

A Cross-cultural Sociopragmatic Study

Apology Speech Act Realization Patterns in Indonesian, Sundanese, and Japanese

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Abstract: In everyday life, when a person has performed an action of utterance which has offended another person, and for which he can be held responsible, the person needs to apologize. However, in the cross-cultural context, different rules and customs may apply according to its language and cultural background. This study examined the differences and similarities of apology speech acts and strategies used in different cross-cultural contexts, i.e., in Indonesian, Sundanese, and Japanese. The data on this research were collected using *Discourse Completion Test* (DCT), which investigated four apology situations focused on the relations with the interlocutors. The subjects of this study were 60 Japanese native speakers, 60 Indonesian native speakers, and 54 Sundanese native speakers. The collected data were then classified using Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Pattern (CCSARP) coding scheme. The study findings revealed that Indonesian, Sundanese, and Japanese native speakers used four similar strategies overall, but used different main strategies depending on the relation with the interlocutor. Moreover, Indonesian and Japanese native speakers tend to express apology in the highest frequency, whereas Sundanese native speakers tend to express their responsibility in the highest frequency. Furthermore, the difference of apology speech act also showed in utterance level which indicates the characteristics of each language. This study is expected to give a reference in speech act study, and help understanding apology in cross-cultural context.

1 INTRODUCTION

Apology is a speech act intended to remedy the offense for which the apologizer takes responsibility and rebalance the social relations between interlocutors (Holmes, 1990). In addition, it is also perceived as a social event and is called for when social norms have been violated whether the offence is real or potential (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). The act of apologizing whether as 'remedial work' or social events, requires an action or an utterance which is intended to 'set things right' (Trosborg, 1987). Searle (1965) claims that speech act is operated by universal pragmatic principles and possible variations in verbalization and conceptualization exist across languages (Wierzbicka, 1985).

Several studies have attempted to analyse speech acts across languages and cultures aiming at investigating the existence of pragmatic universals and their characteristics (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1989). The result shows that concerning apologies, little variation was found in the use of five main apologies across languages studied. However, Olshtain (1989)

points out that similarities of expressing apology (IFID) and preferences of expressing responsibility from CCSARP data was surprising. It means that in most situation, participants tend to express apology and took responsibility of the offence. Regardless of similarity pointed out from these results, there are also possibility to find out different tendencies from different languages with different cultures that possess different rules. Furthermore, Blum-Kulka (1989) also stated that studies of speech acts need to move away from western languages and include as many non-western languages and cultures in their scope of study as possible.

Apology speech act in Japanese has been studied from many points of view, such as analysing Japanese apology strategies based on its semantic formulae (Yamamoto, 2004; Sato, 2011; etc.), and also in cross-cultural context such as in Japanese and English (Barnlund and Yoshioka, 1990; Ikeda, 1993; Ootani, 2008;), Japanese and Chinese (Boyckman and Usami, 2005; Abe, 2006; etc.), Japanese and Korean (Jung 2011). However, there are only few cross-cultural studies which compares apology speech acts in

Indonesian and other languages, especially with Japanese (Takadono, 1999; Haristiani, 2010), and fewer in Sundanese and other languages. Therefore, as an attempt to respond to Blum-Kulka's (1989) call to examine deeper about the characteristic of speech act in non-western languages, this study aimed to extract and categorize the range of strategies in the speech act of apologizing in Indonesia, Sundanese and Japanese as Asian languages, based on Blum and Kulka's (1984, 1989) CCSARP coding scheme and main formulas.

2 RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Participants

One hundred seventy two students took part in this study, which include 60 Indonesian native speaker (INS), 54 Sundanese native Speaker (SNS), and 60 Japanese Native Speakers (JNS). INS and SNS were all students studying in different academic fields at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, and JNS were all students studying in different academic fields at Hiroshima University. The average age of the participants was 22.5 for INS, 22 for SNS, and 23 years old for JNS. The reason for choosing university students was that in most studies on speech acts, the participants had been university students. Thus, for the sake of comparability of the results of this study with the findings of the other studies carried out around the world, collecting the data from a sample of a similar population i.e., university students is advisable (Afghari, 2007).

