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Request Strategies in Email Communication: The Case of Indonesian Graduate Students in Japan

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Abstract

While research in speech act has received a lot of academic attention, how requesting strategies are performed in email communication among non-native speakers in a broader cultural context remains scarcely sufficient. This study investigates requesting strategies employed by non-native English-speaking students (i.e. Indonesians) to non-native English university professors (i.e. Japanese) through the medium of email. It further sought whether the strategies performed are different between low and high imposition requests. This study applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches using a corpus of 56 authentic emails. The data were analyzed using a modified version of the request strategies framework of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) contrived by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011). The results show a pattern of different requesting strategies emerged in accordance with the imposition of the requests the students make. While Conventionally Indirect Strategy in the form of query preparatory is found to be favored when writing low imposition email requests, this strategy is not appeared to be preferred when students write high imposition requests. Instead, Indonesian students tend to employ a great deal of Hint Strategies and let the professors interpret their intention in the emails.

Keywords: Request strategies, email communication, intercultural context, e-pragmatic.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Email is one of the most prominent media of communication in public and private institutions (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). In universities, email is used extensively as a means of communication by students to reach their lecturer quickly for a range of academic purposes, e.g. asking for help or course information. When a student writes a request to his/her lecturer, s/he needs to be aware of the power asymmetry which is common to institutional contexts and needs to be cautious about how s/he structures the request utterances (Chen, 2006). This is a demanding task, especially for students who are non-native speakers of English; as they do not only deal with grammatical accuracy but also pragmatic strategies to foster successful communication.

The utterances expressed are also often determined by the type of request. In the case of high imposition requests such as asking the professor to prepare a letter of recommendation, a student may select linguistic expressions with a high degree of formality and politeness as this type of request potentially put an additional burden on the professor. In contrast, when writing low imposition requests such as requests for specific information (e.g. ‘What time should I come to your office?’), a direct question may be deemed as sufficient or even expected by the professor as it is still within the student’s right to ask such a question, and the professor has low difficulty in performing the act or providing the required information.

Research on requests performed through the medium of email—has recently received more attention and it depicts the pervasiveness of email communication in today’s world (e.g. Biesenbach-Lucas & Weasenforth, 2002; Biesenbach-Lucas, 2005, 2006, 2007; Chen, 2006; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012; Gaffar Samar et al., 2010; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Hendriks, 2010; Pan, 2012). Hallajian (2014) noted that these studies focused on examining the difference between the native speaker (henceforth NS) and non-native speakers (henceforth NNS) of English in making requests. Moreover, research on requests performed by NNSs in a non-English country is scarce. There is also a limited number of studies focusing on the request strategies used in accordance with the level of the request impositions. To bridge this gap in the literature, this study examines how NNS students, i.e. Indonesian graduate students, write email requests to their NNS professors, i.e. Japanese professors. It focuses on the requesting strategies they utilize when writing low and high imposition requests. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. What request strategies do Indonesian students employ when making low and high imposition email requests to Japanese professors?
2. Do students apply the same strategy when the imposition of their request increases?

This study aims to understand how requests through emails are performed across a broader range of English language users. Practically, the study aims to facilitate intercultural communication between Indonesian speakers who use English as a lingua franca to the Japanese audience. As more and more Indonesians communicate with non-native international communities, it is worthwhile to investigate what strategies they employ when writing requests via email. In this increasingly global and diversified world, raising pragmatic awareness is needed for “peaceful co-existence and mutual tolerance” (Wierzbicka, 2003, p. viii).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Requests

Request frequently occurs in everyday life. It has been one of the most-researched aspects among other speech acts, e.g. apology, complaint, invitation, refusal, etc. When a speaker (S) makes a request, S conveys that S is an attempt to get a hearer (H) to do any act which S knows that H is able to do (Searle, 1969).

Depending on the type of request that S performs, the S usually imposes the H. This makes it why the S needs to have a certain level of pragmatic competence to understand how to navigate the request strategies they use in the interaction. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) classified requests that are only asking routine institutional information and that do not require too much time and preparation on the part of the professor into low imposition requests. These types of requests include requests for information, requests to have a meeting with a professor, or requests to ask for special permission. On the other hand, requests that require certain actions and take a lot of professor's time and require additional effort, e.g. requests to provide feedback on students' thesis and requests to write a scholarship recommendation, are categorized as high imposition requests.

