The development of apologies in the Japanese L2 of adult English native speakers

Seonaid Beckwith* and Jean-Marc Dewaele**
*RCEAL, University of Cambridge
** Centre for Multilingual & Multicultural Research, Birkbeck, University of London

_____

Abstract

The present paper focuses on the use of seven apologies strategies in the Japanese of 20 adult, high-intermediate English learners/users of Japanese. Nine of these learners had spent a minimum of two years in Japan. The proportions of apology strategies produced by the two groups of learners in response to 8 situations presented to them in a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) were compared with data obtained from a control group of 14 Japanese L1 participants and a control group of 12 British English L1 participants. In total, 1999 tokens of apology strategies were collected. Statistical analyses and an analysis of lexical items allowed us to describe the learners' development and the effect of the stay in Japan.

_____

Introduction

Research on cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics has witnessed explosive growth in recent years (e.g. Barron 2003, Barron and Warga 2007, Kinginger, 2008, Kraft and Geluykens 2007).

This longitudinal and cross-sectional research has been carried out into various language combinations, such as Irish English NSs learning German (Barron 2003), and Austrian German NSs learning French (Warga and Schölmberger 2007). There have also been several studies into Japanese NSs learning English (e.g. Kondo 1997, Matsumura 2007, Park and Nakano 1999), and English L1 learning Japanese (Marriott 1995) and on various speech acts; for example, requests (e.g. Barron 2003, Félix-Brasdefer 2004) and apologies (Warga and Schölmberger 2007, Kondo 1997).

One general finding of these studies is the non-linear nature of pragmatic development, which has been explained in terms of pragmatic transfer from the L1, typical learner behaviour such as over-generalisation, the influence of the 'complexification hypothesis' and the presence or absence of noticing opportunities and negative feedback.

_____

E-mail address for correspondence: *seonaidbeckwith@googlemail.com* and *j.dewaele@bbk.ac.uk*

Relatively little work has been done on the development of apologies of English L1 learners of Japanese (see however Tamanaha 2003). This is a particularly interesting area of research as Japanese politeness strategies are regulated by complex culture-specific norms (Pizziconi 2003, 2007a, b). Okumura and Li Wei (2000) have argued that differences in the cultural concept of self explain different communicative behaviour of British and Japanese participants. The British self is "more independent and public" while the Japanese self is "group-oriented and private" (p. 7). The authors link this cultural distinction to their finding that Japanese participants apologised not only for themselves but also on behalf of family members. Japanese participants also used elaborate combinations of strategies when apologising to close friends. In contrast, British participants used simple strategies and apologised only for what they had done themselves (p. 20).

The originality of the present study also lies in the selection of the second experimental group. While most studies focus on the effect of a single academic year abroad, the present study looks at a number of participants who have spent at least two years in the target language community.

The analysis focuses on the use of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), explanations, verbal redress, intensifiers, offers of repair, and acceptance of responsibility by L2 learners/users who lived in Japan and compares this with strategy choices of learners who have not lived in Japan and with baseline data from English and Japanese NSs.

First, we will provide a brief review of several studies in this area, before moving on to describe the method used, participants and results, finally linking the findings with results from other researchers, and discussing possible explanations for the findings.

Background

There have been several studies which focus on the effect of proficiency on pragmatic competence (cf. Rose 2000, Sabaté i Dalmau and Curell i Gotor 2007, Trosborg 1995). These researchers report that in many cases grammatical and pragmatic competence seem to develop together but relatively independently. Individual differences have been linked to learning context and time spent in the target language community.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) looked at the pragmatic awareness of advanced Hungarian EFL learners of English and compared it with that of advanced ESL learners living in the USA. They found that the EFL students rated grammatical errors as worse than pragmatic ones, whereas the ESL students did the opposite, acting in the same way as the control group of English NSs, leading to the idea that studying in the target language community gives rise to increased pragmatic awareness, and possibly improved pragmatic competence.

Other studies have followed students who studied abroad. Warga and Schölmberger (2007) investigate the effect of study abroad on the

pragmatic development of the apologies of seven Austrian L1 learners of French, who spent 10 months in Quebec. Data was also taken from native speakers of Quebecois French and Austrian German. The results were mixed: some aspects moved towards the L2 norm (for example, the number of justifications used decreased), some did not change (for example overuse of IFID), and some moved away from the L2 norm (for example, use of upgraders). Interestingly, the excuse rather than the IFID was the most common strategy used by the learners, which is different both from the usual findings and from the NS norm in both languages.

Félix-Brasdefer (2004) studied the refusals of English L1 learners of Spanish from the USA who had spent various amounts of time, ranging from 1 to 30 months, in Latin America and compared the results with baseline data from English and Spanish NSs. He found pragmatic development occurred over the 30 months, with participants who had spent at least nine months in the target language community demonstrating more native-like refusals, using more lexical and syntactic mitigation and more negotiation, than those who had spent less than five months abroad.

Barron (2003) investigated a group of Irish (English L1) learners of German who spent an academic year in Germany as part of their degree program. She also found some aspects of the learners' language became more native-like but other aspects moved away form the L2 norm (e.g. use of 'kein problem' - a direct translation of 'no problem' a minimizer in English but not German). Evidence of negative transfer was also apparent even after time abroad. Learners' pragmalinguistic competence appeared to increase as they were able to make more complex requests and use a wider range of strategies, including internal modification, than before their time abroad. However, their sociopragmatic competence seemed to develop more slowly, as, although the students achieved some situational variation, it did not always correspond to the L2 norm.

Kondo (1997) studied Japanese learners of English who spent a year in the USA. She found that many of their apology strategies, such as the use of explanation, or the percentage of utterances containing an IFID, moved closer to the L2 norm and that the amount of negative transfer decreased during the learners' time abroad. However, the tendency to use repeated IFIDs, characteristic of Japanese rather than American apologies did not change during the time. On the other hand, there were also a few moves away from the L2 norm, for example, the learners overused the 'concern for hearer' strategy.

While Marriott (1995) did not look at a particular speech act, she studied Australian high school students of Japanese who spent one year in Japan, and found that while most of them at the beginning of their stay used the neutrally polite form of the verb (e.g. 飲みます *nomimasu* '(I) drink'), during their time abroad they began to use the plain or familiar form (飲む *nomu* '(I) drink'). However, they over-generalised this form, which Japanese NSs use with friends and family, using it in formal situations, for example with the interviewer during data collection, and

switching apparently randomly between the two forms. They also did not develop their use of address forms, continuing to refer to out-group third parties without the use of the polite さん 'san' with the name, something which is very negatively evaluated by native speakers. There were, however, some moves towards the L2 norm; for example, the students increased their use of politeness routines, and opening and closing formulae towards native-like competence.

In summary, these studies point out some important effects towards and away from the L2 norm that can be triggered by time abroad, but also stress the non-linear nature of this kind of pragmatic development.

