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Apologizing Strategies in Japanese and Hungarian[*]

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the speech act of apologizing in an intercultural Hungarian-Japanese framework, more specifically, it compares the apologizing strategies used by Hungarian native speakers and Japanese learners of Hungarian as a second language. The study claims that a noticeable negative pragmatic transfer influences second language learners' linguistic behaviour. To test this hypothesis, a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test has been carried out. The paper proves that because of the presence of negative pragmatic transfer, the linguistic behaviour of second language users is affected by their native language. Additionally, the study reveals the differences between the socio-cultural backgrounds of the two speaking communities.
Keywords: speech act, apologizing, Japanese, Hungarian as a second language

1   Introduction

Languages differ from each other not just in their lexical, grammatical or phonological features but with respect to their pragmatic usage. A key aspect of examining the (pragmatic) usage of languages is investigating speech acts. Hidasi (2008) claims that while culture can be examined without language, language is totally uninterpretable without culture. Speech acts play a pivotal role in the connection between language and culture, their investigation reveals the hidden socio-cultural background of linguistic behaviour. Comprehending the cultural environment behind language routines results in a more successful and effective language use. As Mászlainé Nagy (2007) remarks speech acts are the most culture-specific aspects of language, so investigating them is instrumental in our understanding of the pragmatic usage of a certain language. Szili (2003) also claims that speech acts of a language-speaking community have turned into social norms and rules and thus they represent cultural values on their own. This is why their dissimilarity across cultures can cause confusion or awkwardness (Szili 2003).

The culture-sensitivity of speech acts makes the acquisition of pragmatic skills difficult. However, there is another factor that has a bigger role in hampering the development of pragmatic competence and that is negative pragmatic transfer. The term itself is generally understood as "the projection of first language-based sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic

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knowledge onto second language contexts where such projections result in perceptions and behaviours different from those of second language users" (Maeshiba et al. 1996: 155). Negative pragmatic transfer has an apparent role in second language learners' production of speech acts and this study assumes that differences between learners' and native speakers' perceptions of speech events result in differences in their speech act performance.

Comparing the apologizing strategies of native Japanese speakers learning Hungarian as a second language and Hungarian native speakers, the paper aims to prove that due to the remarkable presence of negative pragmatic transfer, second language users are affected by their native language. On the basis of a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test and its statistical analysis it is argued that the patterns and the social conventions of the source language commonly appear in the target language. Furthermore, the results of the questionnaire to be discussed below reveal the concealed socio-cultural background of the Japanese apologizing norms.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Apology

A considerable amount of literature has been published on speech acts (Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Bach & Harnish 1979). While various definitions of speech acts are found, this paper will utilize the definition used by the dynamic speech act theories. These view speech act as a language unit that shows culture-specific differences and operates through a speech event while connecting several speech sequences together (Jeffrey 2004). According to dynamic speech act theories not just cultural or social but conversational factors also play a big role in explaining speech acts.

Apologizing as a speech act belongs to the category of expressives. It always serves as a response to a particular kind of human behaviour and it shows a bold front toward the other participants' present or past manners. Moreover, it expresses feelings that are addressed to the hearer since apologizing is generally considered as a hearer-oriented speech act.

Speech act theories define apology as a social interaction in which one of the interlocutors, the apologizer, re-establish the balance between him/her and the other interlocutor, the offended person. As Blum-Kulka and House (1989) point out the equilibrium need to be restored, since the apologizer had made a mistake that ruined the social harmony between the participants.

According to Faerch and Kasper (1984), an act of apology act has three preconditions:

1. The speaker committed X or abstained from doing X (or is about to do it).
2. X is perceived by the speaker only, by the hearer only, by both the speaker and the hearer, or by a third party as a breach of a social norm.
3. X is perceived by at least one of the parties involved as offending, harming, or affecting H in some way.

Both the definition and the preconditions of apologizing are well accommodated into the theory of Brown and Levinson (1978). Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that the motivation lying behind the speaker's polite behaviour is nothing else but to protect his/her face in face-threatening interactions and to show the best face to the external world or to his/her partner. If these face-saving actions fail, losing his/her face or becoming less esteemed in the society are unavoidable (ibid). Nevertheless, the face of the hearer also can be strengthened, re-established or it can be even threatened based on the speaker's behaviour (Szili 2003).

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Apologizing – as it is interpreted in the Brown and Levinson framework – is a double-edged speech act: on the one hand it is face-threatening for the speaker, but on the other hand it is face-saving for the hearer. This is due to the fact that confessing one's fault results in the reduction of the value of face. Nonetheless, at the same time it compensates the hearer for the loss of his/her face (Szili, 2003).

