p-ISSN 2252-7427, e-ISSN 2541-3635
https://ieflj.uniku.ac.id/pub

p-ISSN 2252-7427 e-ISSN 2541-3635
Indonesian EFL Journal
AISEE
The Association of Indonesia Scholars of English Education

NEGOTIATING *WA* IN INDONESIA: A CULTURAL-PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF JAPANESE SPEECH ACTS AND POLITENESS AT PT. OHKI INDONESIA

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APA Citation: Kuraesin, U., & Amalia, A. (2026). Negotiating WA in Indonesia: A cultural-pragmatic analysis of Japanese speech acts and politeness at PT. Ohki Indonesia. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, *12*(1), 223-234. https://doi.org/10.25134/rbjp0362

Received: 04-09-2025 Accepted: 14-11-2025 Published: 30-01-2026

Abstract: This study investigated speech acts and politeness strategies in Japanese corporate communication within the intercultural environment of PT. Ohki Indonesia. Using a qualitative cultural-pragmatic approach, the research analyzed a mixed corpus of written correspondence (75 items), recorded meetings (8 sessions; ≈6 hours), and semi-structured interviews (12 participants) between Japanese expatriates and Indonesian employees. The analysis indicated on speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), Brown & Levinson's politeness framework (1987), and Ide's concept of *wakimae* (1989). Findings show that Japanese corporate discourse systematically deploys honorific forms *(keigo)*, indirect directives, ritualized apologies, and hedging to maintain *wa* (harmony) and hierarchical relations; Indonesian interlocutors display respectful directness grounded in *rukun* and *tepo seliro*. These differing pragmatic realizations produced occasional misalignments which Japanese indirectness can be read as evasiveness, and Indonesian directness as bluntness, requiring pragmatic competence and mutual adaptation. The paper concluded with practical implications for intercultural training and institutional protocols to improve communication in Japanese–Indonesian corporate settings.
Keywords: *speech acts; politeness strategies; keigo; intercultural pragmatics; communication.*

INTRODUCTION

Business communication is integrated from the cultural and pragmatic values of a society. In Japan, professional discourse is deeply shaped by the pursuit of *wa* (harmony), hierarchical relationships, and contextual sensitivity (*kuuki wo yomu* – reading the air). Pragmatics, understood as the study of meaning in context, provides a framework for analyzing how Japanese professionals negotiate interaction in ways that maintain group cohesion, avoid conflict, and preserve face. Furthermore, he cross-cultural analysis of English, Chinese, Japanese, and French shows that politeness is deeply shaped by historical trajectories and cultural philosophies, such as Confucian ethics in East Asian societies, which emphasize hierarchy, respect for elders, and social harmony (Gao et al., 2021). As (Wang, 2024) noted, At the theoretical level, both articles converge in questioning the universality claims of dominant politeness theories proposed by Brown and Levinson and by Leech. They argue convincingly that these models reflect a Western, individualistic conception of face, which does not fully account for collectivist cultures where politeness is grounded in social roles, obligations, and group harmony rather than individual wants. In recent years, studies have shown that politeness strategies and pragmatic norms extend across domains of communication, from traditional corporate interactions to digital environments. For example, impoliteness strategies in online fan discourse, showing that anonymity reshapes expectations of face and leads to more direct or sarcastic exchanges (Pratama & Suastha, 2024). Similarly, (Locher & Larina, 2019) examined online classrooms, finding that teachers and students employ tact, modesty, and sympathy maxims as well as positive and negative politeness strategies to maintain respectful interaction. These findings reinforce that politeness is dynamic, context-sensitive, and deeply tied to cultural

values, whether in digital or face-to-face professional settings (Bar-or et al., 2022).

Japanese corporate communication is a particularly rich site for analyzing pragmatics and politeness. Research by (Astartia & Widianti, 2022) highlighted how directive speech acts—ordering (*meirei*) and requesting (*irai*)—are mitigated through positive politeness strategies to balance efficiency and interpersonal sensitivity. For instance, requests are often framed indirectly, with modal expressions or self-effacing language, while orders are softened through expressions of consideration. This strategic use of politeness ensures that workplace interactions remain respectful, even in hierarchical environments, and demonstrates the interdependence of speech acts and politeness strategies in maintaining smooth corporate relations (Şekercİ, 2023). The competencies comprise three dimensions (Yamayanti, 2020). Cognitive competence refers to an individual's knowledge of verbal and nonverbal communication rules, cultural norms, and pragmatic strategies, such as understanding when and how to use honorifics or indirect requests. Beneath communicative competencies is the communication environment, which consists of the situational factors that frame interactions. This includes the physical setting, the communication channel (e.g., email versus face-to-face), power relations, and the immediate goals of the interaction (Isabella et al., 2022). Communication interaction refers to the actual exchange of messages, verbal and nonverbal, that occurs within this cultural frame (Nofitasari, 2024). Effective communication arises when individuals demonstrate adequate communicative competencies, align their behaviors with cultural expectations, and adapt appropriately to the organizational context (Mangana, 2020). The significance of politeness also extends to the use of address terms and honorifics. Nonetheless, socio-pragmatic analysis of address terms across cultures that polite expressions are deeply embedded in socio-cultural hierarchies and relational dynamics (Al-Hamzi et al., 2024). In Japan, honorifics (*keigo*), including *sonkeigo* (respectful), *kenjōgo* (humble), and *teineigo* (polite), function not only as linguistic forms but as cultural markers of respect, solidarity, and self-positioning within organizational hierarchies. This aligns with Leech's politeness maxims, such as modesty and approbation, which promote self-effacement and praise of others, reflecting Japanese workplace values of group harmony and humility.