2.2 Data Collection

The data in this study were collected through an open questionnaire which is a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The DCT used in this study included a brief description of the situation. The situation in DCT was a situation that university students are likely to encounter in their daily language which is "Failed to return book borrowed from interlocutor". The two main social factors specifically added in the situations, i.e., social distance and social dominance. The social distance is that the interlocutors either had a close relationship (- distance) or hardly knew each other (+ distance). The social dominance or the power relationship between the interlocutors inside the DCT in this study was assigned only two values: status equal (student-student), and status non-equal (student-lecturer). All the interlocutors in the DCT is set as follows: (1) Status un-equals, intimates:

Intimate Lecturer (IL), (2) Status un-equals, non-intimates: Non-intimate Lecturer (NL), (3) Status equals, intimates: Intimate Friend (IF), and (4) Status equals, non-intimates: Non-intimate Friend (NF). Data collected from DCT were then classified into coding scheme from Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) by Blum-Kulka (1984, 1989), minus the "A promise of forbearance" (FORB).

3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Coding Scheme of DCT Data

Based on CCSRAP coding scheme, the linguistic realization of apology speech act can take the form of five main strategies (Blum-Kulka, 1984, 1989; Afghari, 2007). However, since the apology subject in this study is about failing to return borrowed book, "A promise of forbearance" (FORB) strategy mainly replaced by "Promise to return the book" which already included in "An offer of repair" (REPR). Thus, the FORB strategy is not included in the coding scheme in this study. According to the results from DCT data, the apology strategies used by INS, SNS, and JNS mainly including four (4) strategies based on CCSARP coding scheme described as follows: (Substantial English translation from utterance (E), examples utterance taken from the data from three languages in Indonesian (I), Sundanese (S) and Japanese (J) with Japanese utterance's reading in alphabet are also provided)

1. An expression of an apology (use of IFID)

e.g. (E) I apologize

(I) *Saya memohon maaf yang sebesar-besarnya.*

(S) *Hapunten pisan Bu.*

(J) *本当にすみませんでした。*

(Hontouni sumimasendeshita)

2. An acknowledgement of responsibility (RESP)

e.g. (E) I forgot to bring the book.

(I) *Buku yang kemarin saya pinjam itu lupa dibawa hari ini.*

(S) *Abdi hilap teu nyandak bukuna.*

(J) *今日返却の本を忘れてきてしまいました。* (*kyou henkyaku no hon o wasurete kite shimaimashita*)

3. An offer of repair (REPR)

e.g. (E) Can I return the book tomorrow?

(I) *Bolehkah kalau saya bawa bukunya besok saja?*

(S) *Upami enjing tiasa teu Bu?*

(J) 明日お返ししてもよろしいでしょうか。

(Ashita okaeshishitemo yoroshiideshouka)

4. **Concern for the hearer (CONC)**

e.g. (E) **Do you need it today?**

(I) Gimana emang butuh banget untuk hari ini ya?

(S) Bukuna teu kacandak, bade enggal dianggo?

(J) もしかして今日必要だった?

(Moshikashite kyou hitsuyoudatta?)

The first strategy which is “An expression of an apology”, is the most direct realization of an apology done via an explicit Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) (Searle, 1969; Afghari 2007). Furthermore, the main four strategies above consist of a number of sub-formulas (sub-strategies), which will not be discussed further in this paper.

