all aspects of the language used by second language learners, which are studied in other fields of linguistics and psychology (Cook, 2002; Dornyei, 2013).

Researchers in the field of second-language acquisition (SLA) have shown significant concern for learner errors. The Error Analysis was developed as an alternative to Contrastive Analysis (CA), which examines learner errors by contrasting the first (L1) and second (L2) languages. The error analysis approach specifically targets the learner's understanding and production of the second language (L2). Unlike contrastive analysis, which aims to compare the idealized language structures of native L1 and L2 speakers, error analysis focuses on the specific mistakes produced by L2 learners (Saville-Troike, 2006). The field of error analysis has revolutionized the perspectives of SLA researchers and teachers on learner mistakes. These mistakes provide valuable insights into the difficulties learners have when acquiring a second language (Saville-Troike, 2006). Furthermore, it enhances our comprehension of the reasons behind certain students' learning difficulties and provides valuable insights for enhancing our pedagogical approaches to teaching second languages.

The theory of error analysis (EA), developed by Stephen Corder in the 1970s, has gained significant popularity as a prominent method for examining errors in the process of acquiring a second language. Error analysis, a significant theory in second language acquisition, examines the discrepancies between the norms of second language learners and the norms of the target language. It attempts to clarify the mistakes made by learners by comparing their acquired norms with the desired norms. Error analysis is the systematic examination and identification of the how, when, why, and nature of language errors.

Corder (1973) categorizes errors into four distinct groups: omission, addition, selection, or misordering. Along with the preceding types, errors can also be classified as local or global errors (Erdogan, 2005). Local errors are minor errors that occur within a certain context and are generally seen as more acceptable since they do not hinder the intended message and can still be comprehended by readers and interlocutors. Meanwhile, the term "global error" holds great importance as it hinders the comprehension of the intended meaning.

The errors made by the learners in their language production are strongly linked to the process of language acquisition (Ellis, 1994). The primary sources of errors in language are interlingual and intralingual interferences (James, 1998; Richard, 1975). Interlingual errors, also known as transfer errors, are errors that are linked to the individual's first language (L1). These errors hinder or impede the language learner from fully grasping the patterns and rules of the target

language (Corder, 1981). Typically, second-language learners make interlingual errors due to their reliance on their first language as a learning aid for the second language. They apply some elements from their first language (L1) to generate their second language (L2). When writing in a second language, learners often make errors because they struggle to distinguish between their native language (L1) and the second language (L2). As a result, they tend to rely on directly translating the structure of L1 into L2, which leads to errors (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982, as cited in Al-Khresheh, 2016). Nevertheless, according to EA theory, interlingual errors are not attributed to ingrained habits but rather viewed as indications that the learner is adapting to an unfamiliar language system (Erdogan, 2005).

On the other hand, intralingual errors, commonly known as developmental errors, arise from the target language (L2) or the language being learned. Intralingual errors include the following aspects: over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and incorrect hypothetical concepts of some grammar rules (Al Khresheh, 2016). According to Corder (1981), the examination of language errors made by learners holds significant importance for both teachers and learners. Teachers ought to think about whether their instruction had an obvious impact on learners and whether or not learners demonstrated advancement due to learner errors. For language learners, errors can serve as a valuable tool for gaining a deeper understanding of the language and enhancing their language proficiency.

Research method

Research design

This study applies the descriptive qualitative methodology, utilizing the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) instrument, to identify the speech act strategies employed by learners when apologizing as well as the errors present in their speech.

Participants

This study included participants who were enrolled in Japanese language education or Japanese literature study programs at universities in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. The total number of participants was 150, divided into three groups according to their language proficiency: 50 students who achieved JLPT N5 (beginning level), 50 students who achieved JLPT N4 (pre-intermediate level), and 50 students who achieved JLPT N3 (intermediate level). The participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of study participant

Japanese Level	Gender	Range of Age	Semester
N5 (Beginner)	F = 28	17 – 24	1 st = 2
	M = 22		3 rd = 45
	Σ=50		5 th = 2
			7 th = 1
N4 (Pre-Intermediate)	F = 28	18 – 24	1 st = 1
	M = 22		3 rd = 20
	Σ=50		5 th = 25
			7 th = 4
N3 (Intermediate)	F = 30	19 – 23	1 st = 2
	M = 20		3 rd = 5
	Σ=50		5 th = 21
			7 th = 19
			9 th = 3