Moreover, the cross-cultural study of politeness shows that pragmatic competence is crucial for effective communication in multicultural corporate environments. Politeness is both a social norm and an interactional strategy, but the forms it takes vary significantly between societies (Valdellon, 2024). By focusing on directive, *expressive* and *commissive* speech acts, the research seeks to uncover how Japanese pragmatic norms are enacted, negotiated, or hybridized in intercultural workplace communication (Isabella et al., 2022). In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions of how politeness is not merely about language use but also about maintaining social order, professional identity, and cross-cultural understanding in globalized corporate environments (Pirdehghan, 2024). The correspondence between pragmatics, culture, and politeness in business communication thus lies in their mutual reinforcement (Santoso et al., 2024).

This research explores, for instance, why the same speech act, such as making a request, may be expressed more directly in one culture but indirectly in another, depending on perceptions of politeness, power distance, and appropriateness (Do et al., 2025). In professional communication, pragmatics plays a crucial role because workplace interactions are not only about conveying information but also about managing relationships. The way directives, requests, or refusals are constructed often reflects a balance between achieving efficiency and maintaining social harmony (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2021). While cross-cultural pragmatics provides insights into general tendencies (e.g., Japanese indirectness vs. Western directness), intercultural pragmatics captures the dynamic, negotiated nature of communication in mixed-cultural workplaces (Asai et al., 2022). While previous studies acknowledge the potential for pragmatic misalignment in intercultural business contexts, they rarely demonstrate how such misalignments affect concrete organizational processes such as task coordination, response timing, or perceptions of reliability. This study addresses this gap by examining how politeness strategies in Japanese–Indonesian workplace interaction shape not only interpersonal harmony but also communicative efficiency and decision-making processes within a Japanese subsidiary operating in Indonesia.

This dual focus is critical in multinational corporations, where cultural values frequently intersect and sometimes clash. Employees are required not only to use appropriate speech acts within their own cultural norms but also to anticipate how these utterances may be received by

colleagues from other backgrounds (Shimamoto, 2023). For example, the corresponding communication below concerns with Pragmatics and intercultural context:

Table 1. *Email corresponding at Japanese company*

Expression	Speech act	Pragmatic-cultural aspect	Politeness
いつもお世話になっております (Itsumo osewa ni natte orimasu)	Expressive (gratitude/acknowledgment)	This is an institutionalized phrase used in letters or emails to thank business partners for ongoing support. It reflects Japanese enryo (restraint) and amae (dependence within relationships), where one positions oneself as indebted to the other party.	It uses honorific/humble language (o-sewa ni natte orimasu) to elevate the addressee and lower the self, embodying wakimae (discernment of social roles).

Source: PT. Ohki Indonesia

In Japanese corporate communication, expressions such as *Itsumo osewa ni natte orimasu* ("I am always indebted to your support") exemplify how pragmatics, culture, and politeness intersect in everyday business correspondence. Pragmatically, the phrase functions as an expressive speech act of gratitude, but culturally it conveys more than simple thanks. It positions the speaker as indebted to the hearer, reflecting the Japanese value of *amae* (dependence) and the maintenance of harmonious relationships. The use of the humble form *natte orimasu* also signals deference and respect, embodying the cultural principle of *wakimae* (discernment of social roles) where the addressee's position is elevated while the speaker lowers them. The examples above demonstrate how Japanese business communication intricately weaves pragmatics, cultural values, and politeness into everyday speech acts. Gratitude, requests, apologies, and statements are not expressed in isolation but are embedded in honorific language (*keigo*) that elevates the hearer and lowers the self. This strategy reflects Japan's collectivist culture, where maintaining harmony, respecting hierarchy, and demonstrating humility are paramount. In this way, speech acts in Japanese correspondence serve not only functional purposes but also relational ones, ensuring that professional interactions reinforce trust, respect, and long-term cooperation (Chang et al., 2021).

Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, grounded in the concept of face, has long provided a foundational framework for analyzing how speakers employ linguistic strategies to minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Chenhua, 2023). Their model distinguishes between positive politeness strategies, which emphasize solidarity and involvement, and negative politeness strategies, which mitigate imposition and respect the hearer's autonomy. While this framework has been highly influential in pragmatics, its universality has been questioned, particularly in the Japanese context. Scholars such as (Asai et al., 2022) and (Wijana, 2021) argued that Japanese politeness cannot be fully accounted for by Brown and Levinson's face-saving perspective, because it presumes an individualistic orientation in which speakers make strategic choices to protect face. In contrast, Japanese politeness is less about individual volition and more about fulfilling socially prescribed obligations that are deeply rooted in cultural norms. This differs markedly from the Brown and Levinson notion of politeness as an optional mitigation strategy, highlighting the culturally specific nature of Japanese communication (Liu & Allen, 2014).

The system of *keigo* (honorific language) illustrates this principle. It encompasses three main categories: *sonkeigo* (respectful speech), used to elevate the addressee or third person; *kenjōgo* (humble speech), used to lower oneself when referring to one's own actions; and *teineigo* (polite forms), which add general courtesy. In corporate communication, the use of *keigo* is not merely stylistic but a pragmatic necessity that signals sensitivity to hierarchy and group harmony. For instance, a subordinate reporting to a manager will use humble forms to position themselves below the manager, while the manager may employ respectful forms when referring to the work of clients or external partners. In this way, *keigo* functions both as a politeness strategy and as a reflection of Japan's vertically oriented corporate culture (Diegoli, 2024). Speech act theory, originating with Austin (1962) and further developed by Searle (1969), offers a useful framework for examining how utterances perform social actions beyond their literal meaning (Shen et al., 2024). In business communication, utterances do not merely transmit information but accomplish tasks such as making requests, issuing directives,

offering apologies, and negotiating agreements. In Japanese business contexts, however, these speech acts are not realized in straightforward ways; rather, they are heavily mediated by cultural norms and politeness conventions that prioritize harmony (*wa*), hierarchy, and relational sensitivity (Indraswari et al., 2021).

Moreover, apologies are perhaps the most pervasive and ritualized speech acts in Japanese corporate life. Phrases such as *sumimasen* ("excuse me / I'm sorry") or *mōshiwake gozaimasen* ("I am terribly sorry") are used not only when actual mistakes occur but also as a default strategy to maintain harmony and express humility. As it is previously explained, apologies in Japanese culture often serve as relational lubricants rather than admissions of guilt. In business contexts, frequent apologies help mitigate potential conflict, acknowledge inconvenience, and reaffirm respect for others, all of which are central to sustaining cooperative relationships in hierarchical organizations (Haristiani et al., 2023). Politeness becomes a tool for balancing the dual identity of being a loyal team member and a competent contributor (Nkirote, 2024).

These dynamics underscore the importance of viewing politeness not merely as linguistic courtesy but as a socio-pragmatic practice with identity-building functions. In Japanese corporate life, where hierarchy and harmony coexist with demands for productivity and innovation, politeness serves as the medium through which employees navigate complex role expectations (Chen & Qiu, 2025). Understanding politeness as cultural capital highlights its broader organizational significance. On the other hand, it sustains professional identities, legitimizes authority, and fosters collective harmony, thereby ensuring both relational stability and institutional effectiveness (Meisong, 2025).

In intercultural corporate environments such as PT. Ohki Indonesia, Japanese communicative norms interact dynamically with Indonesian cultural expectations. Although both cultures place a high value on maintaining harmony, the underlying pragmatic realizations of politeness differ. Japanese politeness is largely mediated through *wakimae* (discernment) and the elaborate system of *keigo* (honorific language), where linguistic choices reflect hierarchy, humility, and role-based obligations (Mao & Wang, 2022). Misalignments often emerge in workplace interactions where Japanese and Indonesian norms overlap. Indonesian employees might use a relatively direct form of request, softened only by honorifics like *Pak* (Sir) or *Bu* (Madam), which to Japanese colleagues could appear casual or overly blunt. These subtle pragmatic mismatches can lead to misunderstandings not because of linguistic incompetence, but because of divergent cultural interpretations of appropriateness. Despite extensive scholarship on Japanese politeness and cross-cultural pragmatics, existing studies have largely relied on either domestic Japanese contexts or abstract cultural comparisons. There remains a notable lack of fine-grained, empirical research examining how Japanese politeness strategies are enacted, interpreted, and negotiated in actual workplace interaction within overseas subsidiaries. In particular, little attention has been paid to how non-Japanese colleagues perceive, adapt to, or reinterpret Japanese pragmatic norms in daily communication. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates written, spoken, and interview data from a Japanese subsidiary in Indonesia to reveal how politeness operates as an interactional and organizational resource rather than a static cultural norm.