According to Mászlainé Nagy (2007) Brown and Levinson do not take into consideration the existence of public face alongside the existence of private, individual face (the concept of public face is from Nwoye 1992). Redefining the concept of apologizing in the light of public face, Suszczyńska (1999, 2003) argues that apologizing (what she calls remedial work) is based on violating the social norms, i.e. apologizing contains strategies that are utilized if a certain act exceeds the social rules accepted by the society (Suszczyńska 2003: 255, based on Meier 1998). It is important to realize that in cultures where the importance of public face is huge, apologizing is required in those situations where it is expected by the social norms and not where the individual had made a mistake without social consequences. Comparing the two theories outlined above, Brown and Levinson's theory represents a private face view, while Nwoye's (1992) approach can be associated with a public face view. Whereas the private face view implicitly elevates the individual over the group and works well in the atomistic and individualistic Western-societies, the public face view emphasizes the needs of the group rather than those of the individual. Therefore, the latter is related to Eastern-societies, since the individuals are not important factors in a non-Western society (Nwoye 1992).

What we know about apologizing is largely based upon empirical studies. One such major study is the CCSARP project (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project 1989). CCSARP was an international cooperation among 10 researchers from a variety of countries. The team members developed a framework for collecting cross-cultural data on two speech acts, request and apology. They examined apology in American English, Australian English, Canadian French, German, and Hebrew. Outside the project, the apologizing strategies of Danish (Trosborg 1987), New Zealand English (Holmes 1990), Japanese (Coulmas 1981) and British English (Owen 1983) were investigated and analysed among others.

Regarding Hungarian, the following studies have been carried out. Szili (2003) and Suszczyńska (1999, 2003) attempted to investigate the apologizing strategies of the whole Hungarian population, while Mászlainé Nagy (2007) deals with the apologizing strategies of children. Bándli-Maróti (2003) focused not on the speech act of apology but on request and refusal, nevertheless, this is the first example of a Hungarian-Japanese intercultural research.

2.2   The rules of Japanese communication and apologizing

Negative pragmatic transfer involves the projection of a first-language based knowledge onto second language users. As the aim of the study is to investigate how negative pragmatic transfer appears in the apologizing strategies of Japanese learners of Hungarian, it is worth introducing the most fundamental characteristics of Japanese communication and apologizing strategies in this section.

Firstly, it should be noted that the most fundamental principle of Japanese communication is the need of protecting the partner's face while overshadowing one's own face (unlike in Western-societies where saving one's face is a must). In order to achieve this, Japanese people tend to follow the communication rules listed below:[1]

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[1]   Kindaichi (2003: 17-26) provides a more detailed description of the Japanese communication strategies.

1. According to Leech's maxim of generosity, people tend to "minimize benefit while maximizing cost to self" (Leech 1983: 132). The usage of this maxim is especially illustrative of the Japanese society (Szili 2000).
2. Debates and quarrels are avoided if possible (generally speaking, Japanese people are not good at it).
3. The avoidance of causing discomfort or annoyance to their partner is also expected; Japanese even try to evade getting favours as well, since they consider it as a form of indebtedness and feel obliged to the other person.
4. Protecting the partner's face appears on the level of language too: humble and submissive linguistic behaviour is expected from the members of the society. Showing a modest attitude while valuing the partner by no means is the cornerstone of Japanese communication.
5. They always try to provide the partner an elegant way of refusing if (s)he desires to do so. Consequently, sentences are frequently elliptical and the problematic sentence elements are usually omitted. Apart from accepting the offered possibility of withdrawing from a situation, explicit refusals are not preferred (for example using *iie* (meaning *no*) is only accepted in refusing praises).
6. Ambiguity and indirect expressions are favoured because definite wording and expressions can easily threaten the partner's face.

Japanese people regularly apply the same rules to the speech act of apologizing as well. Firstly, it is not the content of apologizing that is in focus, what matters is the humble behaviour and the proper tone (Kindaichi 2003). Secondly, since hinting at the reason of apologizing is enough for the partner to understand the message, it is not necessary to provide full details about the motivations behind the apologizing act. Nonetheless, with the appropriate apologizing form even the most complex and difficult situations can be solved as both apologizing and forgiveness are obligatory Japanese social norms. Finally, it should also be mentioned that *sumimasen* – one of the most frequent form of apologizing – can be used interchangeably in both thanking and apologizing situations owing to the fact that the dividing lines have grown indistinct between them. In his major work Coulmas (1981) compares the thanking and apologizing rules of Japanese. He points out that in Japan the feeling of gratitude and the feeling of remorse are both connected to the concept of indebtedness and give responsibility to both interlocutors.

