

THE ASSERTIVE (REPORT AND STATEMENT) SPEECH ACT BASED ON POLITENESS STRATEGY IN JAPANESE COMPANIES COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Japanese are known to have a very unique work culture. One of the characteristics of Japanese work culture is Hourensou. Hourensou is an important way of how you report to your superiors and colleagues in a Japanese business setting. This study aims to clarify how the practice of assertive (report and statement) speech act in Japanese between superiors to subordinates in the communication frame in Japanese companies. The methods in this study are case study, literature studies, focus group discussion, and interview of 20 workers of Japanese Company in Indonesia, with various position from staff to manager. The results show that the practice of the assertive speech act and politeness strategy implemented between superiors to subordinates in Japanese companies. The results also show the similarity and differences between Indonesian and Japanese communication culture at work. The findings of the study have some pedagogical implications, especially to overcome the difficulties and language errors made by Japanese language learners. Beside that, this study also expected as an effort to improve communication skill from graduates of Japanese language education study programs in society, especially into Japanese companies or institutions that use Japanese language as a communication way.

Keywords: communication, culture, pragmatic, politeness, sociolinguistic, speech act

INTRODUCTION

Japanese language cannot be separated from its culture. The more general task of understanding the role of cultural differences in communicative processes and their possible relationship to cognitive processes has been a major concern for many linguists, semioticians, and philosophers of language. (Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G., 1989: 267). This emphasizes the urgency of pragmatic studies. Cross-cultural understanding is currently an important area for pragmatic linguistic studies, because cultural differences between nations can be one of the obstacles in communication, such as an error and mistakes from Japanese language learner.

Assertive speech acts are one type of illocutionary speech acts, speech acts that are included in assertive acts, for example the statement states, suggesting, informing something, reporting, showing, expressing, explaining, and suggesting speech acts. This study aims to clarify how the practice of assertive, reporting and stating speech act in Japanese companies communication based on politeness strategy from the theory of Brown & Levinson (1987).

METHOD

A qualitative descriptive method was used in this study. Data were collected from case study, literature studies, focus group discussion, and interview. The study involved 20 participants (7 male and 13 female) having more than 10 years of working experiences at Japanese companies in Indonesia. Seven were superiors (2 male and 5 female) and 13 subordinates (5 male and 8 female). They were the alumni of Japanese Language Education in one public university. Data were collected from December 2021 to 27 May 2022. The study used focus group discussion and



interview based on topic the practice of assertive, reporting and stating speech act in Japanese companies communication based on politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The interview questions are expected to show the percentage of each speech act politeness strategy implementation. Focus groups elicit qualitative data to explore emic understandings (Fukushima, 2019). Focus groups allow the researcher to interact directly with respondents. This provides opportunities for the clarification of responses, for follow-up questions, and for the probing of responses (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Primary data sources were collected from the mass media in Japanese and Indonesian, such as drama series on tv, reality show, news, and other online media. Secondary data were collected from interview and focus group for data validation.

The previous research that is still relevant to be used in the study of illocutionary speech acts is the theory of Leech Geoffrey in 1993. The classification made by Searle in Leech (1993: 163-165) regarding illocutionary acts is based on various criteria, namely as follows.

- Assertives (Representatives): in this illocutionary bound to the truth of the proposition expressed, for example, stating, proposing, boasting, complaining, expressing opinions, reporting.
- Directives: These illocutions aim to produce an effect in the form of actions taken by the speaker. This illocutionary, for example, ordering, ordering, begging, demanding, giving advice.
- Commissive: in this illocutionary (more or less) bound to an action in the future, for example, promise, offer, make a vow.
- Expressive: the function of this illocutionary is to express or express the psychological attitude of the speaker to the circumstances implied in the illocutionary, for example, thanking, congratulating, apologizing, criticizing, praising, expressing condolences, and so on.
- Declaratives: the success of this illocutionary will result in a match between the content of the proposition and reality, for example, resigning, baptizing, firing, giving names, imposing punishments, excommunicating/disposing, appointing (employees), and so on.