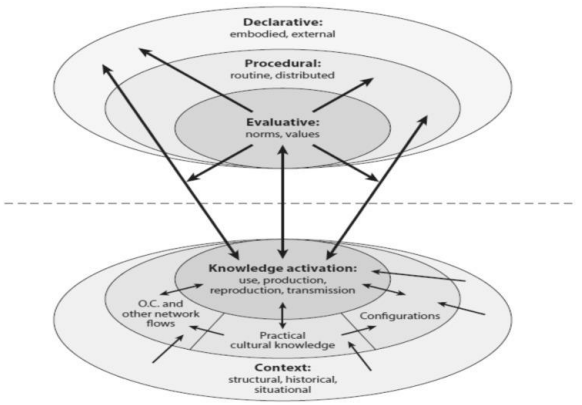


Figure 1. *Components of cultural pragmatics (Tapiwa Kugedera et al., 2021)*

These insights suggest that pragmatic competence is essential not only for Japanese expatriates but also for Indonesian colleagues working within Japanese corporate systems.

p-ISSN 2252-7427, e-ISSN 2541-3635
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Developing this competence involves more than learning vocabulary or grammar; it requires an awareness of cultural pragmatics, the ability to discern when indirectness, humility, or directness is expected, and the flexibility to adapt accordingly. Training in intercultural pragmatics; through workshops, role-plays, and reflective practice; may help employees bridge these differences and foster smoother communication. In this way, politeness and speech acts become tools not only for maintaining internal harmony but also for building sustainable intercultural cooperation (Bardis et al., 2021).

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in a cultural-pragmatic approach. The qualitative method is appropriate because the aim is to understand how speech acts and politeness strategies function in Japanese corporate communication within PT. Ohki Indonesia. To explain how linguistic forms (honorifics, hedges, conditional morphology) function within culturally specific interactional logics (*wa*, *wakimae*) and in intercultural encounters with Indonesian colleagues. Purposive sampling targeted 12 participants who are actively engaged in Japanese–Indonesian workplace communication; which are 6 Japanese expatriates (managers/supervisors; codes J1–J6) and 6 Indonesian staff (administrative, sales, operations; codes I1–I6). Selection criteria included frequency of cross-cultural interaction (minimum weekly contact), role in procurement/operations, and at least six months tenure in the company to ensure familiarity with communication routines.

Data were collected over three months (March–May 2025) and include: (1) 75 written items (emails, memos, formal notices) exchanged between PT. Ohki Indonesia and PT. Nakakin Indonesia (archived and anonymized). (2) 8 internal meetings audio-recorded with consent (total ≈6 hours); these meetings included operational coordination, delivery planning, and problem-solving discussions. (3) 12 semi-structured interviews (30–60 minutes each) conducted in Japanese, Indonesian, or English per participant preference. Interviews explored perceptions of politeness, experiences of miscommunication, and strategies for adaptation.

This study received institutional ethical approval. All participants provided informed consent for recording and data use. Identifying details were redacted and pseudonyms applied. Data storage follows secure protocols; original audio and raw files are stored on encrypted drives and will be deleted according to the consent form timeline.

To increase transparency and replicability, a coding manual was developed. Each coded utterance received: (1) a speech act label (Searle's categories), (2) politeness annotations (presence of honorific prefixes *o-/go-, kenjōgo/sonkeigo* verb forms, apology formulas, hedging tokens like *deshō*, mitigating morphology like *-tara/-ba*), and (3) contextual tags (participant code, medium: email/meeting/interview). Decision rules for multifunctional utterances are documented in the codebook (e.g., priority rules when an utterance performs both a directive and an expressive). NVivo node definitions and sample coded excerpts are available as a project appendix upon request. Responding to concerns about over-reliance on written material, meeting transcripts and interview excerpts were systematically integrated into the Results to substantiate claims about real-time politeness strategies (e.g., mitigation via pauses, hedging tokens, and repair sequences). Representative anonymized quotes are included in the Results to show how spoken politeness co-occurs with or diverges from written strategies. It is explicitly acknowledged the purposive small sample and contextual specificity of PT. Ohki Indonesia; claims are context-bounded and intended to illuminate processes of negotiation rather than to generalize statistically to all Japanese multinational sites.

Data collection took place over a three-month period. Written correspondence was gathered from routine business exchanges, with identifying details removed to preserve confidentiality. Workplace interactions were observed in natural settings, and field notes were taken to capture contextual details such as tone, gesture, and situational background. Semi-structured interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, conducted in Japanese, Indonesian, or English depending on participants' preferences. The interview protocol focused on how employees typically performed speech acts such as requests, apologies, and refusals, and how they interpreted differences in communication styles across cultures.

The analysis of data followed pragmatic and discourse-analytic procedures. To ensure trustworthiness, several strategies were employed. Triangulation was achieved by cross-checking findings from written documents, observations, and interviews. Data analysis followed an iterative, multi-stage process. First, all written and spoken