Further studies show that the notion of 'standard situation' is also crucial when determining the request strategy that needs to be employed (House, 1989). The 'standard situation' presents "a pre-fixed constellation of rights and obligations" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 142). For example, asking for a menu from a waiter would not make the request act as a challenging work as the participants' roles are clearly set or standardized. In this situation, the S needs to perform the request with less effort as the S has a right to pose a request, and the H has a clear obligation to comply with the request.

Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) initially proposed the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), which provides a framework on how the requests are analyzed by examining the head acts. The head act or the core of the request sequence is "the minimal unit which can realize a request" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 275). The CCSARP classifies request head acts into three levels of directness; they are Direct Strategy, Conventionally Indirect Strategy, and Non-Conventionally Indirect Strategy or Hints. It is easy to recognize when a request is direct as the hearer does not need to make speculation what the real intent is. Direct requests can be realized through imperative/mood derivable, elliptical requests, performatives, c, and need statements.

Another level of request directness is Conventionally Indirect Strategy. The strategy is referred to as "contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language" (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 47). It is usually in the form of query preparatory as the speaker is seeking for hearer's permission, willingness or desire, e.g. 'Is it okay...?', 'Would you mind...?'.

The least direct is called Non-Conventionally Indirect Strategy, which requires some inferring effort by the hearer to interpret the request. This type of request carries a partial reference or sometimes no reference to the desired action, and it can be understood from the contextual cues (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989).

2.2 Email Communication

Email is an asynchronous medium of electronic communications and has been used frequently in student-professor communications. It is considered as a new method of communication and does not have a well-specific linguistic convention (Krulatz, 2012). Due to its hybrid nature, some researchers argue that language used on email is carrying informality (e.g. Barron, 2003; Herring, 2002), while others found the evidence of greater formality (Davis & Brewer, 1997). Furthermore, other studies also found that the wide stylistic range of email is rather diverse. Some students would follow a more business template, while some choose a more conversational style. While there have been some resources that provide rules of email etiquette on the Internet, due to its hybridity, writing emails is a challenge, particularly for students who need to deal with producing appropriate linguistic choices in a target language, namely in English.

2.3 Previous Research on Request Speech Act in Emails

Previous research on email has been centered on the request types and imposition levels performed by NS and NNS students to NS university professors. Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996) were one of the earliest researchers in student-professors email requests research. They examined 34 NS and 65 NNS graduate students' email requests and investigated how American university faculty members judged these emails. The emails were examined whether these emails had a positive or negative effect on the addressee, i.e. professors. The study demonstrates that NNSs employ more direct request strategies in the forms of 'I want...', 'Please do...'.

Next, Biesenbach-Lucas (2006) examined cyber-consultations between NNS graduate students and an NS professor in a U.S. university. The analysis used original and modified Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) CCSARP frameworks. The email data set which was analyzed using the original CCSARP framework showed the preference of NNSs to use Direct Strategies in low imposition requests (requests for appointments) while NSs adopted this strategy more in requests for feedback and appointments. On the other hand, the data which were analyzed with the modified CCSARP framework detected more conventionally indirect forms.

In a different study, Biesenbach-Lucas (2007) examined the e-politeness among NS and NNS students when performing low and high imposition requests to American faculty members. Following the original CCSARP, this study revealed that Direct Strategies and hints were more heavily favored than Indirect Strategies. This study revealed that authentic email data produced more hints which had not occurred in previous studies that used the elicitation method of DCT. Overall, the researcher's coding frameworks and the type of requests observed in these two Biesenbach-Lucas's (2006, 2007) studies had an important influence on the interpretation of the results.

Furthermore, the following additional studies showed divergent results due to the different contexts and frameworks used. Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) analyzed Greek university students' email requests to faculty members in an English medium university. The result showed that Direct Strategies were greatly employed by NNSs. In contrast, a study of Iranian NNS students' email requests, Zarei and Mohammadi (2012) found that the NNSs relied mainly on Indirect Strategies when they made

requests for action. However, when they made requests to ask for specific information, they resorted primarily to Direct Strategies.