Method

Participants

Data were collected from a total of 46 participants: two control groups of monolinguals (English and Japanese NSs), and two groups of high-intermediate English NS learners/users of Japanese. The first experimental group of English NS students (which will be referred to as NNS1) consists of eleven participants (5 women, 6 men, age 20–55, mean age 34) who had studied Japanese only in the UK and had spent no more time in Japan than a two-week holiday. The second experimental group (NNS2) consists of nine participants (6 women, 3 men, age 28–43, mean age 32) who had spent at least eight months studying or working in Japan. In this group, four learners had spent more than two years living in Japan.

The learners were drawn from several different intermediate level classes (Japanese classes at Birkbeck, SOAS, and Alpha Japanese Language School, all in London). The groups are fairly small, but they are comparable with several other studies in the area, such as Félix-Brasdefer (2004), who had six participants in each group.

The first control group consisted of 14 British English NSs (hence NSE) (7 women, 7 men, age 25–55, mean age 34). The second control group consisted of 12 Japanese NSs (hence NSJ) (8 women, 4 men, age 25–56, mean age 37).

The research instrument

All the participants were asked to complete a discourse completion task (DTC), which was written in both English and Japanese, to avoid any problem of comprehension for the learners. The eight apology situations used have already been validated by several studies e.g. Sabaté i Dalmau and Curell i Gotor (2007), Trosborg (1995). The situations included various social settings and different levels of social distance and social dominance. See appendix A for the full questionnaire.

DCTs have been shown to have both strengths and weaknesses. Geluykens (2007: 35) points out that 'they cannot provide authentic speech but only written approximations'. The data elicited through DCTs

is therefore not comparable to natural spoken language. The fact that there is no turn-taking and that the emotional investment is quite different when facing a sheet of paper compared to facing an actual person is undeniable. One more potential problem with DCTs is that they may elicit descriptions of facts, and are subject to being misunderstood by participants. In the present study, this was minimised by having instructions in both Japanese and English; however one participant's DCT had to be disregarded as he had misunderstood the instructions. The redeeming feature of DCTs is that they 'can provide insights into what subjects *think* they would do in a certain situation, in the process revealing tendencies or penchants for certain formulations and routine behaviours' (2007: 36). Also, data can be quickly collected, and the context can be easily controlled and varied. For these reasons, they are much used in acquisitional pragmatics (see e.g. Sabaté i Dalmau and Curell i Gotor, 2007).

The situations used in the present study were as follows:
1. A university lecturer has not finished marking a student's essay (unfinished marking).
2. A student has forgotten to bring a lecturer's book that he/she borrowed (forgotten book).
3. The manager of a café is late to begin an interview with a candidate (late manager).
4. A waiter brings the wrong dish to a customer (wrong dish).
5. A student is late to meet a friend (late student).
6. A person bumps his/her car into another car in a car park (bumped car).
7. An office worker offends a colleague during a meeting (offended colleague).
8. A person's bag falls onto another person on a bus (fallen bag).

Coding

The coding categories used were based on the CCSARP coding manual, Blum-Kulka et al (1989), and Kondo (1997).

Seven categories of apology strategies were created: 1) IFID; 2) Repeated IFIDs; 3) Explanation; 4) Acceptance of responsibility; 5) Offer of repair; 6) Verbal Redress; 7) Intensifier[1].

An IFID is a typical expression used to apologise. In English, an example of an IFID would be 'I'm sorry' or 'I apologise', whereas in Japanese the most common IFIDs are ごめなさい(*gomenasai)* 'I'm sorry' and すみません (*sumimasen*) 'I'm sorry', 'excuse me'. Other IFIDs are ごめん (*gomen)* 'sorry', ごめんね (*gomenne)* 'sorry'. The three following IFIDs mean 'I'm sorry', literally: 'it's inexcusable'), with increasingly polite verbs: もうしわけない (*moushiwakenai),* もうしわけありません (*moushiwake arimasen),* もうしわけございません (*moushiwake gozaimansen).* The next two IFIDs mean 'I'm sorry',

literally: 'I'm being rude', with the second verb being more polite: しつ
れいします (*shitsurei shimasu),* しつれいいたしました *(shitsurei
itashimashita).* The final two IFIDs are ゆるしてください (*yurushite
kudasai)* 'Please forgive me' and おまたせしました (*omatase
shimashita)* 'I'm sorry for being late'. A repetition of IFIDs was coded
separately.

The next category was the use of an explanation to apologize, such as
e.g. バスが遅れました *(basu ga okuremashita)* 'The bus was late'.

Acceptance of responsibility could be a statement of the thing that the
speaker has done wrong: e.g. 本を忘れました (*hon wo wasuremashita*) 'I
have forgotten the book'; the same as previously with verb-*te
shimaimashita*: e.g. 本を忘れてしまいました *(hon wo
wasureteshimaimashita)* 'I have unfortunately forgotten the book'
(discussed below); explicit self-blame: e.g. 悪かった (*warukatta*) 'That
was bad (of me)'; lack of intent: e.g. 違いました (*chigaimashita)* 'I made
a mistake'.

Offers of repair could either be straight: e.g. 明日持ってきます
'*ashitamottekimasu'* ('I'll bring it tomorrow') or could be accompanied
by a request: e.g. 明日はだいじょうぶですか (*ashita wa daijoubu desu ka)*
'Is it okay if I bring it tomorrow?'

Verbal redress could either be an expression of concern for the hearer:
e.g. だいじょうぶですか (*daijoubu desu ka)* 'Are you okay?' or a promise
of forbearance: e.g. それは再び起こりません (*sore wa futatabi
okorimasen*) 'It won't happen again'.

Intensification with an adverb inside the IFID constitutes the last
category: ほんとうに (*hontou ni*) 'really' and たいへん (*taihen*)
'terribly'.

There was, however, one strategy for which the coding category was
unclear, as mentioned earlier. In Japanese it is possible to convey a sense
of regret about an action by using the expression verb-*te shimaimashita*.
Compare the first utterance, which is simply a statement of fact:
私はコーヒーを落としました
watashi ha kohi wo otoshimashita
(I topic marker coffee direct object marker drop past)
('I dropped the coffee')
and the second utterance which includes the speaker's regret:
私はコーヒーを落としてしまいました
watashi ha kohi wo otoshite shimaimashita
I regrettably dropped the coffee / I unfortunately dropped the coffee and
I'm embarrassed about it.

Meier (1997) has a category for 'negative feelings' in which he
includes the speaker's being embarrassed, and in Warga and
Schölmberger (2007), excuses are divided into those that include the word
malheureusement ('unfortunately'), which could be a good translation of
verb-te shimaimashita, and those which do not. However, in Blum-Kulka

et al.'s CCSARP coding manual (1989), an expression of embarrassment is coded under 'taking on responsibility' and, as this expression can only occur with a statement of responsibility, we have decided to code it as a subset of that category.