Research instruments

Data collection in this study involved the utilization of a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) in the form of a questionnaire. The situation portrayed in the DCT is a common situations that participants are prone to encounter in their everyday lives, specifically “being unable to give back the book borrowed from the person they are conversing with.” Two social elements, namely social distance and social dominance, have been introduced into this situation. The concept of social distance refers to the level of familiarity between the speaker and the interlocutor, ranging from a close relationship (-D) to a minimal acquaintance (+D). This study focused on identifying two types of relationships of power between the speaker and the interlocutor: equal status, which occurs between learners, and unequal status, which occurs between learners and lecturers. The interlocutors in DCT are categorized as follows: intimate lecturer (IL), non-intimate lecturer (NL), intimate friend (IF), and non-intimate friend (NF). The contents of the DCT instrument are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The apology situations

No	Interlocutors	Situations
1	Intimate Lecturer (IL)	You borrowed a book from the interlocutor a week ago. Today is the day and time promised to return the book. But you forgot to take the book with you. What do you say when the interlocutor asks for the book?
2	Non-intimate Lecturer (NL)	
3	Intimate Friend (IF)	
4	Non-intimate Friend (NF)	

Data analysis

To determine the learner’s apology strategy, the collected data were classified into 8 types of semantic formulas based on the theories of Fraser (1981), Olshtain & Cohen (1983), and the analytical techniques of Haristiani & Sopiyan (2019) and Abe & Van (2021). The eight semantic formulas can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Semantic formula of apology speech act

No	Semantic Formula	Coding Scheme	Example
1	<i>Meikakuna shazai hyoumei</i> , an expression of apology	IFID	<i>Hontouni sumimasen deshita</i> (I apologize)
2	<i>Sekinin shounin</i> , an acknowledgment of responsibility	RESP	<i>Kyou henkyaku no hon wo wasurete shimaimashita</i> (I forgot to bring the book)
3	<i>Hoshou no moushide</i> , an offer of repair	REPR	<i>Ashita okaeshitemo yoroshiideshouka</i> (Can I return the book tomorrow?)
4	<i>Riyuu/joukyou setsumei</i> , account or explanation	EXPL	<i>Mada yonde imasu</i> (Still reading)
5	<i>Maeoki</i> , an opening sentence before entering the topic to be discussed	OPNG	<i>Okari shiteita hon nan desuga</i> (about the book I borrowed).
6	<i>Yobikake</i> , address terms	ADRS	<i>Sensei</i> (teacher or lecturer) and <i>~san</i> (other people)
7	<i>Kantoushi tekina hyoushutsu</i> , emotional expression	EXPR	<i>e!? Are, maji?</i> (really? Are you sure?)
8	<i>Sono ta</i> , a semantic classification not included in the previous category	OTHR	<i>Aa, sou ieba</i> (by the way).

The research proceeded by examining the patterns of methods employed by Japanese learners while apologizing, followed by an analysis of the errors found in their apologies. This analysis encompassed learners at the beginning, pre-intermediate, and intermediate proficiency levels. This study is grounded in the stages of error analysis proposed by Corder (1981) and Ellis (1994). The process has four stages: (1) collecting a sample of language errors made by learners, (2) identifying the errors, (3) describing the errors, and (4) explaining the errors.

The first stage of data collection was carried out by looking at the results of the DCT of the learner's speech acts, which have been described previously. After that, mistakes were identified manually by looking at the type of apology strategy used. Based on EA theory, the error description was a stage at which the identified errors were counted and categorized. Meanwhile, the error explanation was at the stage where the nature of the error was explained based on certain factors, both interlingual and intralingual factors.