2.3 Apologizing Strategies

2.3.1 The model: Olshtain-Cohen Classification

One aim of empirical studies concerning pragmatics is to determine the main strategies and patterns that are used in the realization of speech acts and generate a classification model that characterizes them. The classification model used in the present study is adapted from Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 22-23) and this was utilized in the CCSARP project as well (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 289).
The model is presented below:

(1) Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)
   a. An expression of regret, e.g. *Sajnálom (I'm sorry)*
   b. An offer of apology, e.g. *Bocsáss(on) meg! (I apologize)*
   c. A request for forgiveness, e.g. *Elnézést kérek/ Bocsánatot kérek (Excuse me/Forgive me/)*

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d. Expression of embarrassment or shame (based on Szili (2003) and inserted into the classification) e.g. *Szégyellem magam (I am ashamed)*

(2) Taking on Responsibility

a. Self-blame, e.g. *Az én hibám/ Tévedtem (It is my fault/my mistake)*

b. Expression of self-deficiency or self-dispraise e.g. *Nem láttalak/Elfelejtettem/Olyan hülye vagyok (l didn't see you/I forgot/I'm such a dimwit!)*

c. Justifying hearer, e.g. *Minden okod megvan rá, hogy haragudj rám (You're right to be angry)*

d. Lack of intent, e.g. *Nem szándékosan tettem (I didn't mean it)*

(3) Explanation or Account

Any external mitigating circumstances, 'objective' reasons for the violation, e.g. *Borzalmas volt a közlekedés (The traffic was terrible)*

(4) Offer of Repair, e.g. *Megtérítem a károdat (I'll pay for the damage)*

(5) Promise of Forbearance, e.g. *Nem fog még egyszer előfordulni (It won't happen again)*

Researchers who apply this model claim that in apologizing situations, people consistently use only a small number of verbal strategies. The model outlined above can capture Hungarian apologizing strategies as Hungarian uses easily identifiable strategy-sets (Suszczyńska 1999: 1056). However, the "final linguistic realization of these strategies is context- and culture-sensitive" (ibid). The main strategies represented in the model are briefly described in the following sections.

2.3.2   IFID strategies

IFID strategies are the most routinized and the most conventional forms of apologizing. They express the purpose of apologizing explicitly and unambiguously. They always contain a performative verb that signifies the act of apologizing (*sorry, apologize, excuse*). IFID strategies always stand in the centre of the speech act, as Suszczyńska (1999) claims the speech act of apologizing usually starts with an IFID strategy. Owen (1983) suggests that IFID strategies fulfil the part of a specific communication function in the shape of either a semantic-syntactic form or a verbal routine (Owen 1983: 172, also in Szili 2003; Suszczyńska 1999). As a consequence of that, IFID strategies have an immediate illocutionary force, they are able to represent and display speech acts in any kind of situations (Szili 2003). Olshtain and Cohen (1983) differentiate three subcategories of IFID strategies.

The first subcategory in the classification of IFIDs is the expression of regret (REG) strategy (the most common form of it is *Sajnálom* (*I am sorry*)). REG can be used only if the gravity of the offense is not serious. As a result of this REG is considered to be a very weak strategy and it is usually intensified (with adverbs such as *borzasztóan* (*terribly*), *szörnyen* (*awfully*), *nagyon* (*very*)).

The second type of IFIDs is the offer of apology (APOL) strategy (mostly in the form of *Bocsáss(on) meg!* (*I apologize/Forgive me*) or *Ne haragudjon!* (*Do not be angry*)). It is used particularly in situations when the purpose of apologizing needs to be expressed explicitly, but at the same time the gravity of the offense does not account for a severe face-losing behaviour. In Hungarian APOL regularly appears in the imperative mood. Using *Bocsásson meg!* (*Forgive me*) requires a bigger self-abasement.

Thirdly, the request for forgiveness (FORG) strategy is being introduced among the IFID strategies (*Bocsánatot kérek* (*Pardon me*), *Elnézést kérek* (*Excuse me*)). *Bocsánatot kérek* or

Bocsánat (*Pardon me*) suggest a closer relationship between the interlocutors. FORG is the most conventionalized mean of apologizing and it is employed principally in situations where the speaker must be equal to the expectations of the society and the (s)he does not aim at showing real repentance.

Finally, the strategy of expression of embarrassment or shame (EMB) should be mentioned. EMB is originally not part of the Olshtain-Cohen classification, it was inserted into the model by Szili (2003) as a typical and unique characteristic of the Hungarian apologizing routine (e.g. *Szégyellem magam* (*I am ashamed*)). EMB is quite sporadic in Hungary because it involves the most sentiment-revealing and the most face-threatening forms of all IFIDs. EMB is used only if the gravity of the offense was really enormous and the speaker is really determined to pray for forgiveness. Due to its face-threatening nature, EMB is preferred only when the participants of the given situation have a close relationship with each other. Similarly to REG, it is typically intensified (*truly* (*nagyon*), *terribly* (*rettenetesen*), *awfully* (*szörnyen*)).