The same coding scheme was used for the English apology strategies. The most frequent IFIDs for the NSE were: *I'm sorry, I apologise* and *Excuse me*. Intensification included the following words: *really, very, so, terribly, extremely*.

Research questions

1) Is the distribution of apology strategies comparable among our NSE and NSJ?
2) If not, is the distribution of apology strategies different in the two NNS groups (NNS1 and NNS2)?
3) Does the distribution of the NNS groups approximate the Japanese or the British English NS distribution patterns more closely?
4) Which lexical items are used by the groups of learners and the NSJ?

Results

Table 1 shows how the 1999 tokens of apology strategies are distributed per group and type of apology strategy.

Table 1: Total number of apology strategies produced by Native speakers of English (NSE), Non Native speakers of Japanese who had not been in Japan (NNS1), Non Native speakers of Japanese who had been in Japan (NNS2), and Native speakers of Japanese (NSJ)

| Group	IFID	Re-peated IFID	Explana-tion	Accept-ance respon-sibility	Offer repair	Verbal Redress	Intensi-fier	Total
NSE	101	3	28	97	19	56	97	401
NNS1	321	24	9	64	19	7	12	456
NNS2	276	74	5	49	22	4	14	444
NSJ	375	82	28	83	71	16	43	698

We calculated the proportion of apology strategies for every participant as this permitted a statistical analysis of the data. Independent samples t-tests were used to determine the differences in the proportion of a particular apology strategy between NSE and NSJ, NS1 and NNS2, NNS1/2 and NSJ, NNS1/2 and NSE.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of apology strategies across the four groups of speakers. What strikes immediately is the difference between

the NSE and the NSJ, with the learners approximating the target language distribution.

In the following sections we will look at the differences between the four groups for each apology strategy.

Figure 1: Distribution of the 7 apology strategies produced by the NSE, the NNS1 and NNS2 and the NSJ
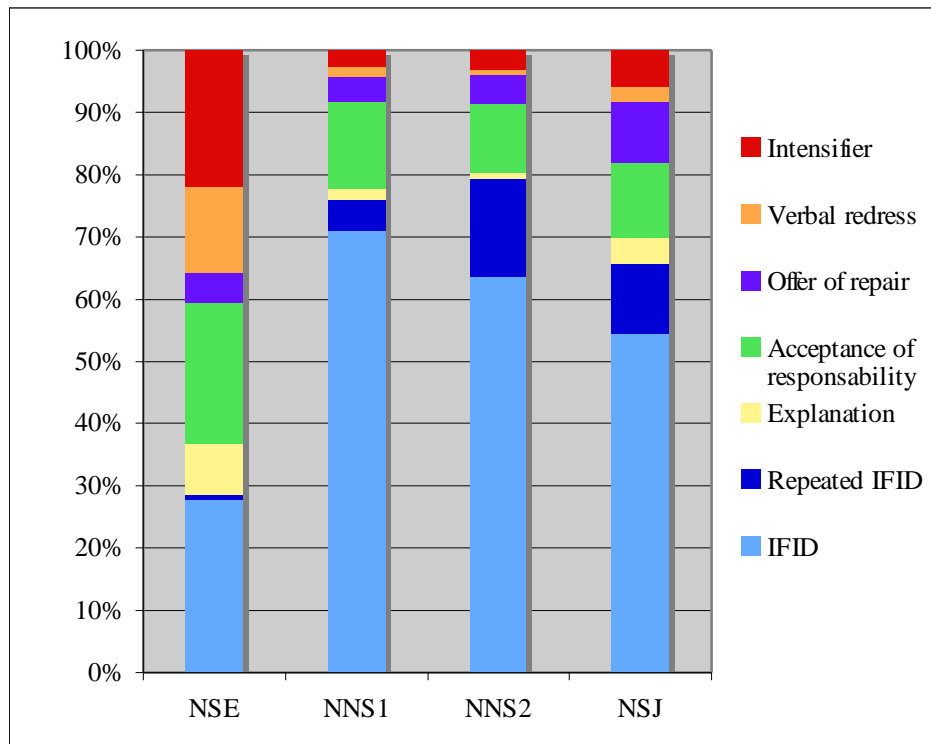
IFIDs

The proportion of IFIDs used by NSJ (Mean = 54.6%, SD = 9.0) is significantly higher (t = -7.0, p < .0001) than the proportion of IFIDs in the apology strategies of the NSE (27.6%, SD = 10.4).

The difference between both groups of learners is not statistically significant (Mean NNS1 = 70.8%, SD = 9.5 compared to Mean NNS2 = 63.6%, SD = 14.1 respectively; t = 1.3, p = ns).

A comparison between NNS1 and NSJ shows a significant difference (t = 4.2, p < .0001). The difference between NNS2 and NSJ is not significant anymore (t = 1.8, p = .09). The proportions of this strategy are significantly different between NNS1 and NSE (t = -10.7, p < .0001) and so is the difference between NNS2 and NSE (t = -7.0, p < .0001).

A closer analysis of data on specific situations showed that the 'unfinished marking' situation invited the fewest IFIDs in general, while the 'bumped car' situation elicited the fewest from the NSE. The NNS1 are closer to the NSE in this latter situation, using an IFID in 91% of

utterances, while the NNS2 use an IFID in 100% of utterances like the NSJ. This could be seen as a move towards the L2 norm.

The 'late student' situation also elicited significantly fewer IFIDs from the NSE than from any of the NSJ; both groups of learners and the NSJ used an in IFID in 100% of utterances in this situation. On the other hand, all the groups including the NSE used an IFID 100% of the time in the 'wrong dish' situation.

Repetition of IFIDs

NSJ used a repeated IFID (i.e. used a word meaning 'sorry' more than once), significantly more ($t = -4.7$, $p < .0001$) than NSE (Mean NSJ = 11.2%, SD = 7.9 compared to Mean NSE = 0.8%, SD = 2.2).

The difference between both groups of learners is also significant ($t = -2.5$, $p < .022$) with NNS1 using fewer repeated IFIDs (Mean = 4.9%, SD = 9.5) compared to NNS2 (Mean = 15.7%, SD = 9.4)

A comparison between NNS1 and NSJ shows a non-significant difference ($t = -1.7$, $p = .10$). The difference between NNS2 and NSJ is not significant either ($t = 1.2$, $p = $ ns). The proportions of the repeated IFID strategy are not significantly different between NNS1 and NSE is ($t = -1.6$, $p = $ ns) but the difference between NNS2 and NSE is highly significant ($t = -5.7$, $p < .0001$).