Results

The comprehensive DCT result of Japanese learner apology strategies

The data collected from the DCT was then classified into eight coding schemes of apology strategies and the frequency distribution of each strategy can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. The apology strategies used by Japanese learners

Coding Scheme	N5		N4		N3	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
1 IFID	192	38.55%	225	35.94%	213	32.27%
2 RESP	166	33.33%	187	29.87%	199	30.15%
3 REPR	44	8.84%	86	13.74%	121	18.33%
4 EXPL	4	0.88%	10	1.60%	5	0.76%
5 ADRS	71	14.26%	80	12.78%	78	11.82%
6 OPNG	2	0.40%	7	1.12%	8	1.21%
7 EXPR	10	2.01%	22	3.51%	19	2.88%
8 OTHR	9	1.81%	9	1.44%	17	2.58%
TOTAL	498	100.00%	626	100.00%	660	100.00%

According to Table 4, learners at level N3 showed the highest overall frequency of apology strategies (660). This was followed by level N4 learners (626), and lastly by level N5 learners (498). Furthermore, the order of the most used strategies by N5 (beginner) learners is IFID > RESP > ADRS > REPR > EXPR > OTHR > EXPL > OPNG, respectively. Furthermore, the order of the most used strategies by N4 (pre-intermediate) learners is IFID > RESP > REPR > ADRS > EXPR > EXPL > OTHR > OPNG, respectively. As for N4 (intermediate) learners, the most widely used strategy is IFID > RESP > REPR > ADRS > EXPR > OTHR > OPNG > EXPL, respectively. From the frequency order of these strategies, it can be seen that Japanese learners at any level use the same main strategies, namely expressing of apology (IFID), acknowledging responsibility (RESP), offering repair (REPR), and addressing terms (ADRS), although in a different order.

Identification of learner errors in the apology speech act

Based on the data obtained from the DCT results of the act of apology to Japanese learners at the beginner, pre-intermediate, and intermediate levels, the number of errors based on the strategy was obtained. The overall error results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Learner's overall mistakes based on apology speech act strategies

Strategies	Beginner	Pre-intermediate	Intermediate
	(N5)	(N4)	(N3)
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency
IFID	17	7	6
RESP	52	96	101
REPR	29	44	49
EXPL	4	3	1
ADRS	64	76	75
OPNG	0	1	2
EXPR	0	0	0
OTHR	4	0	1
TOTAL	170	227	235

According to Table 5, N3 learners make more errors in their use of apology strategies compared to N4 learners and N5 learners. Specifically, N3 learners made 235 errors, while N4 learners made 227 errors and N5 learners made 170 errors. Based on the frequency of errors, N3 learners make errors in the following order: RESP, ADRS, REPR, IFID, OPNG, EXPL, OTHR. On the other hand, N4 learners make errors in the following order: RESP, ADRS, REPR, IFID, EXPL, OPNG. N5 learners make errors in the following order: ADRS, REPR, RESP, IFID, EXPL, OTHR. Based on the data result, we can identify that the most frequent errors made by Japanese learners were identified in their use of the responsibility acknowledgment strategy. Then, it is important to note that the usage of address phrases is considered an error, as native Japanese speakers infrequently employ this method due to its association with cultural background.

Furthermore, in EA research, there are two types of errors: interlingual errors and intralingual errors (Richard, 1975). The influence of the learner's mother tongue causes interlingual errors. Meanwhile, intralingual error is a type of developmental error caused by the target language (L2) or the language being studied. For the type of interlingual error, it is divided into L1 transfer, literal translation, and writing error. As for the types of intralingual errors, they are divided into grammatical errors, vocabulary errors, surface errors, and pragmatical errors (errors in selecting the correct *hyougen*). The categorization is adapted from the techniques of Al-Rawafi et al. (2021) and Imamura et al. (2014), with slight modifications to adjust to Japanese language rules. Table 6 summarizes the types of learner errors.

Table 6. Types of learner's mistakes in the realization of apology strategies

Interlingual Error					
No	Categories	Sub-category	N5	N4	N3
1	L1 Transfer	Address term (<i>Yobikake</i>)	49	79	76
2	Literal Translation	Word-by-word translation	26	7	3
3	Writing	Long vowel (<i>Chouon</i>)	4	6	4
Total			79	92	83

Intralingual Error					
No	Categories	Sub-category	N5	N4	N3
1	Grammatical Error	Particle/Auxiliary Verbs	30	66	48

		Tenses	37	48	73
2	Vocabulary Error	Vocabulary	37	26	48
3	Surface Form Error	Typo (writing)	0	8	2
4	Pragmatical Error	Expression (<i>Hyougen</i>)	20	7	7
Total			113	155	178

The results presented in Table 6 indicate that learners at the N5 (beginner), N4 (pre-intermediate), and N3 (intermediate) levels exhibited a higher frequency of intralingual errors in comparison to interlingual errors. The most frequent type of intralingual error made by beginner-level learners was a vocabulary selection error. Particles were most commonly misused by learners at the pre-intermediate level, but learners at the intermediate level made the most errors in grammatical usage. Learners at all three proficiency levels exhibited numerous errors when trying to apply the grammatical norms of their native language to their second language. The discussion section will provide a deeper explanation of the mistakes identified in the apology speech strategies of Japanese learners.