Félix-Brasdefer (2012) analyzed email requests sent by U.S. learners of Spanish to NNSs and NSs of Spanish language instructors. The study differentiates the level of the imposition of email requests into low and high imposition requests. The continuum from low to high imposition is requests for information, requests for validation, and requests for feedback, and the highest level of imposition is requests for action. The results show that U.S. students preferred to use query preparatory strategy when composing higher imposition requests while they used more direct request strategies when making lower imposition request with direct questions as to the most preferred strategy. Students chose Conventionally Indirect Strategy when they asked the professor to do something for their benefit. In contrast, when only asking certain information or asking for validation, they preferred to use direct question request strategies. This trend was found to be the preference when they wrote emails in their L1, i.e. English and in L2, i.e. Spanish.

These studies are important in interlanguage pragmatics and computer-mediated communication. Nevertheless, some gaps are highlighted, and a further study is needed to shed some light on linguistic production in email communication initiated by students to professors. The gaps are as elaborated below.

Firstly, many of the earlier request studies obtained their data primarily either through Discourse Completion Test (DCT) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008, 2009; Faerch & Kasper, 1989) or role-plays (Félix-Brasdefer, 2012). In email request studies, a few studies examined authentic email messages which were sent to the researchers themselves (Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010).

Secondly, many of the existing studies (except for Biesenbach-Lucas, 2006, 2007; Félix-Brasdefer, 2012) did not scrutinize the level of request imposition which each email carried. This variable is important as email weightiness is varied, which affects the strategies employed when performing a request. Because of this reason, we analyze the request strategies following the request imposition levels.

Lastly, most of the previous studies investigated the email request sent by NNS students to English speaker professors in English medium universities. Other than studies done by Zarei and Mohammadi (2012) and Hallajian (2014), none of the above-reviewed studies examined how NNS students use English in a non-English medium university. Hence, this study is dedicated to investigating how students from a non-English speaking background conduct academic consultation virtually with their university professors who are also from a non-English speaking country.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This study applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The qualitative analysis was used to determine the request purposes and imposition levels. After this classification, the analysis was concerned with coding each of the request head acts by following a framework based on Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011), a modified version of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project

(CCSARP). The quantitative analysis was applied to tabulate the frequency of occurrences of the request strategies used in emails.

3.2 Email Data and Participants

The email data for this study consisted of a natural email corpus of 56 emails written in English sent by 10 Indonesian graduate students to 10 Japanese professors at a public university in Japan. Most of the students were in Master's programs and a few from Ph.D. programs in various academic fields, including agriculture, engineering, and social sciences. The emails collected were their actual emails sent to their academic supervisors and co-supervisors, who were all native Japanese speakers.

To collect these email messages, we approached Indonesian graduate students and explained the study briefly. Once they agreed to participate, they were asked to send their past emails to one of the researchers' email addresses. To address the ethical issues concerning this study, the researchers further emphasized the participant anonymity. They were informed that their emails would be stored and used only for data analysis of this study. Further, they were told that they were free to delete any sensitive and confidential information in their emails.

Upon receiving the emails, the collected emails were firstly checked whether they met the request criteria of this study. For the case when the email message intents were unclear due to the absence of the head acts, we contacted the students in person to confirm the requestive intent of their emails.

The email corpus presented here is composed in the form of original emails, which means that the researchers did not correct any mistaken linguistic features or any misspellings. Any personal information such as participants' and professors' names, the name of the school, and the research topics were deleted and signaled with *** to preserve confidentiality.

3.3 Email Data Analysis

The collected emails were first analyzed in terms of their head request acts. After identifying the head act, the emails were then classified based on their request purposes. They are Requests for Information (RI) (e.g. *'Could Sensei give a good suggestion on paper or book?'*), Requests for Permission (RP) (e.g. *'If it is possible, I would like to participate'*), Requests for Meeting (RM) (e.g. *'When do Sensei have a free time for the next meeting?'*), Requests for Feedback (RF) (e.g. *'I hope Sensei have same time to give some feedback'*), Requests for Action (RA) (e.g. *'Is it possible for you to write me a recommendation?'*) and Requests to become students' Academic Supervisor (RS) (e.g. *'Would you be my supervisor for my research?'*). Following a guideline suggested by [Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig \(1996\)](#), RI, RP, and RM were classified as Low Imposition Requests; whereas, RF, RA, and RS were categorized as High Imposition Requests.