Choice of IFIDs

As Sabaté i Dalmau and Curell i Gotor (2007) suggest, English has a very small number of lexical items to draw from in apologies. They compared English to Catalan; however the same is true of Japanese, which uses a much wider range of lexical items to apologise than English, making the choice of an IFID a problem for English NS learners. The data show that in fact the choice of IFID by both groups of learners differed significantly from that of the NSJ.

The most frequently used IFIDs were すみません (*sumimasen*, meaning 'I'm sorry' or 'excuse me'), ごめなさい / ごめん / ごめんね (*gomenasai / gomen / gomenne)*, also translated as 'I'm sorry' or 'sorry') and 申し訳ありません / 申し訳ございません (*moushiwake arimasen / moushiwake gozaimasen*, literally 'it's inexcusable' but generally translated as 'I'm sorry'). This latter is more formal than the previous two. (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Proportion of types of IFIDS used by the NNS1, NNS2 and NSJ.
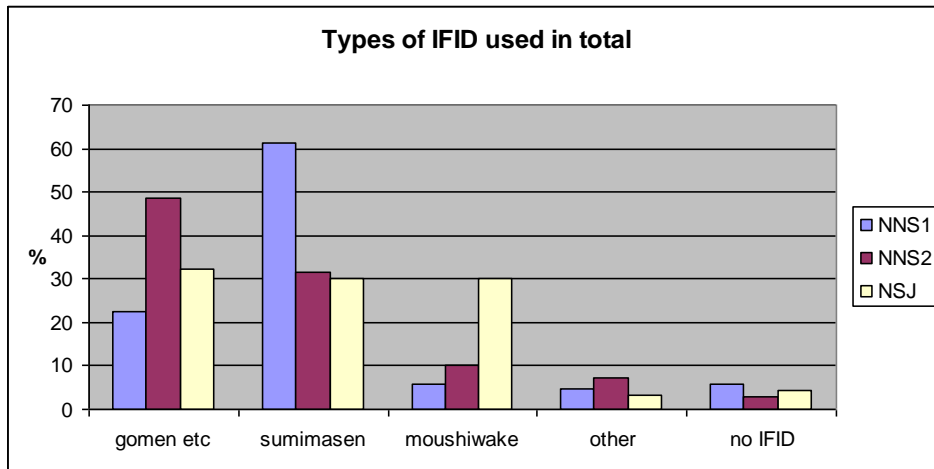

Figure 3 also shows that NNS1 overuse *sumimasen* compared to the NSJ using it 61% (n = 52) compared to the NSJ's 30% (n = 28). NNS2 seem closer to the L2 norm in their use of *sumimasen*; however their use of *gomenasai* etcetera (49%, n = 34) also differs from the Japanese (32%, n = 30). Neither NNS1 nor NNS2 use *moushiwake arimasen* etcetera in a way that approximates the L2 norm.

In the 'wrong dish' situation, every utterance from both the NSJ and both groups of learners contained an IFID. However the kind of IFID used differed considerably, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Proportion of types of IFIDS used by the NNS1, NNS2 and NSJ in response to the 'wrong dish' situation.
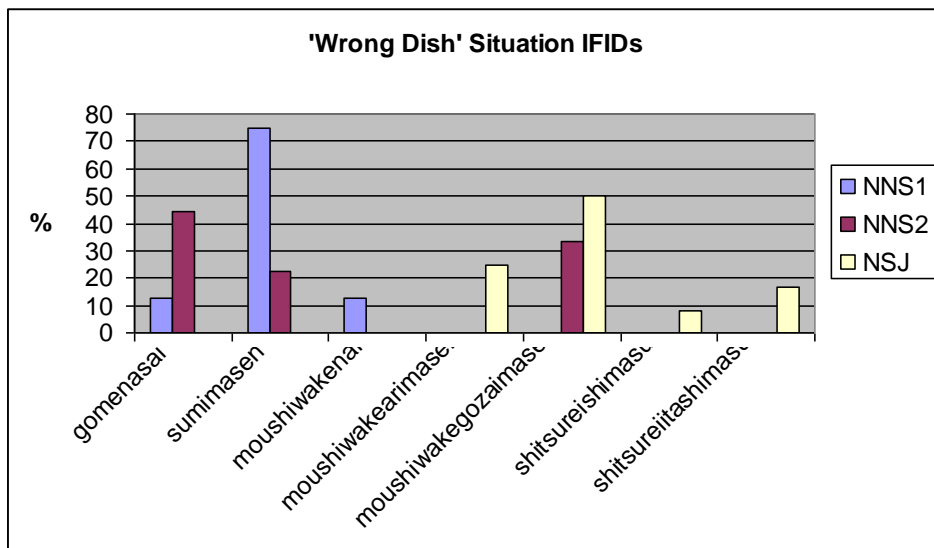
In this situation, NNS2 used *sumimasen*, which is a polite neutral form, less than the NNS1 group, who rely very heavily on it and so are closer to

the NSJ who do not use *sumimasen* at all. There also appears to be development towards the target language norm in the use of *moushiwake gozaimasen.* This IFID is used by the NSJ in half of utterances, compared to a third for NNS2. However, it is not used at all by the NNS1 group. The learners' apparent closeness to the L2 norm is only due in part to the more idiomatic use of *sumimasen* and *moushiwake arimasen.* It is also due to the overuse of *gomenasai* by NNS2. This IFID was not present in any utterance by a Japanese NS in situation 4, as it is too informal for this kind of situation. However, it is used by both groups of learners and more by NNS2.

Equally unlike the NSJ, neither of the two groups of learners use *shitsurei shimasu / itashimashita* at all.

In the more casual 'late student' situation, however, the NNS2 are closer to the L2 norm. NNS2 use *gomenasai* more often than NNS1 but less than NSJ. One NNS1 participant also used the unidiomatic *sumimasen.*

Explanations / Excuses

Kondo (1997: 271) points out, "Japanese have a tendency for not explaining the offence compared to Americans," suggesting that in Japanese using this strategy shows too much concern for one's own face. In contrast, our data show that NSE do use more explanations than NSJ, but not significantly so (t = 1.5, p = ns). In total, the NSE used an explanation in 8.2% (SD = 9.4) of all the utterances, compared to a mean of 4.1% (SD = 2.3) for the NSJ.

Both sets of learners used very few explanations (Mean NNS1 = 1.9%, SD = 2.0) (Mean NNS2 = 1.0%, SD = 1.3) and the difference between both groups is not significant (t = 1.2, p = ns). The difference between NNS1 and NSJ is significant (t = -2.2, p < .037) and so is the difference between NNS2 and NSJ (t = -3.5, p < .002).

The proportions of this strategy are also significantly different between NNS1 and NSE is (t = 2.2, p < .041) and so is the difference between NNS2 and NSE (t = 2.3, p < .034).