interactions were segmented into analytically relevant units and coded taxonomy of speech acts, with particular attention to directives, expressives, and representatives. Second, each utterance was analyzed for politeness strategies using a modified version of (Isabella et al., 2022) framework, supplemented with Japanese-specific concepts such as *wakimae, enryo,* and *keigo.* Third, interview data were coded thematically and used interpretively to triangulate and contextualize observed speech acts, particularly regarding participants' perceptions of indirectness, hierarchy, and communicative intent. This recursive process allowed empirical observations to inform cultural interpretation and vice versa. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to verify accuracy and to avoid researcher bias. Thick description was also applied in the presentation of data, providing sufficient contextual detail to allow readers to understand the communicative environment and assess transferability to other intercultural business settings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Complementing the email analysis, meeting transcripts and interview data reveal how politeness strategies are proper in real time. For example, in a coordination meeting (Meeting_03, 2025-04-14), Japanese manager J2 used multiple mitigators—chotto (a little), a pause, and yoroshii deshō ka—before making a scheduling request; the sequential structure reduced the imposition and allowed the Indonesian interlocutors space to respond. Indonesian interviewee I4 observed: *"When they hesitate, we know it means they are politely refusing; we learned to ask for clarification"*. The findings on directive speech acts partially confirm patterns identified by (Fernandes & Assunção, 2018), particularly regarding the preference for indirect requests in hierarchical contexts. However, unlike their findings in domestic Japanese settings, the present data reveal that Indonesian interlocutors often interpret such indirectness pragmatically rather than normatively, treating it as situational politeness rather than an obligatory form. This suggests that Japanese politeness strategies undergo contextual recalibration in overseas workplaces. These findings highlight how speech acts that serve the same function in making requests are formed by different pragmatic and cultural norms. Consistent with (Shimamoto, 2023) findings on politeness and identity negotiation, this study shows that employees use politeness strategies to balance deference and professional competence. However, the present findings extend this work by demonstrating how such identity work is co-constructed *interculturally* rather than within a single linguistic community.

Data 1

いつも大変お世話になっております。
(itsumo taihen osewani natte orimasu)

早速でございますが本日フラックスA103TLは弊社の倉庫に入荷致しました。
(Sassokude gozaimasuga,honjitsu furaakkusu A103TLwa heishano soukoni nyuuka itashimashita)

貴社のデディ様にもお伝えいたしましたが今週中に出荷手配よろしいでしょうか。
(kishano Dedi samani mo otsutaeitashimashitaga, konshuuchuuni shukkatehai yoroshiideshsouka)

ご確認の程よろしくお願い申し上げます。
(gokakunin no hodo yoroshiku onegaimoushiagemasu)

The business correspondence from PT. Ohki Indonesia indicates how Japanese politeness conventions are integrated into intercultural communication within an Indonesian corporate context. The letter begins with the standard opening formula *itsumo taihen osewani natte orimasu* ("I am always greatly indebted to your support"), which functions as an expressive speech act of gratitude. In the term of Pragmatics, this expression does not simply thank the recipient but reaffirms an ongoing relationship of dependence and respect, a typical feature of Japanese business correspondence. Its ritualized use reflects the cultural principle of *amae* (dependence on goodwill) and positions the speaker as relationally indebted, thereby setting a harmonious tone before moving into the transactional content of the message. The following sentence; *sassoku de gozaimasuga, honjitsu furakkusu A103TL wa heisha no sōko ni nyūka itashimashita* ("Promptly, the flux A103TL has been delivered to our warehouse today"), demonstrates the use of honorific forms (*de gozaimasuga, itashimashita*). At this point, the speaker implements *kenjōgo* (humble language) to report their company's action, lowering themselves while elevating the addressee. Pragmatically, this constitutes a representative speech act (stating a fact), but its cultural framing signals humility and respect,

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showing that even neutral information is delivered in a way that reinforces hierarchy and politeness.

The subsequent line; *kishano X sama ni mo o-tsutae itashimashita ga, konshūchū ni shukka tehai yoroshii deshō ka* ("I have also informed Mr. X of your company, but would it be acceptable to arrange the shipment within this week?"), contains a directive speech act (request), yet it is softened through multiple politeness strategies. The use of *o-tsutae itashimashita* is humble language that places the speaker beneath the addressee, while *yoroshii deshō ka* frames the request as a question rather than a demand. From a pragmatic-cultural perspective, this indirect phrasing minimizes imposition and preserves the recipient's negative face, consistent with the previous theories related to negative politeness. The letter concludes with *go-kakunin no hodo yoroshiku onegai mōshiagemasu* ("We humbly request your kind confirmation"), a formulaic directive speech act framed in highly deferential honorific language. The use of *mōshiagemasu* (humble form of "say") again lowers the speaker while elevating the recipient. This correspondence exemplifies how Japanese politeness strategies are embedded into Indonesian corporate practice when interacting with Japanese partners. Every speech act, whether expressive, representative, or directive, is figured through honorifics and indirectness, reflecting the Japanese communicative preference for humility, respect, and relational harmony. For Indonesian staff, adopting these forms demonstrates intercultural pragmatic competence, showing not only linguistic adaptation but also an understanding that in Japanese business culture, politeness functions as both a relational lubricant and a marker of professional identity.