To determine the type of request strategies, the request head acts were then analyzed according to the coding framework based on [Economidou-Kogetsidis \(2011\)](#). This framework is an adaptation of [Blum-Kulka et al.'s \(1989\)](#) CCSARP framework that fits with email request data. As several studies have employed the same coding framework, using the same practice will be beneficial in comparing the results of this present study with other previous studies. The request strategies were classified into

11 sub-strategies; the first nine sub-strategies are traditionally classified as direct, one as conventionally indirect (query preparatory), and one as non-conventionally indirect or hints. Table 1 presents the coding frameworks and the corresponding examples.

Table 1. Request strategies' coding framework (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011)¹.

CCSARP Directness Level	Request Strategies	Examples
Direct	Imperatives/mood derivable	Please just let me know what time I should come to have my rehearsal with you
	Direct question	When do Sensei have a free time for the next meeting?
	Elliptical requests	2*Any news?
	Performatives	I am writing to ask for your letter of recommendation
	Want statements	*I want to ask for an extension
	Need statements	I need information of how to join in your lab
	Expectation statements	I hope Sensei could provide some information for me about the procedures and requirements to take the research student program?
	Reminder requests	I thought I'd send you a friendly reminder that today is the last day
	Pre-decided statements	*I will hand my assignments tomorrow
Conventionally indirect	Query preparatory	May I meet you to consult about this data, once more?
Non-conventionally indirect (Hints)	Strong hints (containing some reference to requested act)/ mild hints (containing no reference to requested act)	Because I cannot find the website for registration this trip, therefore I hope this e-mail can represent it.

4. RESULTS

This section provides the results obtained after the data analysis. Tables 2 and 3 below present the distribution of the request strategies used by Indonesian students when making low and high imposition email requests. From a total of 70 request head acts found in the email corpus, 24 requests are categorized as low imposition requests and 46 requests are high imposition requests.

The data analysis showed that the students preferred different request strategies in accordance with the request imposition levels. When writing low imposition requests in emails, the majority of the students resorted to Conventionally Indirect Strategies (62.5%) followed by Direct questions (20%). Other strategies such as Imperatives, Performatives, and Need statements were used once while others, such as Elliptical requests, Want statements, Expectation statements, Reminder requests, and Pre-decided statements were absent.

¹ • The examples provided in this study are authentic examples from the present study.

• The coding categories followed Economidou-Kogetsidis's (2011) coding framework; the examples, on the other hand, were taken from the examples found in the present study's data set. Nevertheless, as we found no examples of three request strategies, i.e. Elliptical requests, Want statements and Pre-decided statements, the examples provided were from Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011, p. 3211) and were indicated with an asterisk.

Meanwhile, in high imposition requests, the students mostly used Hints (39.1%). This was followed by a large portion of Expectation statements (23%) and Conventionally Indirect (19.5%). Other request strategies such as Imperatives, Performatives, Reminder requests, Direct questions were sparingly used, while other strategies such as Elliptical requests, Want statements, Need statements, and Pre-decided statements were not used at all.

Table 2. Distribution of request strategies employed for low imposition requests.

Directness Level	Request Strategies	Low Imposition Requests			
		RI (n: 9)	RP (n: 9)	RM (n: 6)	Total (n:24)
Direct	Imperatives/ mood derivable	1	0	0	1
	Direct question	2	0	3	5
	Elliptical requests	0	0	0	0
	Performatives	0	1	0	1
	Want statements	0	0	0	0
	Need statements	1	0	0	1
	Expectation statements	0	0	0	0
	Reminder requests	0	0	0	0
	Pre-decided statements	0	0	0	0
	Query preparatory	4	8	3	15/24 (62.5%)
	Hints	1	0	0	1/24 (4.1%)
Conventionally indirect					
Non-conventionally indirect (Hints)					

Table 3. Distribution of request strategies employed for high imposition requests.

Directness Level	Request Strategies	High Imposition Requests			
		RF (n:25)	RA (n:12)	RS (n: 9)	Total (n: 46)
Direct	Imperatives/ mood derivable	2	0	1	3
	Direct question	0	0	1	1
	Elliptical requests	0	0	0	0
	Performatives	0	2	0	2
	Want statements	0	0	0	0
	Need statements	0	0	0	0
	Expectation statements	10	1	0	11
	Reminder requests	2	0	0	2
	Pre-decided statements	0	0	0	0
	Query preparatory	1	3	5	9/46 (19.5%)
	Hints	10	6	2	18/46 (39.1%)
Conventionally indirect					
Non-conventionally indirect (Hints)					

A closer look at the two levels of request impositions and the request strategies employed are explained further in the following sub-sections.