Accepting responsibility

Many of the participants used the 'accepting responsibility' strategy. In most cases this was a straightforward statement of what happened, e.g. 本を忘れました *(hon wo wasuremashita)* 'I forgot to bring your book'. The NSE (Mean = 22.8%, SD = 12.0) use this strategy significantly more (t = 2.8, p < .009) than the NSJ (12.0%, SD = 5.5).

No significant difference emerges between NNS1 and NNS2 (t = 1.2, p = ns), with both groups hovering near the target norm (Mean NNS1 = 13.9%, SD = 4.9 and Mean NNS2 = 11.0%, SD = 5.5). Not surprisingly, both learner groups are not significantly different from the NSJ (t = 0.85, p = ns and t = -0.43, p = ns).

The proportions of this strategy are also significantly different between NNS1 and NSE (t = 2.3, p < .031) and so is the difference between NNS2 and NSE (t = 2.8, p < .012).

In Japanese many of these statements include the form *verb-te shimaimashita* at the end of the sentence, which conveys a sense of regret e.g. 'unfortunately I forgot to bring your book'. The Japanese use this expression in a statement of responsibility in about a fifth of utterances, which is slightly more than the NNS1 and NNS2.

Offer of repair

Typical offers of repair in our data were 'I'll bring your book tomorrow'.

The NSJ were found to use almost twice as many offers of repair compared to the NSE (Mean NSJ = 9.9%%, SD = 5.2 and Mean NSE = 4.7%, SD = 10.4 respectively. This difference is significant (t = -3.0, p < .006).

The difference between both groups of learners is not statistically significant (Mean NNS1 = 3.9%, SD = 4.6 compared to Mean NNS2 = 4.7%, SD = 4.7 respectively; t = -0.3, p = ns).

The difference between the NSJ and both groups of learners are significant (t = -2.8, p < .0001 for NNS1 and t = -2.3, p < .0001 for NNS2), showing that the learners are still some way from the target language proportions for this apology strategy.

The difference between the NSE and NNS1 is not significant (t = 0.5, p = ns) and so is the difference between NSE and NNS2 (t = 0.2, p = ns), which suggests that the learners were still influenced by the L1 proportion in their Japanese apology strategies.

Verbal redress

The verbal redress category includes 'promise of forbearance' (e.g. I won't do it again) and 'showing concern for the hearer' (e.g. are you okay?). Our corpus had very few examples of the former. The NSE used this strategy significantly more than the NSJ (Mean NSE = 13.8%, SD = 6.3 and Mean NSJ: 2.3%, SD = 0.7) (t = 6.2, p < .0001). The difference between both groups of learners is not significant (Mean NNS1 = 1.6%, SD = 1.7 compared to Mean NNS2 = 0.8%, SD = 1.4 respectively; t = 1.1, p = ns).

The difference between NSJ and NNS1 is not significant (t = -1.3, p = ns for NNS1) but it is significant between NSJ and NNS2 (t = -3.2, p < .005 for NNS2).

The learners have clearly moved away from the proportions of this strategy in their L1: the difference between the NSE and NNS1 is significant (t = 6.2, p < .0001) and so is the difference between NSE and NNS2 (t = 6.0, p < .0001).

Intensifiers

The NSE used this strategy more frequently than the NSJ (Mean NSE = 21.8%, SD = 13.6 and Mean NSJ = 5.9%, SD = 3.8; t = 3.9, p < .001).

The difference between both groups of learners is not significant (Mean NNS1 = 2.7%, SD = 3.1 compared to Mean NNS2 = 3.1%, SD = 2.6 respectively; t = -0.3, p = ns).

The difference between the NSJ and the first group of learners is significant (t = -2.2, p < .04 for NNS1) but it is not significant for the second group (t = -2.0, p = .07 for NNS2).

The learners have also moved away from the proportions of this strategy in their L1: the difference between the NSE and NNS1 is significant (t = 4.5, p < .0001) and so is the difference between NSE and NNS2 (t = 4.0, p < .001).

Although in English a far smaller range of IFIDs was used, the range of adverbs used as intensifiers to make the apology stronger was much larger, including 'very', 'so', 'terribly', 'really', and 'extremely', whereas the NSJ used only two adverbs as intensifiers, ほんとうに (*hontou ni*, meaning 'really') and たいへん (*taihen*, 'terribly'). Learners were found to use *hontou ni* as an intensifier. However *taihen* is hardly used as an intensifier at all by the learners. Moreover, the learners who did use *taihen* used it in random situations, whereas the NSJ used it in situations requiring a high level of formality, such as the 'wrong dish' situation.

Discussion

Table 2 presents a quick overview of the differences in proportions of 7 apology strategies between the different pairs of participants.

Table 2: Overview of the differences in proportions of apology strategies between the different pairs

Strategy	NSE/ NSJ	NNS1/ NNS2	NNS1/ NSJ	NNS2/ NSJ	NNS1/ NSE	NNS2/ NSE
IFIDs	***	ns	***	ns	***	***
Repeated IFIDs	***	*	ns	ns	ns	***
Explanations	ns	ns	*	**	*	*
Acceptance of responsibility	**	ns	ns	ns	*	*
Offer of repair	**	ns	***	***	ns	ns
Verbal redress	***	ns	ns	**	***	***
Intensifiers	**	ns	*	ns	***	***

ns: p >.05, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

The results show that differences in proportions between NSE and NSJ are significant in 6 out of 7 apology strategies. Differences between the two learner groups are only significant for repeated IFIDs. As would be expected the NNS1 is more often significantly different from the

values of the NSJ (4 out of 7) than the NNS2 (only 3 out of 7). On the other hand, NNS1 is closer to NSE values for 2 strategies compared to only 1 strategy for NNS2.

Both groups of learners have approximated the NSJ proportion of the strategy "acceptance of responsibility". This strategy is much more frequent among the NSE than among the NSJ and yet even the learners who had not stayed in Japan used it close to NSJ's proportions. The other strategies that both groups of learners had picked up were the use of repeated IFIDs and the acceptance of responsibility.

There are two strategies where the NNS2 are closer to the NSJ proportions than the NNS1, which could be interpreted as development of pragmatic competence resulting from the stay in Japan. It concerns the use of the use of intensifiers and IFIDs.

The IFID was the most frequently used strategy across the different groups. This is in line with the findings of many studies of both learners' and native speakers' apologies (with the exception of Warga and Schölmberger (2007), who found that more excuses were used than IFIDs).