The cause of error

The cause of the error was determined after analysis, as shown in figure 1.

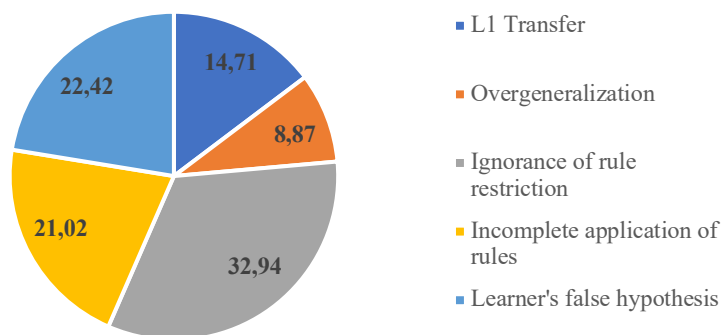


Figure 1. The cause of error

Figure 1 shows the percentage of the main causes of errors, according to Richards (1975). The results show that the following factors contribute to the highest percentage: incomplete application of rules, ignorance of language rule restriction, the learner's false hypothesis, language transfer, and overgeneralization. The highest cause of errors in speech acts of apology is the incomplete application of rules (32.94%). This occurs mostly when the learner removes or adds unnecessary objects or elements, such as the use of inappropriate sentence patterns. The second-highest cause is the learner's false hypothesis, which is also the cause of errors in learners' utterances (22.42%). This error most likely occurs because the learners failed to distinguish concepts related to the speaker-to-talk relationship, such as the choice of apology expressions and the differences between "*motte iku*" and "*motte kuru*," as well as the verb "give-take" in Japanese. This error can be categorized as a global error because it affects the overall meaning and can cause misunderstandings. The third-highest cause is ignoring the restrictions of language rules (21.02%), which relate to the use of particles related to time.

Furthermore, the fourth cause of errors is the transfer of language from L1 to L2 (14.71%). Language transfer in this context mostly includes errors in writing, errors in constructing sentences, errors in using the correct vocabulary, and the incorrect use of address terms. In addition, overgeneralization is the last cause of errors, with a percentage of 8.87%. Over-generalization is seen when the learner over-generalizes the *te*-form of the verb, such as “*motte kitte wasure chatte*”, etc.

Discussion

Apology speech act strategies used by Japanese learners

Based on the results of the DCT data regarding the speech act strategy of apology (Table 4), Japanese language learners were prioritized for apology strategies (*meikakuna shazai hyoumei/IFID*). This was becoming the primary strategy for native Japanese speakers when performing the apology speech act. In their study, Abe and Van (2021) found that native Japanese speakers used expressions of direct apology (*meikakuna shazai hyoumei/IFID*) far too frequently. The use of this strategy was not settled at the level of mistakes or violations that have been occurring, including minor, moderate, or serious mistakes. It also did not depend on the relationship with the other person, whether equal or not or intimate or not.

The strategy of accepting responsibility (*sekinin shounin/RESP*) was the primary strategy for learners performing apologetic speech acts in a second language. Recognizing responsibility (*sekinin shounin/RESP*) and expressing of apology (*meikakuna shazai hyoumei/IFID*) is a universal strategy that can be used in any situation involving apology speech acts (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Ogierman, 2009). By admitting mistakes that had been made, it indicated that the speaker was sincere in conveying their apology (Salgado, 2011). Offering repair (*hoshou no moushide/REPR*) and address term (*yobikake/ADRS*) were also considered important strategies for Indonesian and Japanese learners at beginner, pre-intermediate, and intermediate levels. An offer of compensation or reparation (*hoshou no moushide, REPR*) allowed the speaker to correct any mistakes that had occurred. Meanwhile, the address term (*yobikake/ADRS*) in Bahasa or Indonesian-language daily life is used to show the other person’s level of respect.