4.1 Low Imposition Requests

A total of 24 requests were categorized as low imposition requests. Our data shows that students mostly mentioned their requests using Conventionally Indirect Strategy using query preparatory (62.5%; n=15 of 24 requests). This was particularly evident when the students asked for permission (RP) where 8 of 9 requests head acts were expressed with query preparatory forms. This strategy was also largely used in Request for Information (RI) where 4 of 9 requests were expressed with this strategy. The excerpts below illustrate the use of query preparatory forms (E refers to excerpts and the numbers display the sequencing of data display for this section).

E1 sumimasen sensei, at 7 March, my brother will marry. May i get off 2 weeks to attend it? I also want to arrange document of my scholarship to extend PhD, may i? Thank you, sensei.

E2 is it okay for me to send the documents directly to academic Affairs Division without the recommendation letter in it?

E1 and E2 above are examples of the use of query preparatory in low imposition requests where students seek the professor's permission. E1 shows a request for permission where the request head act is realized with 'May I..?' while the request head act in E2 is realized with 'Is it okay...?' therefore, they are coded as Conventionally Indirect Strategy.

Following this, the Direct question came as the second most utilized strategy when performing low imposition requests (20%; n = 5 of 24 requests). Specifically, this strategy was mainly used when the students asked the professors for a meeting (RM) as in Excerpt 3.

E3 Dear LN-sensei
Do you have time for meeting tomorrow?

In E3, the head act is expressed with a direct question to ask the professor about his availability. Another typical example from the data also shows the use of a Direct question strategy utilizing wh-questions when the students pose a request for information as in the following excerpt.

E4 I expect guidance, what should I prepare to be able to continue ***?

4.2 High Imposition Requests

In contrast to Low Imposition Requests, the request patterns found in High Imposition Requests showed a preference for using Hints (39.1%; n=18 of 46 requests). The use of Hints was more prominent in the requests for feedback (RF) and requests for action (RA) as shown in E5, E6, and E7.

E5 Dear LN-Sensei and LN-Sensei

CC: LN-san
I hope this email finds you well.

I conducted FN-san specimens and obtained several data. I hope these data are enough to be managed for this paper. The paper must be submitted before 1st of April. Hereby, I attached my paper, pamphlet and instruction related to *** 2018
Thank you very much.
[student's FN + LN]

E6 Dear Prof. LN + F.N.
Konnichiwa
Based on the regulation of the scholarship. The applicant should send an unconditional LoA which is the acceptance letter. Then, I will use the letter of the acceptance as soon as after I pass the examination
Thank you for your kindness.
Best Regards,
[student's FN + LN]

In E5 to E7, the students' email messages require more interpretation as the request head acts are not transparent. The student in E5, for instance, only mentioned a partial reference to do the desired act, i.e. to get the professor to write feedback on her paper with 'I attached my paper...' therefore, this email message falls within the Hint category. Meanwhile, the student in E6 indirectly asked the professor to conduct an action, i.e. to provide a letter of acceptance. This request can be interpreted from the contextual cues, i.e. the justification for the request she provided in the email message ('Based on the regulation of the scholarship. The applicant should send an unconditional LOA...') therefore, this email message is categorized as Hint.

Further, many of the requests found in the data included no reference to the desired acts. Many were understood from the background information or through the subject of the email. E7 is a typical example of a very opaque request which provides no context about what actions the student asks. Nevertheless, the student used the expression of 'This is the last version of my presentation' along with a contextual cue, i.e. a file attachment, it is understandable that the message is a hint to ask the professor to provide feedback on the student's writing. This was supported by confirmation with the student; therefore, this email message was coded as carrying Hint strategy.

E7 Dear LN-Sensei,
This is the last version of my presentation
regards,
[student's F.N.]

Along with this, the results also showed an important number of expectation statements (23%; n=11 of 46 requests). The students seemed to favor using the expression 'I hope...'. This strategy was used particularly popular in requests for feedback. E8 is a typical example. Further, some messages used query preparatory but the proportion is not as many as in low imposition requests (19.5%; n= 9 of 46 requests).

E8 This is the latest version of my paper. I hope Sensei have same time to give some feedback.