3.2 **Frequency Distribution of Apology Strategies Used by INS, SNS, and JNS**

The data collected from DCT then classified into four coding schemes of apology strategies and each strategy’s frequency distribution is as seen in *Table 1*. *Table 1* shows that INS used the highest frequency of apology strategies overall (715 times), followed by JNS (689 times), and lastly by Sundanese (618). Further, the sequence of most strategies used in INS and SNS are similar, which are RESP (INS: 273 or 38.18%; SNS: 230 or 37.22%), at the highest frequency, followed by IFID (INS: 255 or 35.66%; SNS: 215 or 34.79%), then REPR (INS: 155 or 21.68%; SNS: 128 or 20.71%), and lastly by EXPL (SNS: 32 or 4.48%; SNS: 45 or 7.28%). Meanwhile, JNS used IFID most frequent (274 or 39.77%), followed by RESP (229 or 33.24%), then REPR (148 or 21.48%) and lastly by EXPL (38 or 5.52%).

Table 1: Frequency distribution of apology strategies used by INS, SNS and JNS (%).

	INS	SNS	JNS
IFID	255	215	274
	(35.66)	(34.79)	(39.77)
RESP	273	230	229
	(38.18)	(37.22)	(33.24)
REPR	155	128	148

	INS	SNS	JNS
	(21.68)	(20.71)	(21.48)
EXPL	32	45	38
	(4.48)	(7.28)	(5.52)
Total	715	618	689
	(100)	(100)	(100)

Even though the most frequently used apology strategy in three languages was slightly different, the two most used apology strategies in all three languages were the same: IFID and REPR. It seems that, as also put by Trosborg (1987) and Afghari (2007), the two strategies which are ‘directly apologizing’ (IFID) and ‘showing responsibility’ (RESP), are the most frequently used apology strategy in Indonesian, Sundanese and Japanese, as well as in English and Persian. Several studies stated that Indonesian tend to use many strategies in frequent number while apologizing (Takadono, 1999; Haristiani, 2010; etc.), and the result of this study also showed the same tendency since Indonesian used apology strategies in higher frequency compared to the other two languages. Meanwhile, there are studies reported that Japanese tend to use simple and small amount of strategies in apologizing (Ikeda, 1993; Abe, 2006; etc.). However, the results of this study showed rather different tendency, since Japanese native speaker used higher frequency of apology strategies compared to Sundanese native speaker.

3.3 **The Use of Apology Strategies by INS, SNS, and JNS Based on the Interlocutors**

The use of four main apology strategies according to the interlocutors in three languages is as seen on *figure 1 (a), (b)* and *figure 2 (a), (b)*. *Figure 1 (a)* shows that when the interlocutor is an intimate lecturer (IL), INS and JNS used IFID in the highest frequency with a slight difference (INS: 37.71%; JNS: 38.01%), followed by RESP as second frequent strategy (INS: 32.57%; JNS: 35.09%), then REPR (INS: 21.71%; JNS: 15.79%), and lastly EXPL (INS: 8%; JNS: 11.11%). Meanwhile, SNS used two strategies as the most frequent strategies which are IFID and RESP (37.91%), followed by REPR (19.23%), and lastly EXPL (4.95%). Further, when the interlocutor was a non-intimate lecturer (NL), ISN and JNS again showed a highly similar tendency.

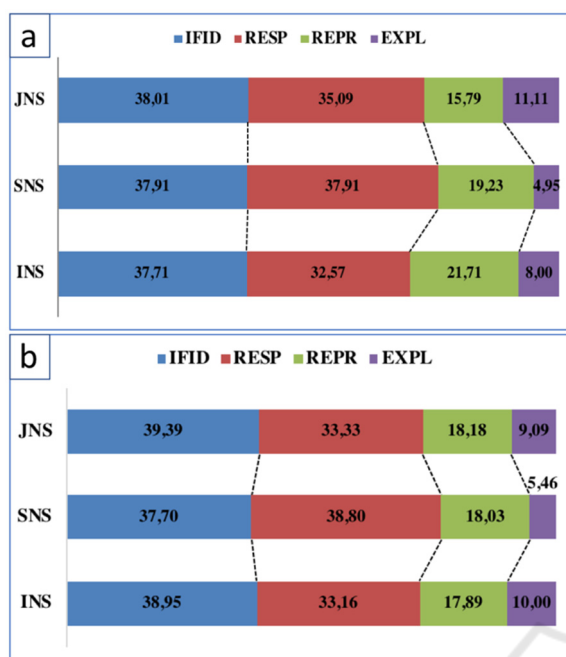


Figure 1: Percentage of overall apology strategies used by INS, SNS, and JNS to non-equal interlocutors (Lecturer). *Figure (a)* shows apology strategies used to Intimate Lecturer (IL), while *(b)* to Non-intimate Lecturer (NL).