Furthermore, several previous studies have stated that native Indonesian speakers tend to use strategies to provide reasons or explanations (*riyuu, joukyou, setsumei, or EXPL*) when apologizing (Wouk, 2005). However, these tendencies were not transferred by learners to their L2 speech strategies. Al-Zumor (2011) and Ogierman (2009) stated that the explanation was a situation-specific strategy. The DCT situation presented in this research, which used “forgetting the book” as the situation, might be sufficient to be explained by an acknowledgment of “I forgot” responsibility. An additional explanation that was better than the statement of regret (*sekinin shounin/RESP*) was unimportant.

The four main strategies employed by these learners demonstrate their “interlanguage” knowledge and competence. This form of interlanguage can be seen from the learners’ efforts to avoid using the EXPL (explain) strategy, which is rarely used by native Japanese speakers. However, on the other hand, the use of ADRS (address terms) to express respect to unequal interlocutors is a form of L1 influence.

Despite the fact that Japanese learners attempt to imitate native speakers in their use of strategies when doing apologetic speech acts, due to their inadequate language and pragmatic skills, a number of errors and mistakes are nonetheless observed. These errors will be discussed further.

Types and causes of errors in Japanese learners apologies

In this section, the types of errors in the Japanese language learner's apology strategy were explained and analyzed. This study focused on IFID (*meikakuna shazai hyoumei*), RESP (*sekinin shounin*), REPR (*hoshou no moushide*), EXPL (*riyuu/joukyou setsume*), and ADRS (*yobikake*), which are four of the eight semantic formulas.

IFID (an expression of apology, meikakuna shazai hyoumei)

IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices) is the most important strategy used to apologize in various languages, including the learner's language. An Indonesian Japanese learner at the beginner, pre-intermediate, and intermediate levels made significantly more mistakes when using this strategy. The error showed up in the Data 1.

Data 1

(F) Sensei, hon wo wasurete, ~~gomennasai~~.

(T) Sensei, hon wo wasurete, sumimasen deshita.

Sensei, I forgot the book, I am sorry.

Data 1 is an example of an apology speech act by a beginner-level learner (N5) to an intimate lecturer. The examples of utterances in Data 1 are not only seen in the realization of the speech act of apology at the beginner level but also at the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. The example in Data 1 demonstrated that the learner was incorrect in his/her selection of the appropriate tone or expression of apology. The mistake in choosing the *target language* was due to "false concepts hypothesized," which means an incorrect or incomplete understanding of the target language. This error is included in the intralingual error. The mistakes in choosing the correct *hyougen* are also seen in the Vietnamese-Japanese apology speech act (Abe & Van, 2021).

In contrast to Bahasa or Indonesian, which only have expressions of apology in the form of the words "maaf" and "ampun" (Wouk, 2006a; 2006b), there are many *hyougen* in Japanese, from the super-formal level to the casual level (Beuckman & Mori, 2018; Haristiani & Danuwidjaya, 2017). In Japanese, an apology might be expressed in various expressions such as *moushiwake arimasen*, *sumimasen*, *gomen*, *warui*, etc. The selection of the right expression is based on the level of error and the relationship between the speaker and the other person. Even though the main strategies of learners are similar to those of native speakers, the choice of expressions in their utterances is still not quite right when viewed from the perspective of social status and social distance. When apologizing to friends, some learners used *sumimasen* (a formal expression), while lecturers used *gomennasai* (an informal expression). According to Yamamoto (2004), before Japanese speakers speak, they assess the situation that led to the apology as well as the relationship between the speaker and listener, and then choose the appropriate expression to use. Due to the possibility that native speakers will view pragmatic errors like this as impolite, learners should be more careful when choosing the appropriate expression (Zhao & Fukuoka, 2010).