The gap of the research, according to the author, is that the assertive study has not been narrowed by specializing speech acts in the realm of business/work technically, practically, and applicable. Leech and Searle discuss well and categorize illocutionary acts broadly. Domestically, previous research studies have been conducted by Arifiany (2016) with the title *The Meaning of Directive Speech Acts in the Comic "Yowamushi Pedal Chapter 87-93"*. This study describes the various types of directive speech acts in Japanese. Arifiany explained that the form of the directive is in the form of a command, the directive is in the form of a request, prohibition, permit, and a suggestion in the comic. The difference can be seen from the data sources and objects used in the study, Arifiany uses the comic "Yowamushi Pedal Chapter 87-93" while this study uses original speech from Japanese speakers in the mass media. The similarity of this study is to analyze illocutionary acts, while Arifiany's research examined directive acts, this study examines assertive speech in a business context.

Another study was conducted by Yayuk in 2012 and 2016 which examined assertive speech acts in Banjar pleasantries. This study describes the form of assertive speech acts in small talk in Banjarese society. The speakers are represented by (A) and the interlocutor by the symbol (B). Based on the type of speech act, the speaker is bound by the truth about something he states. The form of assertive speech acts in pleasantries in the Banjar community can be seen in the following explanation. Assertive speech act to state something assertive speech act to state something at the same time affirm is a speech act that is carried out with the intention that the



speech is justified by the speech partner. This utterance contains a statement as well as an affirmation of something said by the speaker, complains, admits, claims, and reports in Banjar pleasantries.

The conclusion from both research is that it is known that pleasantries in Banjarese are used to maintain communication relationships, break rigidity, and end communication well. Based on the results of the analysis, it shows that the form of assertive speech acts in Banjar language pleasantries consists of assertive speech acts stating something, speculating, complaining, admitting, and reporting.

Another research was conducted by Dini Purnama Sari (2015). Assertive illocutionary acts in the film *Sen To Chihiro No Kamikakushi* by Miyazaki Hayao, with descriptive qualitative method. In determining the classification of assertive illocutionary acts based on lingual markers and their context. The data found in this film amounted to 53 data. The data findings consist of (*dangen suru*) 'stating' found as many as 24 data. (*houkoku suru*) 'report' found 4 data. (*jiman suru*) 'to be proud' found 2 data. (*kujou wo iu*) 'complaining' found as many as 6 data. (*iken wo iu*) 'expressing opinion' found as many as 11 data. (*teian suru*) 'propose' found as many as 6 data. The difference in the research is in the object and context of the research, this research purifies assertive speech in the business and corporate world from the mass media.

Previous research in Japan, conducted by Takehara (2018), analyzed contrastively related to Japanese-English Bilingual Competence on Speech Acts in Politeness. The research method was carried out quantitatively with the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) technique for data collection. The aim of the study was to investigate whether circumstantial bilinguals retain the respondent's speech act competence in their first language after a long time of living in countries where the respondent's second language (L2) is spoken. DCT and interviews were conducted with Japanese-English bilinguals to Japanese respondents living in the United States.

Takehara (2018) reveals the different competences of bilinguals from speech acts in Japanese, influenced by the use of colloquial language, age of arrival, and length of stay outside Japan in their speech acts, the necessity of *wakimae* (wisdom) and the use of appropriate lexical forms, and the unusual similarity of typical Japanese speech acts.

Based on the questions in the DCT, the Japanese-English bilinguals show typical Japanese speech acts or speech acts influenced by the typical in America. Takehara (2018) shows that bilingual speech acts follow Japanese politeness strategies, and evaluations by Japanese monolingual raters tend to be polite on average. Speech acts that are influenced by American politeness strategies are also observed from various questions in DCT. In this study, the data collection method is different from Takehara (2018), primary data was taken through recording the utterances of Japanese and Indonesian speakers in the mass media as a data source, to then analyze the tendency of speech intent based on pragmatic theory, in order to know the similarities and differences in assertive speech and directive in Japanese with Indonesian based on politeness strategies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of Assertif Speech Act ('reporting' and 'stating')

This study contains a description of the results of the study which begins with the classification of assertive and directive speech acts based on their function. After that, data analysis was carried out to analyze the similarities and differences between each speech act in Japanese and Indonesian based on the politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987).