Data 2

いつもお世話になっております。
(Itsumo osewani natte orimasu)

ご確認ありがとうございます。
(gokakunin arigatou gozaimasu)

承知(しょうち)いたしました。
(shouchiitashimashita)

よろしくお願いいたします。
(yoroshiku onegaiitashimasu)

This reply from staff at PT. Nakakin Indonesia to staff at PT. Ohki Indonesia is a compact and straight to the point; yet highly formulaic example of Japanese business correspondence, where each utterance performs both a communicative and relational function. The email begins with the conventional opening *itsumo osewani natte orimasu* ("I am always indebted to your support"), an expressive speech act of gratitude that reaffirms an ongoing business relationship rather than addressing a specific favor. Pragmatically, this expression foregrounds harmony and respect, reminding the recipient of mutual interdependence. Culturally, it reflects the Japanese norm of beginning correspondence with ritualized politeness to frame the interaction in terms of humility and acknowledgment of the other's continued support.

The next part, *go-kakunin arigatō gozaimasu* ("Thank you for your confirmation"), indicates another expressive speech act, specifically gratitude. The use of go- as an honorific prefix and the polite form *gozaimasu* elevates the recipient while lowering the speaker, signaling deference. In this context, the utterance does more than acknowledge receipt of confirmation; it strengthens relational bonds by showing attentiveness and appreciation for the interlocutor's effort. Furthermore, the sentence *shōchi itashimashita* ("I have humbly acknowledged [the matter]") demonstrates a representative speech act, where the speaker indicates understanding and compliance. The use of *itashimashita* as the humble form of "to do" is significant, as it reflects self-lowering while presenting the act of acknowledgment. Based on perspective of Pragmatics, this ensures the recipient that the message has been received and accepted, but culturally it also reinforces hierarchy by positioning the speaker as deferential, even when performing a straightforward confirmation.

The closing expression part which is *yoroshiku onegai itashimasu* ("I humbly request your continued favor") is a directive speech act, though highly ritualized and indirect. Rather than requesting a specific action, it implicitly asks for ongoing cooperation and goodwill. The choice of humble form *itashimasu* again reflects self-erasing, positioning the speaker as dependent on the recipient's support. This formulaic phrase is deeply fixed in Japanese business discourse, serving as a pragmatic marker of respect and as a cultural practice to sustain long-term harmony in professional relationships. From a cultural-pragmatic perspective, the brevity of the email does not reduce its politeness load; instead, the use of fixed formulae allows efficiency while still maintaining relational respect. For Indonesian colleagues, such communication may appear

overly formulaic or redundant, but within the Japanese system it represents a careful balance between efficiency and the cultural imperative to preserve *wa* (harmony) and acknowledge hierarchy.

Data 3

いつもお世話になっております。
(Itsumo asewani natte orimasu)

使用開始はのうにゅう,納入に合わせてで問題ありません。
(shiyoukaishi wa nounyuuni awasetede mondaiarimasen)

今週中に4月分として60KgでPOを提出させていただきますので、
次回のA103T輸入時に合わせていただけると助かります。
(konshuuchuu ni shigatsubuntoshite 60 kg de PO o teishutsu saseteitadakimasunode, jikai no A103T yunyuutokini, awaseteitadakeru to tasukarimasu)

最初ののうにゅうび,納入日わかりましたらご連絡いただけますようお願いいたします。
(saisho no nounyuubi wakarimashitara gorenraku itadakemasuyou onegai itashimasu)

The email above is taken from staff of PT. Nakakin Indonesia which illustrates how Japanese corporate correspondence intertwines pragmatic functions with politeness conventions to balance clarity and relational harmony. The opening line, *itsumo osewani natte orimasu* ("I am always indebted to your support"), contributes as an expressive speech act of gratitude, ritualized to reaffirm the relationship before addressing transactional content. Its placement at the beginning of the message reflects the Japanese communicative norm of anchoring professional exchanges in relational acknowledgment rather than moving directly to business matters. The first substantive statement, *shiyō kaishi wa nōnyū ni awasete de mondai arimasen* ("There is no problem with starting usage in line with the delivery"), functions as a representative speech act, confirming agreement. While pragmatically this is a straightforward acceptance, culturally it demonstrates attentiveness to coordination and relational reassurance. By explicitly affirming that the timing is acceptable, the writer ensures that no ambiguity could cause tension, maintaining both efficiency and harmony.

The next passage, *konshūchū ni shigatsu-bun to shite 60 kg de PO o teishutsu sasete itadakimasu node, jikai no A103T yun'yū toki ni awasete itadakeru to tasukarimasu* ("I will humbly submit a PO for 60 kg as the April portion within this week, so if you could align it with the next import of A103T, I would be grateful"), combines commissive and directive speech acts. The phrase *sasete itadakimasu* refers to a humble form meaning "I will submit (with your permission)," which pragmatically frames the act of submitting a purchase order as something granted by the addressee rather than decided independently. This illustrates the cultural logic of *kenjōgo* (humble language), where self-lowering reinforces deference. Meanwhile, the request *awasete itadakeru to tasukarimasu* ("if you could align it, it would help me") represents an indirect directive. Instead of commanding, the writer couches the request as a conditional that benefits the speaker, softening the imposition. The concept of *wakimae* in which appropriateness arises from fulfilling role-based obligations.