2.3.3   *Strategies besides IFID*

As noted by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Szili (2003) apart from the most conventional IFID strategies there are situation-based apologizing strategies as well. In this section, the three most recurrent situation-based strategies are introduced. However, the strategy of lack of intent (INT) and promise of forbearance (FORB) will not be explained in detail. Due to the fact that situation-based strategies usually show culture-specific preferences, differences between the Japanese and the Hungarian norms are also discussed.

2.3.3.1   Taking on responsibility

Firstly, the strategy of taking on responsibility (RESP) is described. Suszczyńska (1999), when commenting on the Olshtain-Cohen classification, emphasizes the importance of redefining the concept of RESP (1999: 1056). Based on her study, this paper differentiates between the explicit (RESPE) and implicit (RESPI) ways of taking on responsibility.

Concerning RESPE strategies, the term is used to describe the act of self-blaming, admitting someone's fault and accepting that the hearer has been insulted by the speaker. The most regular forms of RESPE are for example *It's my fault* (*Az én hibám*) or *I did it* (*Én tettem*). As argued by the CCSARP project, it is a strategy that is used so frequently that it can be considered to be the second most significant strategy worldwide. However, this is not true for Hungarians. The possible reason for this is that Hungarians are not in favour of acknowledging their mistake. The Japanese, however, behave on the contrary, since their ultimate goal in communication is to protect the hearer's face, they easily confess their guilt and not make up explanations.

Regarding RESPI strategies, originally they are not part of the Olshtain-Cohen classification. RESPI strategies – also called self-strategies by Suszczyńska (1999) – contain self-depreciation with reference to the incompleteness of the individual and admit the insufficiency and the imperfection of the apologizer. Generally, self-strategies are speaker-oriented and always humiliate the speaker. However, compared to other strategies, when using RESPI strategies, the apologizer does not lose his/her face to such extent. This is because (s)he makes reference to the most accepted human weaknesses. As a consequence of this, it is a particularly popular strategy among Hungarians. Typical examples of self-strategy *I forgot it* (*Elfelejtettem*), *It got out of my*

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mind (*Kiment a fejemből*), *I am clumsy* (*Ügyetlen vagyok*), *I am stupid* (*Hülye vagyok*), *I was careless* (*Figyelmetlen voltam*).

Preference or disapproval of self-strategies usually depend on the cultural attitudes of the given speech community. If a speech community generally does not have problems with self-exposing, employing self-strategies is not problematic for the members of the community (Suszczyńska 1999). Nonetheless, there are societies where speaking about oneself is not preferred; for example, in Japan, where people normally uses negative politeness strategies. As negative politeness strategies are incompatible with self-exposing, it can be suggested that self-strategy is not an often used device in the apologizing norms of Japanese.

2.3.3.2 Explanation or Account

The second type of situation-based apologizing strategies is explanation or accounting for the situation (EXPL). As Olshtain and Cohen (1983) indicated, internationally EXPL is one of the rarest strategies. However, regarding Hungarian, EXPL proved to be a relatively frequent apologizing strategy (Suszczyńska 1999). Employing EXPL may cause displeasure and inconvenience in Japanese people. Therefore, the frequency of EXPL in Japanese is especially low as compared to other languages.

2.3.3.3 Offer of Repair

Finally, the third situation-based apologizing strategy to be expounded in this paper is the strategy of offer of repair (REPR). REPR plays a relatively big role in the norms and routines of apologizing customs in Hungary. This strategy usually joins IFID strategies and as Szili (2003) highlights, using this strategy tends to be more spontaneous and situation-dependent compared to the other strategies. Accordingly, it could not be characterized as a set of conventional and routinized phrases.

Regarding the appearance of this strategy in Japanese, thus far, only three studies have indicated the presence of this strategy in the Japanese language (Sugimoto 1997, 1998; Lee 2003). First, Sugimoto (1997, 1998) recognizes the importance of this strategy claiming that REPR generates the atmosphere of a profuse apology. Nevertheless, she does not provide any relevant data to present exactly how frequent this strategy is. Secondly, a Japanese-Korean intercultural study is worth mentioning here (Lee 2003). Lee (2003) reports that REPR appears in Japanese only in two types of situations, namely in the case of physical hurt or damaging property. Otherwise not much is known about REPR.

2.3.4 Strategy-sets

It rarely occurs that speakers apply only one of the IFID strategies in an apologizing situation. It is more prevalent that strategy-sets are utilized. The term 'strategy-set' refers to the special case of apologizing when the dominant IFID types of utterances are supplemented by one or two other strategy-based forms. The selection of the appropriate strategy-based form depends on the socio-pragmatic features of the given situation. This is also exemplified in the research undertaken by Szili (2003), who specified the most frequent strategy-sets of Hungarian apologizing. According to her analysis the most generally used strategy-sets of Hungarians include one of the IFIDs + self-strategy + REPR or one of the IFIDs + self-strategy + EXPL etc. The usage of strategy-sets is closer to the ordinary way of speaking than using pure IFIDs, so it was decided that strategy-sets would be investigated in the present study.