In addition to the example of an error in Data 1, there are also errors in writing long vowel sounds (*chou-on*) made by Japanese learners. The error is caused by interference from the learner's *Bahasa*, their mother tongue, and is considered to fall under the category of interlingual errors. The *Bahasa* or Indonesian language, for example, has a short vowel system. Whereas in Japanese, there is a long vowel sound system. According to Yasushi, Kazuo, & Osamu (1990), as quoted from Wahyuni & Sutedi (2019), *chou-on* is a long vowel sound that is expressed by adding the

vowel such as a-i-u-e-o to the previous letter in *hiragana* and *katakana*. *Chou-on* is an additional sound that is issued continuously without changing the shape of the mouth and without pause.

Mispronunciation of long vowel sounds was influenced by the mother tongue because long vowel sounds were considered difficult to recognize (Masakazu, 2014). The pronunciation is also often simplified by learners by shortening the sound. This kind of error is passed on by learners in their writing. Hirata (2022) categorized the errors as “*chou-on no datsuraku*”, or “omitted long vowels”, which were also found in the errors of Japanese language learners from China and Korea, which were analyzed from Corpus I-JAS.

RESP (an acknowledgement of responsibility, sekinin shounin)

This RESP strategy will only be used if the speaker feels guilty or admits responsibility for the mistakes or violations they have committed (Al-zumor, 2011). This strategy is the second most used strategy by Japanese language learners in the realization of the speech act of apology. However, several errors were found in the learners’ speech.

Data 2

(F) Sensei no hon wo ~~motte ikanakatta~~...

(T) Sensei no hon wo motte kimasen deshita. ...

I forgot to bring sensei’s book. ...

Data 2 is an example of a learner’s speech when apologizing to an intimate lecturer. The first mistake that had been made by the learner is that he did not use the polite form (*teinei*), but rather the usual form (*futsuutai*). If one talks to an interlocutor who has a higher position than the speaker, the speaker needs to use the polite form (*teinei*). It is true regardless of the speaker’s relationship with the interlocutor. The use of inappropriate forms may lead to negative impressions from native speakers.

Further, there is also an error that occurred in the use of *motte ikanakute* (to carry). Those errors are caused by “false concepts hypothesized,” which means an incorrect or incomplete understanding of the target language. This error is included in the intralingual error. In this sentence, the correct verb should be “*motte kimasen deshita*.” Many students made this error because they were unable to distinguish between the verb *motte iku* (to go carry) and *motte kuru* (to bring). The difference in the use of the *motte iku* and *motte kuru* forms is seen from the point of view of the speaker and the interlocutor or the direction of movement of the object being carried. If the direction of the movement of goods is towards the other person, it means that the correct verb is *motte kuru*. The difference in the use of verbs based on the point of view and the direction of movement of goods like this is not common in the learner’s mother tongue, making it difficult for learners to use them properly. Japanese learners’ errors in applying the concepts of “*iku*” and “*kuru*” were also identified in Fukunaga, Arinirahma, and Rubenson’s (2022) research.

In addition to the example of an error in Data 2, there are also errors in the use of the forms *~te itadaku* and *~te kudasaru*, which are “giving and receiving auxiliary verbs” (*juju hojo doushi*). The error that occurred is the use of the verb “*itadaita*,” which means “*received*.” “*Itadaita*” in this context means that implicitly the book was given by the *sensei* or the interlocutor to the speaker, not lent by the interlocutor. The sentence is becoming inaccurate and causing misunderstandings. The errors are included in the type of intralingual error which is due to the incomplete application of the rules of the target language by the learner. This error occurred when the learner simplified existing linguistic rules (simplification or *kanryakuka*), thereby failing to learn more complex types of structures. Previous research, such as Dewi, Saun, and Putri (2018), Ota (2020), Park

(2012), and Takemura (2011), discovered learner errors in the usage of give-receive verbs, or “*juju doushi*”.

There are also grammar errors in the use of the responsibility strategy, such as the sentence “*motte kite wasurechattanda*”, which should use “*motte kuru no wo wasurechattanda*” The error is a type of intralingual error caused by the learner’s incomplete application of the rules of the target language. This error occurs when the learner simplifies existing linguistic rules (simplification or *kanryakuka*), thereby failing to learn more complex types of structures.

REPR (an offer of repair, hoshou no moushide)

The semantic formula such as “offer of repair” or “*hoshou no moushide*” is a situation-specific strategy. An offer of repair is an attempt by the speaker to replace the mistake or damage that has been caused by them. The offers of repair are often felt necessary in cases where an apology is deemed insufficient to restore harmony to the relationship between the two parties (the guilty party and the injured party or the speaker and the interlocutor).