In addition, as seen in *Figure 1 (b)*, INS and JNS used IFID the most (INS: 38.95%; JNS: 39.39%), followed by RESP (INS: 33.16%; JNS: 33.33%), then REPR (INS: 17.89%; JNS: 18.18%), and lastly EXPL (INS: 10%; JNS: 9.09%). Meanwhile SNS tend to use RESP the most (38.80%), and followed by IFID (37.70%) with only a slight difference. SNS then used REPR (18.03%) and lastly EXPL (5.46%), which are similar to other two languages.

From these data, it is understandable that in Indonesian and Japanese, when apologizing to the non-equal (+ power) interlocutors, expressing apology is considered as the most important strategy. While in Sundanese, both expressing apology and responsibility are considered equally important, or moreover expressing responsibility tend to be considered as more important. The change of social distance from intimate to non-intimate slightly affected the use of main strategy in Sundanese, but not in Indonesian and Japanese. However, in Indonesian, the frequency of offering a repair tend to be higher when the interlocutor is an intimate lecturer, while in Japanese, offering a repair tend to be used more to non-intimate lecturer.

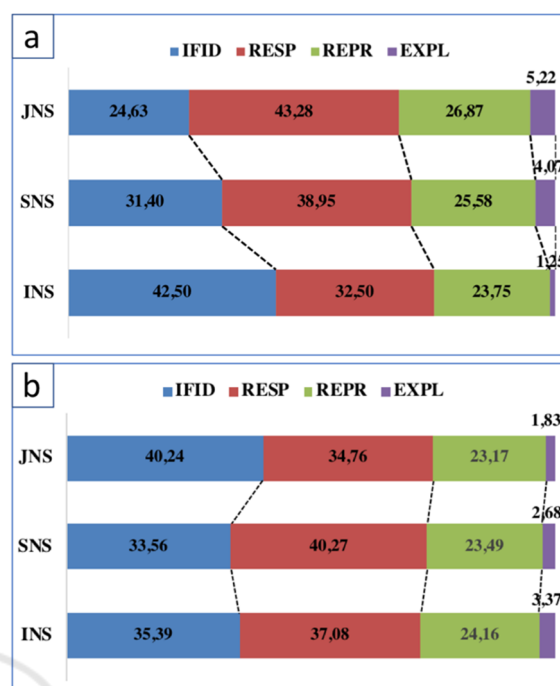


Figure 2: Percentage of overall apology strategies used by INS, SNS, and JNS to equal interlocutors (Friend). *Figure (a)* shows apology strategies used to Intimate Friend (IF), while *(b)* to Non-intimate Friend (NF).

Further, in the situations where the interlocutor is an equal, the use of apology strategies in three languages showed different tendencies. As seen on *Figure 2 (a)*, to an intimate friend (IF), INS still used IFID as the main strategy with significant frequency (42.50%), followed by RESP (32.50%), while SNS and JNS used REPR as the main strategy (SNS: 38.95%; JNS: 43.28%), followed by IFID (SNS: 31.40%; JNS: 24.63%). On the other hand, as seen in *figure 2 (b)*, to non-intimate friend (NF) INS and SNS has the same tendency to use RESP as the main strategy (INS: 37.08%; SNS: 40.27%), followed by IFID (INS: 35.39%; SNS: 33.56%). While JNS used IFID in the highest frequency (40.24%), and then RESP (34.76%). Moreover, REPR and EXPL used in a similar tendency in three languages, either when the interlocutor is intimate (IF) or non-intimate (NF).