3 Method and Materials

3.1 Data collection procedures

Various methods have been developed and introduced to examine interlanguage pragmatics. Ways that are appropriate for scrutinizing ILP can be categorised into oral and written methods. Oral methods include for example the Oral Discourse Completion Test (ODCT) and the method of Discourse Role Play Talk (DRPT). A notable example of ODCT is the research of Bándli-Maróti (2003), while an illustration of DRPT is the study carried out by Mászlainé Nagy (2007).

WDCT (Written Discourse Completion Test) is the most widely used written method; it has been utilized in many investigational studies such as the CCSARP project (1989) and in the papers of Szili (2003) and Suszczyńska (1999, 2003) as well. Nevertheless, for the purposes of the present study, MDCT (Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test) was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, MDCT requires only the selected-response type answer. Hence, only the recognition of the correct form is expected from the participants. As MDCT does not encourage language production, not just the advanced L2 learners are able to complete it but speakers on a lower level as well. Secondly, Chen and Rau (2013: 106) points out that Japan has a test-oriented educational system; therefore it was assumed that MDCT – that is designed exactly the same way as multiple-choice tests – would work effectively with the Japanese participants. Finally, due to the prevalence of the DCT method, MDCT is considered to be a relatively new way of studying ILP.

MDCT refers to a multiple-choice test "where the test taker is required to choose the correct response from the several given options" (Liu 2004: 68). In the present study the MDCT test was designed to investigate the apologizing strategies of native Japanese speakers whose second language is Hungarian (and to compare with the strategies of Hungarian native speakers). The language of the test itself was Hungarian and it was forwarded to the participants electronically. The test was a discourse-completion, closed-ended questionnaire which included 30 situations. In 12 of the situations the speech act of apologizing was investigated, while another 12 were designed to measure the expression of thanks (in this paper only the apologetic situations are discussed). The remaining 6 situations were distractors. The participants were given a short description of the situation which specified the sociopragmatic factors that may have an influence on the situation. These sociopragmatic factors are 1) social distance (the participants of the situation are equal in rank or not) and 2) the gravity of the offense (small or big). The experiment used a 2x2 design where the situations listed below have been tested.

i)   Situation 1. The participants of the situation are not equal in rank and the gravity of the offense is big. (N=3)
ii) Situation 2. The participants of the situation are not equal in rank and the gravity of the offense is small. (N=3)
iii) Situation 3. The participants of the situation are equal in rank and the gravity of the offense is big. (N=3)
iv) Situation 4. The participants of the situation are equal in rank and the gravity of the offense is small. (N=3)

The participants were asked to complete the dialogue, selecting one of the four provided answers. The answers were structured to include the following four strategy-sets:

i)   IFID + RESPI + EMB
ii) IFID + RESPI + REPR/FORB
iii) IFID + INT + EXPL
iv) IFID + RESPE + REPR/FORB

Consider the example below taken from the questionnaire. This is an example of a situation where the participants are equal in rank and the gravity of the offense is small.

Kölcsönkérte barátja egyik kedvenc könyvét. Kávézgatás közben leönti a könyvet kávéval. Mikor visszaadja barátjának a könyvet, Ön ezt mondja:
- Bocsánatot kérek, nem akartam megrongálni a könyvedet. De bejött Buksi a szobába miközben olvastam és az ölembe ugrott.
- Bocsáss meg, néha olyan hanyag tudok lenni. Most nagyon szégyenkezem.
- Ne haragudj, olyan rendetlen vagyok. Ha szeretnéd, megveszem neked a könyvet újonnan.
- Nagyon sajnálom, leöntöttem a könyvedet. Mindenképpen megtérítem a károdat.

You borrowed one of your friend's favourite books. Drinking coffee you spill coffee on the book. When returning the book, you say:
- I apologize, I did not mean to ruin your book. But while I was reading, the dog came into the room and jumped onto my lap. (IFID+ INT + EXPL)
- Forgive me, I can be careless sometimes. I am ashamed of myself. (IFID + RESPI + EMB)
- Do not be angry, I am so untidy. If you wish, I will buy the book anew. (IFID + RESPI + REPR)
- I am terribly sorry, I spilled your book. I definitely pay for your damage. (IFID + RESPE + REPR)

3.2   Participants

Forty-seven participants took part in this study: 23 native speakers of Japanese who learn Hungarian as a second language and as a control group 24 native speakers of Hungarian. The Japanese group consisted of 18 female and 5 male subjects, their average age was 29.8 (age range 20-62 years), while in the Hungarian group the ratio of the sexes was balanced (12 female, 12 male); the average age here was 26.7 (18-51 years). According to the Common European Framework the proficiency level of the Japanese participants was around B1-C1.