Table 1. The Practice of Assertive (report and statement) Speech Act

No.	Classification	Total (utterance)	Percentage
1.	Reporting	38	63%
2.	Stating	22	37%

The overall data found was 60 assertive utterances, with the speech act of 'reporting' was 38 data and the speech act of 'stating' was 22 data.

(1) JP: *Shachō, hōkoku-sho no shimekiri ga raishū ni natta sōdesu.*

ID: *Direktur, katanya batas waktu laporan diundur menjadi minggu depan.*

(Director, the deadline for the report has been extended to next week.)

(RS/NHK/021/EJFW110522/1:41)

Utterance (1) is reporting assertive speech act, because of this speech act characteristic is states the actual condition that has occurred and or states what the speaker has experienced. The speaker is staff from the Japanese company, and the interlocutor is the director. The utterance situation is while the speaker heard the information by phone, and report to his superior at the office. This utterance used formal form because the interlocutor position is higher than the speaker. pattern marks the form of reporting The pattern "... sōdesu " is used to quote information. This sentence pattern marks the form of reporting in Japanese (JP). In Bahasa (BI), the word "katanya ..." is a sentence pattern marks the form of reporting. pattern marks the form of reporting

(2) JP: *Roshia ni yoru Ukuraina no gunji shinkō de gen'yu ya kokumotsu nado no kakaku kōtō ga keiki ni akueikyō o oyobosu to iu kenen ga tsuyomarimashita.*

ID *Invasi militer Rusia ke Ukraina telah menimbulkan kekhawatiran bahwa melonjaknya harga minyak mentah dan biji-bijian akan berdampak negatif pada perekonomian.*

(Russia's military invasion of Ukraine has raised concerns that soaring prices of crude oil and grains will have a negative impact on the economy.)

(MO/0025/NHK20220308/09:10)

Utterance (2) is stating assertive speech act. Speaker is a news reporter who report to audience about the real economy condition after Ukraine has been attacked. The reporter conveyed the impact of the Russian invasion on Ukraine, which had a real impact on the soaring price of crude oil and grain. This utterance used formal form because the program is an official program on a Japanese news station.

From sample above, It can be concluded that reporting and stating speech acts in both languages usually use formal language in certain contexts such as at work and other official events. In addition, this speech is very dependent on who the speaker and the interlocutor are.

(3) JP: *Takano buchō: Purezen no kekka ga deta. Konkai no dezain purojekuto wa waga sha no kikaku, erabareta!*

ID *Manajer Takano: Hasil presentasi sudah keluar. Perusahaan kita memenangkan proyek desain kali ini!*

(Takano Manager: The results of the presentation are out. Our company won the design project this time!)

(TVS/NIPPON TV/002/ HNHEP1/03:25)

Utterance (2) is reporting speech act. In this speech, there is the sentence 'Purezen no kekka ga deta' which shows confirmation of the topic of conversation and information that the speaker wants to report about what has happened or what the speaker has done to his interlocutor. In this context, the speaker aims to report the results of the presentation when the external service has been carried out by the speaker as the head of the section. Speakers report this



information so that all staff immediately prepare to carry out the design project and construction of the cinema building.

The politeness strategy used by speakers in (3) is positive politeness or in Indonesian it means positive politeness, which is one of the politeness strategies that can be used by showing friendliness (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This strategy is characterized by the use of informal language (*futsuukei*), a smile as a nonverbal marker that shows a friendly gesture, because there is a closeness between the speaker and his partner as a teammate. In addition, the position or position between superiors and subordinates also affects the use of language in this speech.