The final directive, *saisho no nōnyūbi wakarimashitara go-renraku itadakemasu yō onegai itashimasu* ("When you know the first delivery date, I humbly request that you contact me"), reinforces this pattern. Here, *go-renraku itadakemasu yō and onegai itashimasu* elevate the addressee and humble the speaker. Pragmatically, it is a request for confirmation, but culturally it places the responsibility on the addressee in a deferential manner.

Data 4

いつもお世話になっております。
(osewani natte orimasu)

みつもり,見積ありがとうございました。
(mitsumori arigatou gozaimashita)

A103TLを使用してみたいと思いますが、
(A103TL o shiyoushite mitaito omoimasuga)

月50～60Kgくらいですが問題ないでしょうか？
(tsuki 50 – 60 kg kuraidesuga mondain ai deshouka)

ご確認よろしくお願いします。
(gokakunin yoroshiku onegaishimasu)

The email above is from staff of PT. Nakakin Indonesia, it demonstrates how Japanese business

p-ISSN 2252-7427, e-ISSN 2541-3635
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communication blends transactional efficiency with politeness conventions designed to maintain harmony. The opening formula *itsumo osewani natte orimasu* ("I am always indebted to your support") is a ritualized expressive speech act of gratitude. It functions relationally rather than transactional, reaffirming ongoing interdependence and positioning the addressee as a benefactor. This opening is standard in Japanese business correspondence, setting a respectful tone before addressing the substantive matter.

The next line, *mitsumori arigatō gozaimashita* ("Thank you very much for the quotation"), continues the use of expressive speech acts, here expressing gratitude for a specific action. The polite past-tense form *gozaimashita* conveys formality and respect, highlighting attentiveness to the addressee's effort. This act of acknowledgment is important pragmatically because it validates the recipient's prior contribution before moving into the speaker's request.

The core transactional message is framed through indirect directives and confirmative. The phrase *A103TL o shiyō shite mitai to omoimasu ga* ("I would like to try using A103TL, but...") is a commissive speech act, signaling the speaker's intention while still hedging with *ga* ("but"), leaving space for the addressee to respond. This indirectness exemplifies Japanese communication style, where even statements of intention are softened to avoid appearing unilateral.

The subsequent question, *tsuki 50–60 kg kurai desu ga mondai nai deshō ka* ("It would be about 50–60 kg per month, would that be a problem?"), constitutes an indirect directive/request for confirmation. The phrasing *mondai nai deshō ka* functions as a mitigation device, transforming what could be a straightforward inquiry into a deferential, tentative question. Instead of asserting feasibility, the speaker transfers evaluative authority to the addressee, reflecting both negative politeness (minimizing imposition) and the cultural principle of *wakimae* (discernment of roles and hierarchy).

The closing line, *go-kakunin yoroshiku onegaishimasu* ("I humbly request your confirmation"), is a formulaic directive speech act requesting cooperation. The expression *yoroshiku onegaishimasu* is deeply embedded in Japanese corporate culture, signaling not just a request but also a desire for continued goodwill and smooth relations. Its use here reinforces both the transactional goal (seeking confirmation) and the relational goal (sustaining collaboration).

Data 5

いつもお世話になっております。
(itsumo osewani natte orimasu)

ご確認いただきありがとうございます。
(gokakunin itadaki arigatou gozaimasu)

A-103TLはへいしゃ, 弊社日本で使用しており、実績(じっせき)がありますのでサンプルは不要です。
(A-103TL wa heisha nihonde shiyou shite ori, jissekiga arimasunode, sanpuru wa fuyou desu)

まずはお見積もりをお願いします。
(mazu wa mitsumori o onegai shimasu)

使用するとなった場合には月50～60Kgになるかと思います。
(shiyou suruto natta baai niwa tsuki 50-60kg ni naru to omoimasu)

※生産動向により使用量は上記記載よりも増減する可能性があります。
よろしくお願いいたします。
(yoroshiku onegai itashimasu)

This message from staff of PT. Nakakin Indonesia indicates the way Japanese business correspondence carefully balances factual communication with relational politeness. The letter begins with the formulaic expression *itsumo osewani natte orimasu* ("I am always indebted to your support"), a ritualized expressive speech act of gratitude. As in most Japanese business emails, it reaffirms relational ties and positions the addressee as a benefactor, thereby framing the entire exchange in terms of humility and interdependence.

The next line, *go-kakunin itadaki arigatō gozaimasu* ("Thank you very much for your confirmation"), performs another expressive act, acknowledging the addressee's prior effort. The humble verb *itadaku* indicates self-lowering, while *arigatō gozaimasu* provides polite acknowledgment. Pragmatically, this does not simply express thanks; it signals attentiveness and reinforces the cooperative spirit expected in Japanese professional interactions.