4 Results

The results of the test are shown in Figure 1-4. The frequency of the four strategy-sets in the case of all the four categories was compared with the help of the chi-square test.

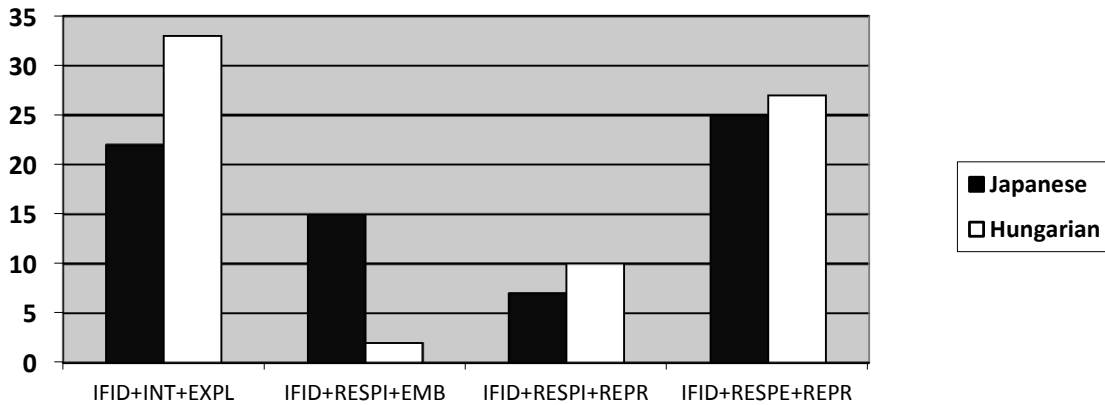### 4.1 Situation 1. Not equal in rank, the gravity of the offense is big

Figure 1: The frequencies of apologizing strategy-sets in situation 1

The result of the chi-square test is: $\chi^2(3)=0,042$, $p<0,05$ i.e. the difference between the apologizing strategies of Hungarians and Japanese is statistically significant. As it was expected IFID+INT+EXPL proved to be more frequent among Hungarians, while Japanese produced EMB approx. five times higher than Hungarian native speakers (2,8 vs. 14,5). However, contrary to the expectations it is impossible to discover major differences within the distributions of RESPE strategy (37, 5 vs. 36, 2).

4.2 Situation 2. Not equal in rank, the gravity of the offense is small
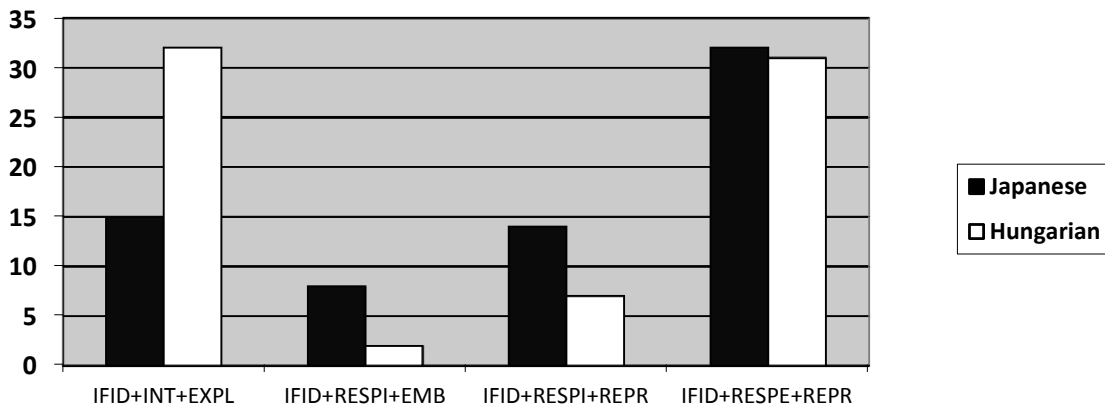

Figure 2: The frequencies of apologizing strategy-sets in situation 2

The results testify that the distributions of apologizing strategy-sets are significantly different ($\chi^2(3)$=0,029, p<0,05). Figure 2 indicates that the tendencies described in the case of situation 1 are also realized in situations where the participants are not equal and the gravity of the offense is small. Specifically, as predicted, IFID+INT+EXPL is more often selected by Hungarians, whereas the frequency of IFID+RESPI+EMB is higher among the Japanese subjects. Moreover, RESPE turned out to be an equally often-used strategy both in Hungarian and Japanese. In contrast, the frequency of IFID+RESPI+REPR in Japanese has grown and increased in contrast with situation 1.