The Politeness Strategy of Assertif Speech Act ('reporting' and 'stating')

Table 2. The Politeness Strategy of Assertive (report and statement) Speech Act

No.	Classification	Bald on Record	Positive Politeness	Negative Politeness	Indirect Strategies
1.	Reporting	5 (13%)	10 (26%)	7 (18.4%)	6 (15.7%)
2.	Stating	4 (18%)	7 (31.8%)	6 (27.2%)	5 (23.7%)

Brown and Levinson (1987:60) identify four politeness strategies or general behavior patterns that can be applied by speakers, namely (1) Bald on Record (without strategy), (2) Positive politeness (intimacy strategy), (3) Negative politeness (negative/formal politeness strategy), (4) Off record (indirect or disguised strategy). From table 2 above, it can be seen that each speech act used the politeness strategy, reporting act used 5 data of bald on record, 10 data of positif politeness, 7 data of negative politeness, and 6 data of indirect strategies. The stating act used 4 data of bald on record, 7 data of positif politeness, 6 data of negative politeness, and 5 data of indirect strategies. The result also show that the context of utterance in situation aspect was very related to the use of speech act strategies.

Direct strategies (bald on-record strategies)

This strategy is used for actions that are not too threatening to the face of the speech partner. More of this strategy is used between two close friends, or when the speaker is in a more powerful position than the interlocutor.

Positive politeness strategies

As with the first strategy, this positive politeness strategy is used for speech acts that are not too threatening to the face of the interlocutor, but the speaker does not have the heart to express it in the form of a command. This strategy is widely used between two friends, acquaintances, or parties who are already close, even though they are not very close.

Negative politeness

Negative politeness is a strategy used when the speaker is aware of a degree of threat that can be accepted by his interlocutor. This can happen, for example, in language acts with strangers, between superiors and subordinates, and between young people and older people.

Indirect strategies (off-record strategies)

The indirect strategy is used especially if there is a more serious threat to the face of the interlocutor. Brown and Levinson (1987: 60) assert that politeness can also be measured by looking at the social distance between the speaker and interlocutor, the close social status between the speaker and the interlocutor (speaker and interlocutor relative power), and the high and low ratings. speech act (degree of imposition between speaker and interlocutor)

One of them is the theory of politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson which is known as the "face-saving or face-saving" view. Rahardi (2005:39) explains that Brown and Levinson



divide the face into two, namely the positive face (positive face) which refers to the desire to be approved (being approved) and the negative face (negative face) which refers to the desire to determine oneself (self-determination).

In interpersonal communication it can be said that a person's face is always in a state of threat. Brown and Levinson call this threatened situation the face threatening act (FTA). Therefore, a politeness strategy is needed not only to avoid conflict, but also to threaten the other person's face when in a certain situation.

Similarity and Differences between Japanese and Indonesian Speech Act Politeness Strategy

From data analysis, herewith the similarity and differences between Japanese and Indonesian speech act politeness strategy.

The similarity are (1) reporting and stating speech acts in both languages usually use formal language in certain contexts such as at work and other official events. (2) Reporting and stating speech act politeness strategy is very dependent on who the speaker and the interlocutor are. (3) In reporting and stating speech act uses more positive politeness to avoid conflict and saving face. (4) Nonverbal aspect as gesture, and expression also related to the speech act politeness strategies.

The differences are (1) In Japanese, even in the context of work in the office, superiors to subordinates usually use the informal form or “*futsukei*”, its use is based on proximity also high and low positions. (2) In Indonesian communication, the more it informal and casual, the more showing more disrespect. There are times when the closer someone is, the more subtle and polite the speech will be as a form of respect.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION)

As previously discussed on the theoretical basis, assertive or representative speech acts occur when speakers (1) state what they believe to be facts, (2) affirmations, (3) conclusions and descriptions. In line with the opinion of Searle (1969) which explains that assertive speech acts are speech acts that bind the speaker to the truth of the proposition said. Politeness strategy is very important for smooth communication. Politeness also needed not only to avoid conflict, but also to threaten the other person's face when in a certain situation.

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