There was no evidence of negative transfer as NNS2 approximated the NSJ proportion, and the NNS1 even "overshot" it. The more frequent use of IFIDs by the NSJ compared to the NSE confirms the findings of Kondo (1997) and Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) who looked at the differences between American and Japanese apology strategies. Maeshiba et al (1996) and Okumura and Li Wei (2000), suggest that Japanese NSs in general use more IFIDs and upgrade more when they are apologising to a higher status person than to an equal or lower. For example, in their study, which includes some of the same situations, more IFIDs are used when the student apologises to the professor for forgetting his/her book, than when the professor apologises to a student for not having marked his/her essay, whereas a group of NS American English speakers used a similar amount of IFIDs and upgraders in both situations. However, although the NSJ in the present study did use fewer IFIDs for the 'unfinished marking' situation than the 'forgotten book' situation, the mainly British English NSs followed the same pattern, in contrast to Maeshiba et al, though this may reflect a difference in British and American culture.

The use of repeated IFIDs was one of two strategies in our study that both groups of learners had picked up (the other one being acceptance of responsibility). The use of repeated IFIDs is very rare in English, yet both groups of learners approximated the NSJ proportion. The NNS2 had even slightly surpassed the NSJ proportion. Studies by Kondo (1997), Maeshiba et al (1996), and Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) suggest a high use of repeated IFIDs as a feature of Japanese apology, and Kondo suggests that the strategy of repeated IFID indicates sincerity in Japanese. Warga and Schölmberger (2007) found that Austrian learners of Quebecois French repeated IFIDs more often than either Austrian or Quebecois NSs, and this repetition increased with time spent in the target language community. They suggest that this could be due to typical

learner behaviour such as a desire to be direct or to the 'waffle phenomenon' (c.f. Hassall 2003), according to which learners tend to use more words than native speakers to say the same thing. However, as there was no evidence of the waffle phenomenon in any other area, decrease of negative pragmatic transfer and an over-generalisation of the L2 norm may be a more likely explanation for the results. Our results support Barron (2003) who found that some kinds of pragmatic transfer decreased over the year her Irish students of German spent abroad, such as the use of 'are you sure?' and 'I wonder' translated literally into German as part of requests and offers. Kondo (1997) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) also report a decrease in pragmatic transfer with an increasing length of stay.

Barron (2003) suggests that this decrease in transfer happens because the learners' ideas of the transferability of certain forms change; for example, the learners became explicitly aware that German people do not make ritual re-offers in the same way that Irish do and so consciously reduced their use of this form. She suggests that this was due to either the availability of noticing opportunities in the target language community, or negative feedback / pragmatic failure.

On the other hand, a lack of available negative feedback, or the appropriate salient input may mean learners do not become aware of the inappropriacy of certain forms. This may go some way towards explaining the participants' choice of IFID, which also showed divergence from the target language norm, with NNS1 overusing the neutral *sumimasen* and NNS2 the more informal *gomenasai*. This seems to have parallels with the findings of Marriott (1996) about the use of verb forms in Japanese. She found that Australian learners of Japanese on exchange in Japan used the neutral/polite form more than the plain/informal form before leaving Australia, but reversed this after time in Japan, overusing the informal form, even when inappropriate. She also stresses the importance of negative feedback, citing the case of a student who reversed this overuse of the informal form after her return to Australia because of negative feedback from her Australian teacher.

Although a few NNS2 students used *moushiwake arimasen,* neither group used *shitsurei shimasu.* The tendency not to use these last two may however be due to teaching rather than developmental issues. Although *moushiwake arimasen* is mentioned in the textbook that most of the students were working from, it is translated as 'excuse me'. Equally, *shitsurei shimasu*, which all the students certainly know as it is usually taught in the first or second lesson of Japanese, is presented as a way to excuse oneself when entering a room or interrupting, and not as a way to apologise for a mistake.

Three participants in NNS2 used *moushiwake arimasen* in a native-like way. Interestingly, these three students were among those who had spent the longest (more than two years) in the target community. Although being too small a sample to be representative, these students had a more native-like pragmatic competence than the learners who had

lived in Japan for less than two years, tentatively suggesting that a number of years rather than a number of months is necessary for pragmatic development to take off. However, Félix-Brasdefer (2004) suggests that nine months is the amount of time needed in the target language community to make a difference, while in Olshtain and Blum-Kulka's study (1986) of non-native speakers living in Israel, it is suggested that five years might be needed before supportive moves in requests and apologies became native-like. In Barron (2003), the increase in use of pragmatic routines was not recorded until near the end of the year abroad; however as sociopragmatic competence was still low, she suggests that one academic year abroad is not enough to acquire a native-like pragmatic competence.

These differing suggestions regarding the amount of time required may confirm the findings of Matsumura (2003), who found that the Japanese L1 students he followed spent the same amount of time in Anglophone Canada studying English but their exposure varied hugely, with some preferring to stay inside the Japanese community and rarely speaking English outside the language classroom, whereas others read in English, made English speaking friends and watched English TV. He suggests therefore that amount of exposure rather than length of stay in itself is the important factor.

In our data, explanations, offers of repair, and verbal redress were used by both groups of learners far less than either English or Japanese NSs, with no sign of development towards the target language norm. There was little evidence of pragmatic transfer, however, as the English and Japanese NSs used these strategies a similar amount. This may have to do with the learners' ideas about transferability, and the large grammatical differences between Japanese and English, which could discourage transfer. Indeed, even in cases of intensifiers such as the use of *hontou ni* ('really') or *taihen* ('terribly') which can in fact be easily transferred as they can be directly translated and are even placed before the IFID in the same way as in English, the learners hardly transfer. Perhaps a perceived lack of transferability could lead to positive transfer not taking place. This is also the kind of situation which would not lead to pragmatic failure or receive negative feedback, so the learners may never become explicitly aware of the problem.

Both groups of learners used the final strategy 'accepting responsibility' less frequently than the NSE, moving towards the proportion used by the NSJ. However, both groups use the *verb-te shimaimashita* ending less than the NSJ with NNS2 using it the least. Barron (2007) suggests that the 'complexification hypothesis' may be able to explain a similar result which she obtained with the use of upgraders by learners of German, having also ruled out negative transfer. She points out that this hypothesis, while originally used to explain syntactic acquisition, can also be used to explain pragmatic development. Learners have to first be confident about using the head act strategy of the speech act before they are able to add modification; before this stage is

reached, the use of upgraders "triggers cognitive difficulties" (Barron 2007: 132). It seems then that the complexification hypothesis may be useful in explaining some of the non-native like utterances the learners produced: the lack of use of *verb-te shimaimashita,* for example, which adds another level of complexity to the utterance, and so may be difficult for learners to use, even though the form is familiar to them, and even after some time in the target language community.

A final point concerns the danger of interpreting deviation from the target language norm as an indication of a violation of L2 norms or incomplete pragmatic competence in the L2. Dewaele (2008) pointed out that L2 users can consciously refuse to accommodate towards the L2 norm because it puts them in conflict with their image of self and their beliefs. Matsumura (2007) presents an example of this conscious deviation from the target language norm. Two Japanese students who had stayed in Anglophone Canada pointed out that they preferred to opt out (i.e., not give advice to someone with a higher status) and act according to the Japanese sociocultural norm in English (2007: 186) though they were aware that according to the Canadian norm, it is acceptable to give advice to somebody with a higher social status.