However, the realization of the strategy by Indonesian as Japanese learners seems to fail as shown in their speeches in Data 3.

Data 3

(F) ...*Ashita wa sensei ni okaeshi ni naru no wa yakusoku shimasu.*

(T) ...*Ashita wa sensei ni okaeshi shimasu.*

Tomorrow, I will return it to *sensei*.

Data 3 is an example of a pre-intermediate-level learner’s speech to an intimate lecturer. The mistake in this sentence lies in the formation of the verb form *sonkeigo* “*okaeshi ni naru*,” which should be the verb form *kenjougo* “*okaeshi suru*” or “*okaeshi shimasu*” in the polite form. These errors include types of intralingual errors, which are due to the learner’s limited understanding of the grammatical structure of L2, especially those related to the concepts of “*sonkeigo*” and “*kenjougo*.”

In addition to the example of the error in Data 3, there are also “interlingual errors”, which are influenced by the learner’s Bahasa as their mother tongue. In this example, the learner translates the literal meaning of the sentence by offering repair: “*Kalau saya kembalikan ke sensei besok, apakah boleh?*” (If I return it to sensei tomorrow, is that okay?) in Bahasa, the Indonesian language. It translated to “*Moshi ashita sensei ni kaeshitara ii desuka*”. In Japanese, the pattern *tara ii desuka* is not used to ask permission from the interlocutor but is used when giving suggestions or input to the interlocutor, so in this speech it can cause misunderstandings. Misunderstandings like this lead to communication breakdowns in cross-cultural communication (Eviliana, 2015).

EXPL (an account or explanation, riyuu/joukyou no setsumei)

This explanation strategy is also a situation-specific strategy. This semantic formula is used by the speaker to reduce their guilt feelings. In this strategy, the speaker tries to explain the circumstances that may alleviate the guilt feeling. The explanations serve as “reasons” for the offense or mistake that has been committed (Trosborg, 1987).

This type of strategy is rarely used by native Japanese speakers. Indonesian Japanese learners also rarely use this strategy. However, from several participants’ utterances using this strategy, several errors were found. The error can be seen in Data 4.

Data 4

(F) ...*Kesa, osoku me ga sameta node, sono hon wo motte kuru no wo wasuremashita.*

(T) ...*Kesa, nebou shite shimaimashitanode, sono hon wo motte kuru no wo wasuremashita.*

This morning, because I woke up late, I forgot to bring the book with me.

Data 4 is an example of speech by Japanese language learners at the pre-intermediate level to intimate lecturers. The error is included in the type of interlingual error. This error is caused by the learner translating word-for-word from Bahasa into Japanese, namely “wake up late” into “*osoku me ga sameta,*” which is not used in L2.

In line with previous research, literal translation from L1 to L2, or word-for-word translation, is one form of mother tongue interference found in the realization of L2 learners’ apology speech acts (Al-Rawawi, Sudana, Lukmana, & Syihabuddin, 2021; Dendenne, 2016). This literal translation is due to the learners’ lack of linguistic ability.

ADRS (address terms, yobikake)

The term “*Yobikake*” refers to words or linguistic expressions used by speakers to draw attention directly to their speech partners (Haristiani & Renariah, 2018). In ADRS, it is divided into two types: *jishoushi* (calls for oneself) and *tashoushi* (calls for others). When apologizing, many Japanese learners use *yobikake* as one of their strategies, as shown in Data 5.

Data 5

Sensei, sumimasenga, Sensei kara karita hon ga wasurete shimaimashita. Hontouni sumimasen deshita. Ashita, hon wo kaeshitai to omoimasuga, Sensei no go tsugou wa yoroshii desuka. Watashi ni hon wo kashite kurete, arigatou gozaimasu.

Sensei, I am sorry, I forgot the book I borrowed from you, *Sensei.* I am really sorry. I would like to return the book tomorrow. Is it convenient for you, *Sensei?* Thank you for lending me the book.

In Data 5, the learners use this ADRS strategy to their interlocutors who are lecturers, both in intimate and non-intimate relationships. Data 5 is not classified into errors, but rather the transfer or influence of L1 learners on the realization of their L2 speech acts.

