Analysis of Situational Contexts of Command Expressions Used by Japanese Language Learners

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INTRODUCTION

- Second Language Learning is not only about linguistic accuracy, but also on understanding and mastering context or pragmatic competence, which plays an important role in the fluency of second language acquisition and its application in communication.
- Ineffective communication resulting from a lack of pragmatic competence among language learners may lead to communication breakdowns or errors, such as pragmatic transfer (Yoshida, 2014).
- A command is realized through a speech act characterized by coerciveness, as it imposes the speaker's intention on the hearer, thus increasing the possibility of a Face-Threatening Act (FTA) (Ogawa, 1995; Matsumura, 1995; Iori, 2000; Yule, 2014; Kashiwazaki, as cited in Dyah & Kanah, 2016).
- In giving commands, especially in second language learning, learners often face difficulties in understanding and using various command forms accurately, in accordance with the rules of the target language. In practice, many tend to rely on the norms and structures of their first language as a reference, and directly apply them in the second language, without considering the situational context, which often differs significantly between languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Context can be understood as a set of elements that play a crucial role in conveying the meaning of an utterance or expression. One model that can be used to understand the relationship between context and utterance is the SPEAKING model proposed by Dell Hymes (as cited in Chaer & Agustina, 2010).
- Huijun (2018) and La Mido (2021) highlight the importance role of situational context and social relationships in the use and interpretation of speech.
- Budiantini and Pratiwi (2024) revealed that directive speech acts, including commands and requests in films, are significantly influenced by contextual factors such as speaker relationships, setting, and communicative goals.
- Maya (2023), who explored the relationship between command expressions and female gender stereotypes in Japanese dramas.
- Wulandari & Rahmalina (2024), who examined the use of command expressions based on social factors in anime.

METHOD

- This study used a mixed-method approach, which combine qualitative method to calculate numerical data in order to generate average scores, which were then explained through descriptive analysis using qualitative methods (Jason & Glenwick, 2016; Greener, 2008; Moleong, 2007).
- Data analysis was carried out using the SPEAKING model theory proposed by Dell Hymes (as cited in Chaer & Agustina, 2010). This model was chosen as a framework to identify various aspects related to the situational contexts behind the use of command expressions.
- Data in this study were obtained through a questionnaire distributed by Google Forms to Japanese language learners in two universities in Bandung, Indonesia. The total number of respondents was 20 students at the intermediate level of Japanese proficiency (equivalent to JLPT N4–N3).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

No	Situations	Average Score
11	**Telling a friend to work on a group assignment.**	**4,00**
15	Telling someone at home to be quiet because you're attending a Zoom meeting (e.g., your sibling, parent, or another family member).	3,75
17	Telling someone at home to pick up a package left at the door (e.g., your sibling, parent, or another family member).	3,40
1	Telling classmates to stay quiet while the lecturer is explaining.	3,35
9	Telling a lecturer to explain the assignment again (such as instructions, deadlines, etc.).	3,30
8	Telling a lecturer to clarify a point that you don't understand.	3,00
3	Telling classmates to finish the assignment right away.	2,95
16	Telling someone at home to open the door because a guest has arrived (e.g., your sibling, parent, or another family member).	2,95
20	Telling a stranger to line up while waiting at the cashier.	2,95
12	Telling a friend to become a committee member for a campus event	2,80

No	Situations	Average Score
13	Telling a friend to attend a campus event	2,75
2	Telling classmates to stay quiet while working on an assignment or taking a test	2,70
18	Telling a store clerk to wrap your purchased items	2,70
10	Telling a lecturer to send the presentation file	2,65
14	Telling a restaurant staff member to clean the table you’re going to use	2,65
5	Telling a friend to look for the lecturer in their office	2,55
6	Telling a classmate to turn on the projector	2,50
7	Telling a friend to ask a question during class	2,45
19	Telling a stranger to put out their cigarette because the smoke is bothering you	2,40
4	**Telling a friend to erase the writing on the whiteboard**	**1,70**

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Dell Hymes Model	Situation 11 (The Higher) Telling a friend to work on a group assignment	Situation 4 (The Lower) Telling a friend to erase the writing on the whiteboard
Setting and scene	Can be in classroom or after the class	In classroom, before or after class
Participants	Learners and their friends	Learners and their friends
Ends	Giving commands in this context is to prompt the interlocutor to collaborate in completing a group task	to have the interlocutor clean the whiteboard in preparation for the next lesson
Act sequences	-	-
Key	Be more relaxed or informal	Be more relaxed or informal
Instrumentalities	Face-to-face utterances or via various messaging media	Face-to-face utterances
Norms	Group assignments are a mutual obligation	Generally viewed as being driven by personal initiative and a sense of individual responsibility
Genres	Direct speech	Direct speech

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

- Based on Dell Hymes' model of the eight aspects of speech situations, the respondents highly considered the ends, or the purpose of the utterance.
- For the other higher considered is norms also taken into a role when deciding whether a situation was appropriate for performing a command.
- Although the respondents generally did not pay much attention to the status or social position of the interlocutors, in reality, they tended to commands more freely to interlocutors who had an equal position, such as friends.
- The respondents already have a solid understanding of the function of commands.

CONCLUSION

- In giving commands, it is not only word choice that needs to be considered, but also the situational context in which the command is given, so that it can function effectively and produce the intended outcome.
- This tendency is also observed among learners when acquiring their second language. Learners tend to use command expressions in situations they perceive as appropriate based on social norms, the purpose of the utterance, and the level of urgency of that goal. When a situation is seen as mutually beneficial and aligned with the prevailing social norms, learners are more likely to regard it as suitable for issuing a command. In contrast, other aspects, particularly those related to the interlocutor, are not considered primary factors by the learners.
- Every individual can use their pragmatic competence to evaluate whether a particular situation is appropriate for performing a speech act, especially directive acts such as commands. However, this pragmatic competence needs to be further developed in order to minimize the occurrence of Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) and to support a deeper understanding of command usage in second language learning, including the norms and cultural values embedded within it.

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THANK YOU!