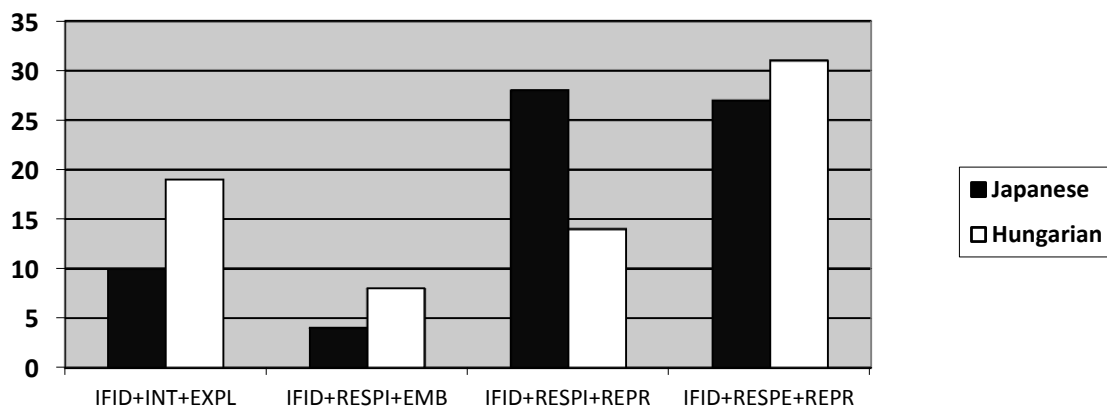### 4.3 Situation 3. Equal in rank, the gravity of the offense is big

Figure 3: The frequencies of apologizing strategy-sets in situation 3

As Figure 3 illustrates – in situations where the participants are equal in rank but the gravity of the offense is big – the difference between the distribution of apologizing strategy-sets across the two languages is significant ($\chi^2(3)$=0,029, p<0,05). According to the expectations, the tendency that EXPL is not preferred by Japanese speakers – as much as by Hungarian natives (14, 5 vs. 26, 4) – can be observed. The frequency of the strategy-set of IFID+RESPI+REPR further increases compared to the previous two situations. It was presupposed that the strategy of expressing embarrassment would be higher when the interlocutors are equal in rank; this is clearly visible in the diagram. Interestingly, similarly to situations 1 and 2 there is no considerable difference between the frequencies of IFID+RESPE+REPR.

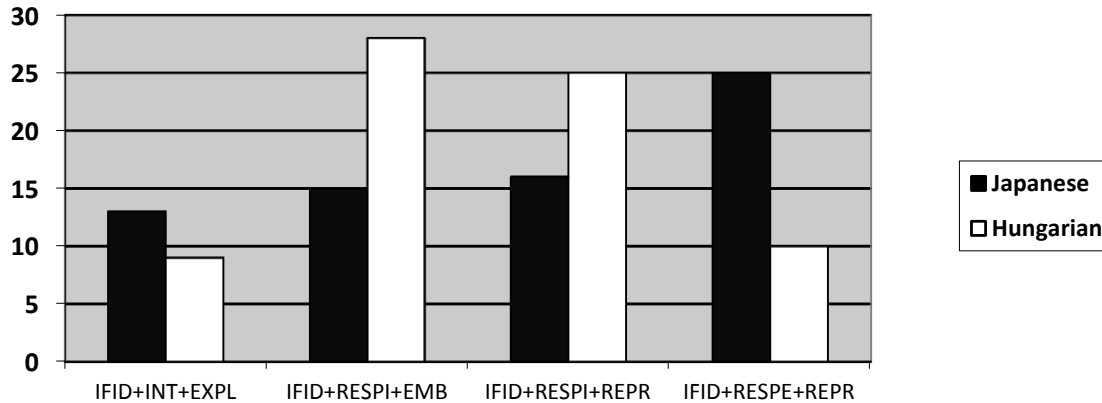## *4.4 Situation 4. Equal in rank, the gravity of the offense is small*

Figure 4: The frequencies of apologizing strategy-sets in situation 4

Figure 4 reports that the difference between the apologizing strategies of Hungarians and Japanese in situation 4 (equal in rank, the gravity of the offence is small) came out as statistically different ($\chi^2(3)=0,005$, $p<0,05$). The most surprising aspect of this is that the strategy-set IFID+INT+EXPL is produced more often by Japanese people (22, 2 vs 12, 5). Frequencies of the other three strategy-sets are as expected, that is firstly, IFID+RESPE+REPR was chosen more often by Japanese than Hungarians (24, 8 compared to 13,9). Secondly, both IFID+RESPI+EMB and IFID+RESPI+REPR are more recurrent among Hungarian speakers.

5 Discussion

5.1 IFID+ self-strategy + expressing shame or embarrassment

As it was mentioned above, the strategy of EMB is the most face-threatening apologizing strategy. Therefore, Hungarians generally employ it in situations where the participants are equal in rank. Accordingly, this tendency can be observed in situations 3 and situation 4. Nonetheless, just the opposite holds in situations 1 and 2 (the participants are not equal) since people do not prefer losing their face when they are in a subordinate position.