5. DISCUSSION

Request strategies employed by Indonesians when making academic email requests to their Japanese professors are varied following the imposition of the requests. Our data show that when the students make low imposition requests, they prefer to use Conventionally Indirect Strategies; however, when the imposition of the request increases, they prefer to use hints and a large proportion of expectation statements instead of Conventionally Indirect Strategy. This finding is in contrast to previous studies mentioned who found that the majority of NNSs resorted largely to Direct Strategies. In [Felix-Brasdefer \(2012\)](#), lower imposition requests were predominant with direct questions, while our finding shows that the students mostly employed Conventionally Indirect Strategy using query preparatory strategy. A possible explanation for this difference is that [Felix-Brasdefer \(2012\)](#) only examined requests for information and asking for validation (e.g. ‘the homework is for tomorrow, right?’), whereas in this present study, low imposition requests include requests for meetings, permission, and asking information. Requests for a meeting (RM), in particular, dominated in low imposition requests group where students asked for professors’ willingness and permission using query preparatory forms, e.g. ‘May I meet you...?’.

It was observed that when the level of imposition increases, the request strategies also change. When students initiate high imposition requests, they dominantly used hints. Most of the requests head acts in requests for feedback were stated in hints (e.g. ‘Please find attachment in this email’, ‘This is the last version of my presentation’). This finding is in line with [Biesenbach-Lucas \(2007\)](#), where NS students prefer this strategy to ask for the professor’s feedback. A possible reason for the great use of this hint strategy might be that these students might assume that the utterance, or in this case, the ‘attached draft’ in their emails, will speak for itself. As many of them have known the professors, the speakers might think that they do not need to express their intention in a direct way, but rather making a statement which contains a partial reference to the desired act is enough to get the addressee, i.e. professors to do something, as noted in [Felix-Brasdefer \(2012\)](#).

Furthermore, asking for feedback lies within [House’s \(1989\)](#) concept about the ‘standard situation’, where the speakers and the hearers’ roles and relationships are transparent. In the university setting, asking for feedback lies within their academic routines as supervisors-supervisees. This possibly makes the student used hints in their emails as this cue (i.e. file attachment) is sensitive enough. Besides, it would not be difficult for the professors to interpret that the students want the professor to do a favor, such as reading their thesis and providing feedback for the student’s work in progress.

This hint strategy to some extent can be explained from a theory of anthropologists, [Geertz \(1976\)](#) and [Mulder \(1989\)](#), as cited in [Hassal \(1999\)](#), who assert that Indonesian society is strongly characterized by an ethos of indirectness and non-egalitarian value. Regardless of whom the professors are, whether they are native Japanese or NS professors, this cultural value that these students carry possibly explains the reason why they opted to hint in their request. Hint strategy also found to be preferable in face-to-face communication using the Indonesian language ([Hassal, 1999](#)). Therefore, further investigation would be worthwhile to see if this hinting strategy was one of the Indonesian politeness devices when requesting, particularly through the medium of email.

Another finding that needs to be highlighted in this study is the high occurrence of expectation statements in the high imposition requests group. This request strategy is popular among the students, especially when they ask for professor's feedback on their writing. This finding is particularly different from other studies (e.g. Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011; Felix-Brasdefer, 2012; Pan, 2012) where the NNSs students did not favor this strategy as much as the Indonesians. The Indonesian students in this study have extensively used the phrase 'I hope *Sensei*...' which tell us that the students try to be explicit about what their requests are, but at the same time showing their humble hopes in looking for the *Sensei*'s (Japanese: teacher or university professor) willingness to do the request act.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to analyze the strategies performed by Indonesians when making email requests to their NNSs professor, i.e. Japanese. Evidence suggests that when they ask for low imposition request, which does not take much time on the side of the professors, they use Conventionally Indirect Strategy in the form of query preparatory. However, as the imposition of the request increases, the students show a tendency to hint and let the professors interpret what the request intents are.

It should be noted that the findings presented in this paper do not attempt to generalize the requests strategies of Indonesian emailers due to the small set of data collected. This present study is also by no means assessing the email politeness as perceived by the email recipients. To further assess pragmatic appropriateness of the email request strategy, a more empirical study is needed.

Future studies could be undertaken by following Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1996), i.e. to triangulate the quantitative data by surveying the views of Japanese professors regarding the politeness of students' emails. This will provide insights on what contributes to politeness when performing the speech act of email requests in non-western cultures as in Japan. Besides, future research is encouraged to explore politeness features of email requests, including analyzing internal and external modifiers, request perspectives, and the linguistic realizations performed by NNSs to NNSs.

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