Limitations of the present study

The participants returned from Japan at various times in the past. Although many studies do not mention this point, e.g. Félix-Brasdefer (2004), Matsumura (2007), Regan (2005) have shown that the length of time since the period abroad finished has an effect on learners' pragmatic or sociolinguistic competence. Matsumura re-tested his Japanese L1 students of English who had spent time in Anglophone Canada one year after their return to Japan, and found that some of them, having developed their level of pragmatic awareness while abroad, reverted to closer to the Japanese norm after returning home.

We are also aware that the sample involved in the present study is relatively small, which limits its generalizability. Also for this reason, the numbers of men and women in each group was felt to be too small to allow for testing for a gender effect. It would be interesting to explore this in future research using a larger sample as gender has been linked to apology strategies in native and non-native English (Ogiermann 2007).

Finally, because our situations all involved participants having to apologise for an offence they had committed themselves, we could not investigate variation linked to the Japanese concept of self, i.e. apologies uttered for the behaviour of close members of the family (Okumura and Li Wei 2000). It would have been interesting to check whether our NNS2 had picked up this culture-specific apology strategy, which is quite rare in British culture (Okumura and Li Wei 2000).

Conclusion

This study has focused on the development of the apologetic behaviour of high-intermediate English L1 learners of Japanese, comparing a group who have spent an extended period of time in Japan with a group who have studied Japanese solely in the UK. The data show that time spent in the target language community can trigger pragmatic development, but also point to the non-linear nature of this development, in agreement with many other studies (e.g. Barron 2003, Warga and Schölmberger 2007).

Three main patterns emerged. In some cases, a developmental pattern towards the L2 norm appeared, perhaps due to a lessening of negative pragmatic transfer triggered by time spent in the target language community; for example, in use of repeated IFIDs. In all other cases, there was no significant difference in the strategy use of both groups of learners; for example, in the general use of intensifiers, explanation, offer of repair and verbal redress, and so no evidence of pragmatic development towards the target language norm (with the exception of repeated IFIDs). These also did not show evidence of pragmatic transfer as the NSE data did not differ to any great extent from that of the NSJ. Finally, there was also evidence of a move away from the target language norm in the choice of some IFIDs.

Some possible explanations for lack of development or development away from the target language norm could include negative transfer, the complexity of the task, the lack of negative feedback and the perceived lack of transferability of strategies.

Acknowledgments

Notes

 1. See appendix 2 for the full coding scheme used.

References

Bardovi-Harlig, K. & Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Do language learners recognize pragmatic violations? Pragmatic versus grammatical awareness in instructed L2 learning. *TESOL Quarterly,* 32 (2), 233-262.

Barnlund, D. & Yoshioka, M. (1990). Apologies: Japanese and American styles. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 14, 193-206.

Barron, A. (2003). *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics: Learning How to Do Things with Words in a Study Abroad Context.* Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Barron, A. (2007). "Ah no honestly we're okay": Learning to upgrade in a study abroad context. *Intercultural Pragmatics,* 4 (2), 129-166.

Barron, A. & Warga, M. (2007). Special issue in Acquisitional Pragmatics. *Intercultural Pragmatics,* 4 (2).

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J. & Kasper, G. (1989). The CCSARP Coding Manual. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, J. & G. Kasper (eds.), *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies* (pp. 273-294). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Blum-Kulka, S. & Olshtain, E. (1986). Too many words: Length of utterance and pragmatic failure. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 8, 165-180.

Dewaele, J.-M. (2008). Appropriateness in foreign language acquisition and use: Some theoretical, methodological and ethical considerations. In R. Manchón & J. Cenoz (eds.) *Doing SLA Research: Theoretical, Methodological, and Ethical Issues.* Special issue of the *International Review of Applied Linguistics,* 46 (3), 235-255.

Félix-Brasdefer, J.C. (2004). Interlanguage refusals: Linguistic politeness and length of residence in the target community. *Language Learning,* 54 (4), 587-653.

Geluykens, R. (2007). On methodology in cross-cultural pragmatics. In B. Kraft & R. Geluykens (eds.), *Cross-cultural Pragmatics and Interlanguage English* (pp. 21-72). Muenchen: Lincom.

Hassall, T. (2003). Requests by Australian learners of Indonesian. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 35, 1903-1928.

Kinginger, C. (2008). *Language Learning in Study Abroad: Case Studies of Americans in France.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Kondo, S. (1997). The development of pragmatic competence by Japanese learners of English: Longitudinal study on interlanguage apologies. *Sophia Linguistica,* 41, 265-284.

Kraft, B. & Geluykens, R. (2007). Defining cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. In B. Kraft & R. Geluykens (eds.), *Cross-cultural Pragmatics and Interlanguage English* (pp. 3-20). Muenchen: Lincom.

Maeshiba, N., Yoshinaga, N., Kasper, G. & Ross, S. (1996). Transfer and proficiency in interlanguage apologizing. In S. M. Gass & J. Neu (eds.), *Speech Acts across Cultures* (pp. 155-187). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Marriott, H. (1995). The acquisition of politeness patterns by exchange students in Japan. In B. Freed (ed.), *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 197-224). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Matsumura, S. (2003). Modelling the relationships among interlanguage pragmatic development, L2 proficiency, and exposure to L2. *Applied Linguistics,* 24 (4), 465-491.

Matsumura, S. (2007). Exploring the after-effects of study abroad on interlanguage pragmatic development. *Intercultural Pragmatics,* 4(2), 167-192.

Meier, A.J. (1997). What's the excuse?: Image repair in Austrian German. *The Modern Language Journal,* 81, 197-208.

Ogiermann, E. (2007) Gender-based differences in English apology realisations. In B. Kraft and R. Geluykens (eds.) *Cross-cultural Pragmatics and Interlanguage English* (pp. 127-142). Muenchen: Lincom.

Okumura, K. & Li Wei (2000). The concept of self and apology strategies in two cultures. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 10 (1), 1-24.

Park, K.-J. & Nakano, M. (1999). A study of pragmatic functions of apology expressions among Japanese and Korean learners of English. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics,* 3, 225-272.

Pizziconi, B. (2003). Re-examining politeness, face and the Japanese language. *Journal of Pragmatics,* 35, 10-11: 1471-1506.

Pizziconi, B. (2007a). Facework and multiple selves in apologetic metapragmatic comments in Japanese. In W. Bublitz & A. Huebler (eds.), *Metapragmatics in Use* (pp. 49-72). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Pizziconi, B. (2007b). The lexical mapping of politeness in British English and Japanese. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 3 (2), 207-241.