From above data, it can be seen that the use of main apology strategies and its frequency to equal interlocutors (friends) in Japanese and Indonesian showed different tendency between intimate and non-intimate interlocutors, but not in Sundanese. In Japanese, when apologizing to an intimate friend, expressing responsibility considered as the most important strategy, while in Indonesian expressing apology considered as the most important strategy.

Meanwhile, when apologizing to non-intimate friend, the most used strategy in Japanese changed to expressing apology, while in Indonesian the most frequently used strategy switched to expressing responsibility. However in Sundanese, when apologizing to both intimate and non-intimate equal interlocutors, expressing responsibility is considered as the most important strategy, regardless the social distance or the intimacy difference.

The findings of this study show that Indonesian and Japanese native speakers tend to distinguish the use of most frequent strategies to the interlocutor mainly influenced by the power dominance. When the interlocutor is equal, the use of most frequent strategy is also influenced by social distance. Indonesian and Japanese also used apology expression (IFID) in high frequency and tend to repeat using IFID, which also stated in many previous studies (Ikeda, 1993; Haristiani, 2010; Jung, 2011; etc.). On the other hand, Sundanese native speakers prefer to use the same main strategy, which is expressing responsibility, to all interlocutors regardless the difference in social dominance and social distance.

However, besides the use of main four apology strategies, the distinction of speech act also showed in the level of utterance. For example, in Japanese that has honorific forms, many expressions of apology from the highest level of polite terms (*sonkeigo*) to regular level form (*futsuukei*) such as *Moushiwake gozaimasen*, *Moushiwake arimasen*, *Sumimasen*, *Gomen*, *Gomennasai*, *Warui*, etc., were all used by Japanese native speaker to express their apology according to their relationship with the interlocutors. Other than apology expression, the honorific forms (*sonkeigo*, *kenjougo*, *teineigo*) in Japanese were also used respectively in all utterance, mainly when the interlocutor has higher social dominance. Meanwhile, in Indonesian that has no structural honorific form, the utterance distinction to different interlocutors mostly showed by using address terms (*Bapak/Ibu*) (Haristiani, 2012), and also by using indirect speech (euphemism), which mainly used to interlocutors with higher social dominance. On the other hand, in Sundanese that also has structural honorific form similar to Japanese, apology expression also used in some forms with different level of politeness such as *Hapuntén*, *Puntén*, *Hampura*, and *Maap*. Furthermore, similar to Indonesian, in Sundanese, address terms also used in high frequency especially to interlocutors with higher social dominance. These findings showed that even the use of main strategies according to CCSARP coding scheme in these three Asian languages did not show a striking difference

with those in European languages (Olshtain, 1989; Holmes, 1990), the difference of speech act in three languages found particularly in the level of utterance, which indicates the characteristics of each language.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to extracting and categorizing the range of main strategies used in performing speech act in cross-cultural context which are in Indonesian, Sundanese, and Japanese. This study also examined the use of apology strategies according to the relationship with the interlocutors, based on social dominance (equal and non-equal), and social distance (intimate and non-intimate).

The findings of this study indicate that in Indonesian, Sundanese, and Japanese – as in the other languages studying the western (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983) and non-western (Afghari, 2007), apologies generally fit within the framework of the categories explored and discovered in western studies. Also, expressing of apology directly and an acknowledging responsibility were found to be the most frequent apology strategies used to all interlocutors in all three languages. However, the expression of apology mainly used most in Indonesian and Japanese, while acknowledging responsibility was Sundanese most used strategy. Furthermore, the characteristic of apology speech act of each language in this study also reflected in the utterance level, which shows the characteristic of Japanese and Sundanese which has structural honorific forms, and Indonesian which doesn't have honorific forms, structurally.

Lastly, this study succeeded in categorizing apology speech act strategies based on CCSARP main formulas. However, to understand deeper about the characteristic of apology speech act in each language in the cross-cultural context, the sub-formula (sub-strategies) is also significant to be analyzed further in the next study.

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