The central portion of the email provides factual information: *A-103TL wa heisha Nihon de shiyō shite ori, jisseki ga arimasu node, sanpuru wa fuyō desu* ("A-103TL has already been used in our

company in Japan, and since it has a track record, a sample is unnecessary"). This is a representative speech act framed with politeness. The verb *shite ori* is the humble form of *shite iru,* which lowers the speaker's position and conveys respect toward the recipient even while stating facts. This shows how, in Japanese business discourse, even objective statements are pragmatically filtered through politeness markers to maintain hierarchy and deference.

The following sentence, *mazu wa mitsumori o onegai shimasu* ("First of all, I kindly request a quotation"), represents a directive speech act. However, it is softened through *onegai shimasu* ("I request"), which frames the request as a favor rather than a demand. The adverb mazu wa ("to begin with") also softens the directive, implying a step-by-step process rather than an abrupt imposition. This constitutes a negative politeness strategy, from another perspective; it exemplifies *wakimae*, since the speaker follows the socially appropriate formula for making requests.

Next, the email adds a prospective statement: *shiyō suru to natta baai ni wa tsuki 50–60 kg ni naru to omoimasu* ("If it is decided to use it, it would likely be about 50–60 kg per month"). This is a commissive act, projecting possible future commitment but hedged with *to omoimasu* ("I think"), which reduces the force of assertion. This hedging reflects cultural restraint (enryo) and prevents the statement from sounding overly definitive or binding before formal agreement. The note about variability due to production trends further demonstrates attentiveness to contingencies, another hallmark of Japanese indirectness in professional exchanges. The email concludes with *yoroshiku onegai itashimasu* ("I humbly request your kind cooperation"), a formulaic directive speech act that goes beyond a simple request. The use of *itashimasu* (humble form of *shimasu*) places the speaker in a deferential position, while the expression itself serves as a relational marker that seeks not just compliance but continued goodwill and harmony.

The findings of this study determine that Japanese corporate communication within PT. Ohki Indonesia is characterized by a systematic reliance on politeness strategies embedded in speech acts. Across the analyzed emails, expressions of gratitude (*itsumo osewani natte orimasu, arigatō gozaimasu*), apologies, requests, and confirmations were consistently framed through honorifics (keigo) and humble forms (*kenjōgo*), signaling deference to the interlocutor. The data further illustrate how speech acts are pragmatically reshaped by cultural expectations. Directives, for instance, were rarely expressed as imperative commands. Instead, requests such as gokakunin yoroshiku onegai itashimasu were framed as humble appeals, allowing the addressee to maintain autonomy while still complying with the request. Similarly, refusals were conveyed indirectly through hedging or alternative suggestions, and commitments (*sasete itadakimasu*) were phrased as actions carried out with the interlocutor's permission. Such patterns highlight that in Japanese business communication, the linguistic form of a speech act cannot be separated from its cultural grounding in hierarchy, humility, and the preservation of *wa* (harmony).

The findings suggest that speech acts in Japanese corporate communication are not merely functional but are deeply intertwined with cultural values and identity work. In an intercultural workplace such as PT. Ohki Indonesia, pragmatic competence goes beyond linguistic accuracy: it requires sensitivity to how politeness strategies are evaluated and understood across cultures. By situating speech act theory within a cultural-pragmatic framework, this study highlights the need for mutual adaptation and intercultural awareness in sustaining effective business communication in multinational corporate environments.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Japanese corporate communication at PT. Ohki Indonesia is organized around culturally mandated politeness practices, *keigo*, indirect directives, ritualized apologies, and hedging, that serve to maintain *wa* and hierarchical relations. Indonesian colleagues enact a complementary pragmatic logic rooted in *rukun* and *tepo seliro*, which privileges respectful directness. These differing realizations can produce misalignments and require pragmatic competence on both sides. We explicitly note the study's limitations: a purposive small sample and contextual focus on a single multinational site limit broad generalizability. Future research should undertake comparative, larger-scale, and platform-diverse studies to test the transferability of these findings. Practically, we recommend targeted intercultural training, clear procedural communication templates, and facilitated dialogues to reduce ambiguity in mixed teams. To be in line with Indonesian context, these communicative practices intersect with local norms of social harmony and consideration for

p-ISSN 2252-7427, e-ISSN 2541-3635
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others. While both cultures prioritize relational balance, they employ different pragmatic realizations; which is Japanese communication emphasizes humility and indirectness through honorific systems, whereas Indonesian communication values respectful directness and solidarity. These contrasts can lead to pragmatic misalignments, such as Japanese indirectness being perceived as evasive or Indonesian directness as overly casual. Nonetheless, the study also shows that both groups actively negotiate meaning, with Indonesian employees adapting to Japanese politeness conventions and Japanese expatriates learning to interpret Indonesian communicative styles.

In conclusion, Japanese business communication, as practiced within PT. Ohki Indonesia, demonstrates how speech acts are integral from cultural values and identity construction. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how politeness operates at the intersection of pragmatics and culture, and it reinforces the need for intercultural sensitivity in globalized corporate settings. Future research could expand this analysis by comparing Japanese-Indonesian communication with other cultural pairings or by exploring the role of digital communication platforms in shaping contemporary politeness strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Research funded by Universitas Widyatama

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