According to Haristiani and Renariah (2018), the use of address terms in Japanese is influenced by power relations (*jougekankei*), while in Indonesian it is influenced both by power relations (*jougekankei*) and social distance (*shinsokankei*). From the perspective of politeness, Japanese speakers tend to minimize the use of greeting terms as their effort to maintain the other person’s negative face as a negative politeness strategy, while Indonesians tend to use address to show their willingness to respect the other person and use address terms as a positive politeness strategy. The tendency of native Indonesian speakers is clearly carried over by Japanese learners in realizing their L2 apology speech acts.

Considering the examples mentioned earlier, it can be seen that errors made by Japanese learners occur in both grammatical and pragmatic aspects, encompassing both interlingual and intralingual categories. The errors exhibited by Japanese learners from Indonesia are likewise observed in Japanese learners from other nations. These errors are widespread because Japanese syntax and word usage principles are unique and vary from the L1 language. Moreover, with regard to the competence level of learners, this study produced an intriguing discovery, that Japanese learners at the N3 (intermediate) level had a higher frequency of errors compared to learners at the lower proficiency levels, N4 and N5.

Based on the research findings, it is evident that having a higher level of language proficiency does not guarantee the ability to perform pragmatics in a native-like manner. The impact of proficiency on pragmatic performance varies depending on the specific features being assessed, such as the directness and conventionality of speech acts. Additionally, the mode of pragmatic performance, whether it is comprehension or production, also plays a role. Social variables, including social status, social distance, and power relationships, further influence the proficiency effect on pragmatic performance. These findings have been supported by various studies conducted by Kasper, et al (1996), Cook & Liddicoat (2002), Félix-Brasdefer (2007), Bradovi-Harlig (2008), Allami & Naeimi (2011), Xiao (2015).

Errors are unavoidable in the process of language acquisition. Errors can be categorized as indicators to indicate the improvement of the interlanguage competence of the learner. Error is sometimes categorized based on misuse of vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, misinterpretation of a speaker's intention or meaning, and production of the incorrect communicative effect through improper use of a speech act or one of the principles of speaking. Not only is it nearly inevitable, but it is also an essential component of education. Therefore, errors can be tolerated if the learner is engaged in some form of learning activity. Moreover, a learner's mistakes have their own benefits. Errors made by a learner are significant because they provide evidence to the researcher, such as how language is learned or acquired and what strategies and procedures the learner employs.

Conclusion

This study seeks to identify and categorize the apology strategies of Japanese language learners as well as the types of errors and underlying causes contained in their apologetic realizations. This analysis reveals that Japanese learners at the beginner (N5), pre-intermediate (N4), and intermediate (N3) levels use the four main strategies in almost comparable proportions, albeit in somewhat varied percentages and sequences. Moreover, depending on the learners' usage of strategies and speech forms, we can discern their interlanguage forms. The learner tries to choose his or her form of linguistic behavior based on his or her knowledge of the communicative behavior of speakers of the target language. On the other hand, learners still think about how to be polite based on how they were taught in their native language.

From the results of the error analysis in this study, it was observed that both interlingual and intralingual errors were present in their utterances. The most common mistakes encountered are errors in the use of grammar, particles, and choosing the right vocabulary, or expressions (*hyougen*). This study found that the mistakes were caused by the learner's false hypothesis, incomplete application of rules, lack of knowledge about rule restrictions, language transfer, and overgeneralization.

However, the results of this study regarding the use of apologetic strategies in the same situation with four different interlocutors are still limited. It will be necessary to delve deeper into a wider range of situations in future research. In addition, we would like to enhance the data collection process. In this investigation, only DCT analysis was employed. DCT is efficient at gathering large amounts of data quickly, but it is incapable of capturing the act of apology as a flow of discourse. In contrast to DCT, it is important to assess apology behavior as a discourse flow using data collection methods such as role play and natural discourse.

This research is expected to contribute to current interlanguage pragmatic understanding and second-language acquisition. Due to the potential problems that Indonesian-speaking Japanese learners may encounter in the competency development of pragmatics in a second language or L2,

the lack of research on the error analysis of Indonesian-speaking Japanese learners in the realization of speech acts suggests that this research will also have pedagogical implications for the teaching of Japanese as a second or foreign language.

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