Regan, V. (2005). From community back to classroom: what variation analysis can tell us about context of acquisition. In J.-M. Dewaele (eds.), *Focus on French as a Foreign Language: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (pp. 191-209). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Rose, K. (2000). An exploratory cross-sectional study of interlanguage pragmatic development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition,* 22, 27-67.

Sabaté i Dalmau, M. & Curell i Gotor, H. (2007). From "sorry very much" to "I'm ever so sorry": Acquisition patterns in L2 apologies by Catalan learners of English. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 4(2), 287-315.

Tamanaha, M. (2003). *Interlanguage Speech Act Realization of Apologies and Complaints: The Performances of Japanese L2 Speakers in Comparison with Japanese L1 and English L1 Speakers*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.

Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage Pragmatics*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Warga, M. & Schölmberger, U. (2007). The acquisition of French apologetic behaviour in a study abroad context. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 4 (2), 221- 251.

Appendix A: DCT

Situation 1:

Imagine you are a university lecturer. You promised to return a student's essay today but you haven't finished reading it. What do you say to the student?

あなたは大学の先生だとそうぞうしてください。今日，学生の作文を戻すと約束しましたが、作文を読んでしまいませんでした。学生に何と言いますか。

Situation 2:

Imagine you are a student. You borrowed a book from your university lecturer, but you forgot to return it. What do you say to your lecturer?

大学生だとそうぞうしてください。先生に本を借りましたが、返すのをわすれてしまいました。先生に何と言いますか。

Situation 3:

Imagine you are the manager of a café. Today you have an interview with a student, who wants a job in your café. However, you are half an hour late for the interview because of a meeting. What do you say to the student?

喫茶店の店長だとそうぞうしてください。今日、あなたの喫茶店で働きたい学生と面接があります。しかし、会議があったので、面接に３０分遅れました。学生に何と言いますか。

Situation 4:

Imagine you are a waiter in an expensive restaurant. A customer ordered beef, but you brought chicken by mistake. What do you say to the customer?

高級なレストランのウェイターだとそうぞうしてください。お客さんは牛肉を注文しましたが、あなたは鳥肉を間違えて持って来てしまいました。お客さんに何と言いますか。

Situation 5:

Imagine you are a student who is often late. Today you are late to meet a friend who you are working with on an essay. What do you say to your friend?

あなたは学生だとそうぞうしてください。あなたはよく遅れます。今日、作文をいっしょの書いている友達との約束に遅れました。友達に何と言いますか。

Situation 6:

Imagine you drove your car into another person's car in a car park. What do you say to the owner of the other car?

駐車場で、ほかの人の車にあなたの車をぶつけてしまったとそうぞうしてください。その車の持ち主に何と言いますか。

Situation 7:

Imagine you work for a company and today during a meeting you offended a colleague. After the meeting the colleague makes a comment to you about the incident. What do you say to the colleague?

会社員だとそうぞうしてください。今日、会議で同僚の感情を害してしまいました。会議の後で、そのことについてはなしをして来ます。同僚に何と言いますか。

Situation 8:

Imagine you are travelling on a bus. You put your bag in the rack, but it fell down and hit another passenger. What do you say to the passenger?

バスであなたは旅行をしているとそうぞうしてください。あなたの荷物を網棚におきましたが、落ちて乗客にあたってしまいました。乗客に何と言いますか。

Appendix B: Coding

IFIDs	0	no IFID		
	1	ごめん	gomen	sorry
	2	ごめんね	gomenne	sorry
	3	ごめんなさい	gomenasai	I'm sorry
	4	すみません	sumimasen	I'm sorry / excuse me
	5	もうしけない!	moushiwakenai	I'm sorry (lit. it's inexcusable) verb is plain form
	6	もうしけありません	moushiwake arimasen	I'm sorry (lit. it's inexcusable) verb is polite form
	7	もうしけございません	moushiwake gozaimansen	I'm sorry (lit. it's inexcusable) verb is very polite
	8	失礼します	shitsurei shimasu	I'm sorry (lit. I'm being rude)
	9	失礼いたしました	shitsurei itashimashita	I'm sorry (lit. I've been rude) verb is very polite
	10	許してください	yurushite kudasai	Please forgive me
	11	お待たせしました	omatase shimashita	I'm sorry for being late

Explanation	0	No explanation	
	1	Explanation	e.g. バスが遅れました The bus was late.
Acceptance of responsibility	0	No acceptance of responsibility	
	1	Statement of the thing that the speaker has done wrong	e.g. 本を忘れました I have forgotten the book.
	2	Statement as above with 'verb-te shimaimashita'	e.g. 本を忘れてしまいました I have unfortunately forgotten the

			book.
	3	Explicit self-blame	e.g. 悪かった That was bad (of me)
	4	Lack of intent	e.g. 違いました I made a mistake.
Offer of repair	0	No offer of repair	
	1	Offer of Repair	e.g. 明日持ってきます I'll bring it tomorrow.
	2	Offer of repair with request	e.g. 明日はだいじょうぶですか。 Is it okay if I bring it tomorrow?
	3	Both 1 and 2	
Verbal Redress	0	No verbal redress	
	1	Concern for the hearer	e.g. だいじょうぶですか Are you okay?
	2	Promise of forbearance	e.g.
Intensification (adverb inside the IFID)	0	No intensification	
	1	ほんとうに (hontou ni) "really"	
	2	たいへん (taihen) "terribly"	

English NSs

English coding (as Japanese, except:)

IFID
0: No IFID
1: I'm sorry
2: I apologise
3: Excuse me

Intensification
1: really
2: very
3: so
4: terribly
5: extremely

Seonaid Beckwith graduated from Birkbeck with a BA in Linguistics with French in 2008. She is currently studying for an MPhil at the Research Centre for English and Applied Linguistics at Cambridge

University. She is interested in second language acquisition, particularly interlanguage pragmatics and psycholinguistics in English and Japanese.

Jean-Marc Dewaele is Professor in Applied Linguistics and Multilingualism at Birkbeck, University of London. He holds a Doctorate in Romance languages (Free University of Brussels, 1993). He has published more than 130 papers and chapters on individual differences in psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, psychological and emotional aspects of Second Language Acquisition and Multilingualism. He is president of the *European Second Language Association* and member of the Executive committees of the *International Association of Multilingualism* and Convenor of the Research Network *Multilingualism: Acquisition and Use* within the *International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA).* He has co-edited special issues in journals with Aneta Pavlenko, and books on bilingualism with Li Wei and Alex Housen and he edited *Focus on French as a Foreign Language* in 2005. He is member of the editorial boards of the *EUROSLA Yearbook, The International Journal of Multilingualism, AILA Bookseries* and *Intercultural Pragmatics*. He is Reviews Editor for *Sociolinguistics Studies*, Assistant Editor of the *International Journal of Bilingualism* and Editor of *Birkbeck Studies in Applied Linguistics*.