As for the Japanese results, Japanese subjects tended to choose the strategy of EMB seemingly more often than Hungarians, though this strategy was claimed to be a unique Hungarian verbal routine by Szili (2003). A possible explanation for this might be that in the Japanese society the most important communicative strategy is not to save your own face but to protect the face of your partner.

As Figure 1-4 shows, while Hungarians do not really favour admitting their fault in front of their superior (since it would be a face-threatening act), Japanese people are prone to use it more frequently. It can therefore be assumed that the verbal routines of their native language (protecting the partner's face by any means) had an influence on choosing EMB in situations where the participants were not equal in rank. This is the direct opposite of the Hungarian preferences.

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Furthermore, as Figure 4 displays, EMB was the most approved strategy – in situations where the participants were close to each other and the offense of the gravity was small – among Hungarian subjects. This result is likely to be related to the fact that the eventuality of losing one's face in a close relationship is remarkably smaller than in disproportionate relations.

5.2   IFID+ self-strategy + offer of repair (promise)

REPR is a strategy that has not been analysed before in the case of Japanese native speakers. Examining closely Figure 1-4, the relative frequency of REPR is increasing. Figure 1 depicts the most face-threatening type of the four situations (the participants are not equal in rank and the gravity of the offense is big). The frequency number expands in situations that are considered to be less face-threatening (Figure 2: the relationship between the participants is uneven and the gravity of the offense is small). The tendency continues in the case of equal participants as well. Therefore, it can be concluded that the less face-threatening a situation is, the more Japanese people are ready to use the offer of repair strategy.

It has to be noted here that one possible drawback of the design is the usage of strategy-sets. Strategy-sets prevent us from clearly realizing how important the influence of a single strategy can be. However, as it is pointed out by various authors there is a strong relationship between negative politeness and the rejection of self-exposing. Hence it is possible that these results are due to using the REPR strategy and not caused by using self-strategies.

5.3   IFID+ expressing lack of intent + explanation or account of the situation

Japanese people do not prefer the strategy of EXPL. They feel uneasy and discomforted if their partner employs this strategy. The reason for this is that EXPL is aimed at protecting one's own and and not one partner's face and this is the exact opposite of the Japanese communicative rules. That is why it was expected that the frequency of EXPL would be much lower in the case of Japanese participants. The results depicted in Figure 1-3 are consistent with our expectations. The tendency that Japanese people dislike the strategy of explanations is discernible. Surprisingly however, the frequency of EXPL was found higher than in the case of Hungarians in situation 4 (the participants are equal in rank and the gravity of the offense is small). The observed increase in the frequency of EXPL in situation 4 could be attributed to two phenomena. Firstly, as Hidasi explains, nowadays, the globalization of the Japanese language can be experienced (Hidasi 2005). Though the main focus of her study is the language of politics the process of language change can easily have an influence on the scope of interpersonal relationships as well. Secondly, close relationships do not require a strict adherence to traditions, conventions or norms, while the opposite is true for situations when someone is in an inferior position. To sum it up, the perceptible difference between Hungarians and Japanese in regard to EXPL – especially in situations 1-3 – further support the hypothesis that negative pragmatic transfer affects the linguistic behaviour of non-native language learners.

5.4   IFID+ an explicit acknowledgement of responsibility + offer of repair (promise)

Prior studies (such as Szili (2003) and Suszczyńska (1999)) have noted that the strategy of RESPE is pronouncedly infrequent among Hungarians and this is owing to the fact that Hungarians are quite reluctant to admitting their own faults. However, the results turned out to

be the exact opposite of the presupposed tendencies. Hungarians chose RESPE as often as Japanese did. A possible explanation for these results may lay in the nature of the applied methodology. Relevant literature has used the WDCT method. WDCT requires language production, not recognition. Differences in the research methods may account for this. Nevertheless, answering this question is a matter of further research.

As expected, the frequency of RESPE among Japanese was very high in all of the four situation-types. This result can be explained by the original hypothesis of this study, namely that the linguistic norms of the native language affected the choice of the strategies.

6   Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the speech act of apologizing in a Japanese-Hungarian intercultural framework. The paper has argued that due to the remarkable presence of negative pragmatic transfer, the language learners' linguistic behaviour is affected by their native language. The results of the experiment strengthened our hypothesis. It has been shown that in all of the four investigated apologizing strategy-sets, the native language of the Japanese subjects had an influence on their second language performance.

However, further investigation and experimentation into this topic is strongly recommended. It would be interesting to compare the results of the present study – with a parallel one with similar (or the same) situations – designed with independent single strategies or using the WDCT method (that aims to measure language production).

The present discussion can be regarded as a pilot study to further research on the apologizing strategies of Japanese native speakers in an interlanguage pragmatic setting. Nonetheless, the results of this analysis provide argument in favour of the necessity of investigating speech acts in general and apologizing norms in particular.

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