

Sociolinguistic Features of Oral Interactions among Junior High School Students



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Sociolinguistic competence

- ◆ **Hymes (1972):** Sociolinguistic competence
Appropriateness
 - what is possible/feasible/appropriate/
actually done
- ◆ **Swain (1984)**
 - appropriateness of meaning/form
- ◆ **Cohen (2003):** Six speech acts
Appropriateness
 - apologies/complaints/compliments/refusals/
requests/thanking

Between NNS and NS

- ◆ Linnell et al. (1992)
Apologies: no significant difference
- ◆ Fukushima & Iwata (1987)
Requests: no significant difference
- ◆ Cohen, Olshatain & Rosenstein (1986)
Apologies: distinction



Cohen (1996)

L2 learners native language and culture

not at all appropriate for the target language and cultural situation

PURPOSE of STUDY

- 1) How do beginners of English in Japan (JHS students) develop their socio-linguistic oral interaction skills?
- 2) Are there any significant differences between NSs and NNSs?
- 3) Can we find some features of Japanese English in this domain?

Categories of Data Analysis

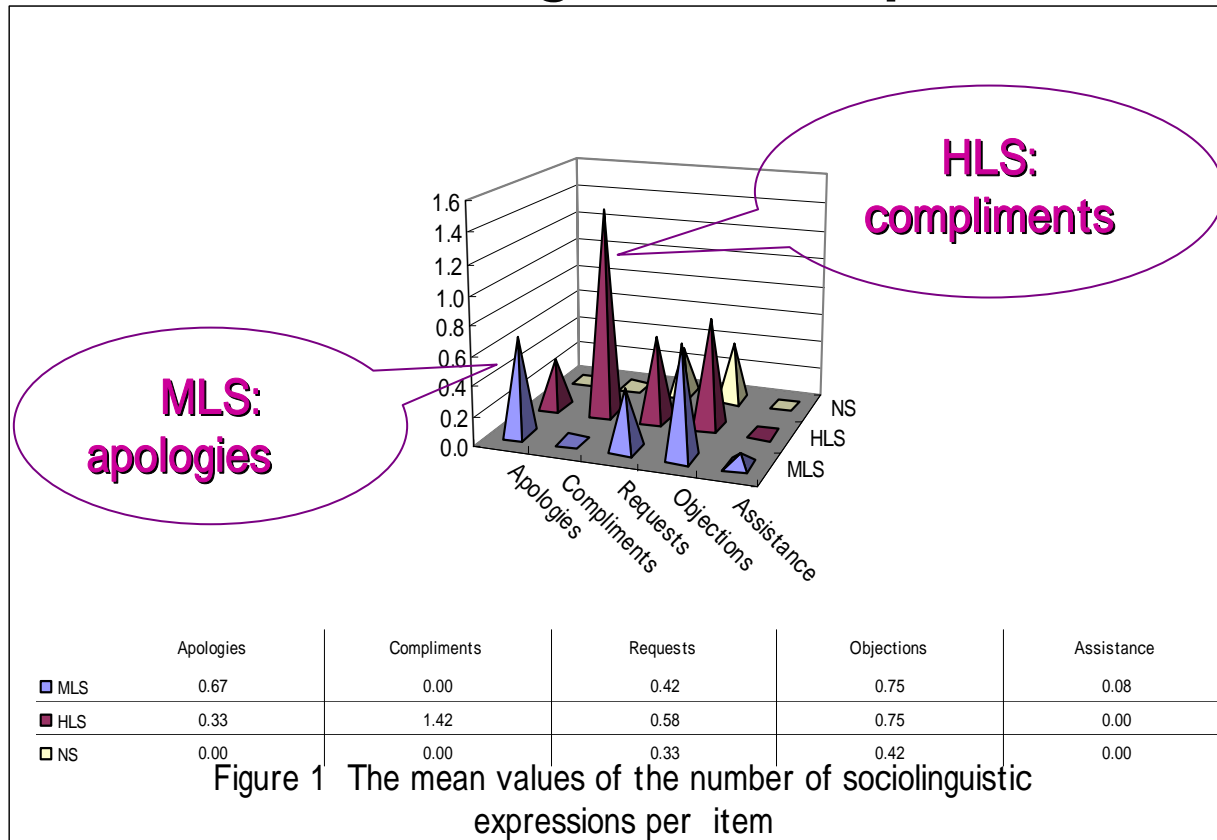
Categories of Data Analysis

- ◆ Apologies
- ◆ Compliments
- ◆ Requests
- ◆ Objections/ Disagreements
- ◆ Assistance

RESULT 1

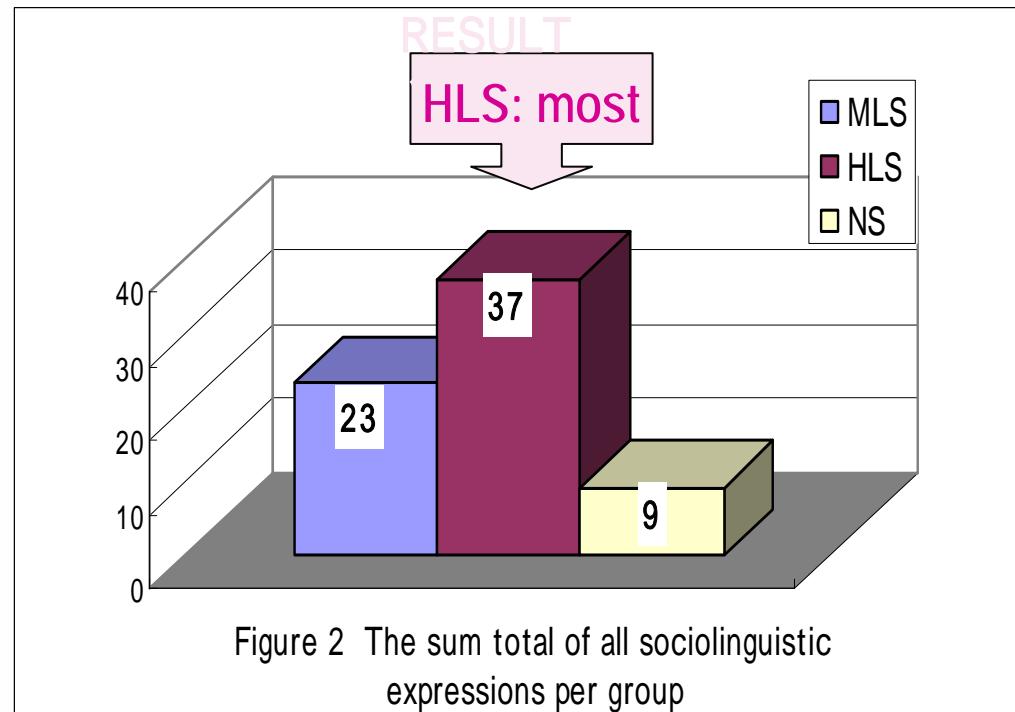
Quantitative Analysis

Numbers of sociolinguistic expressions : few



RESULT 2

Sum total of sociolinguistic expressions per group



RESULT 3

Proportion of expressions showing sociolinguistic competence

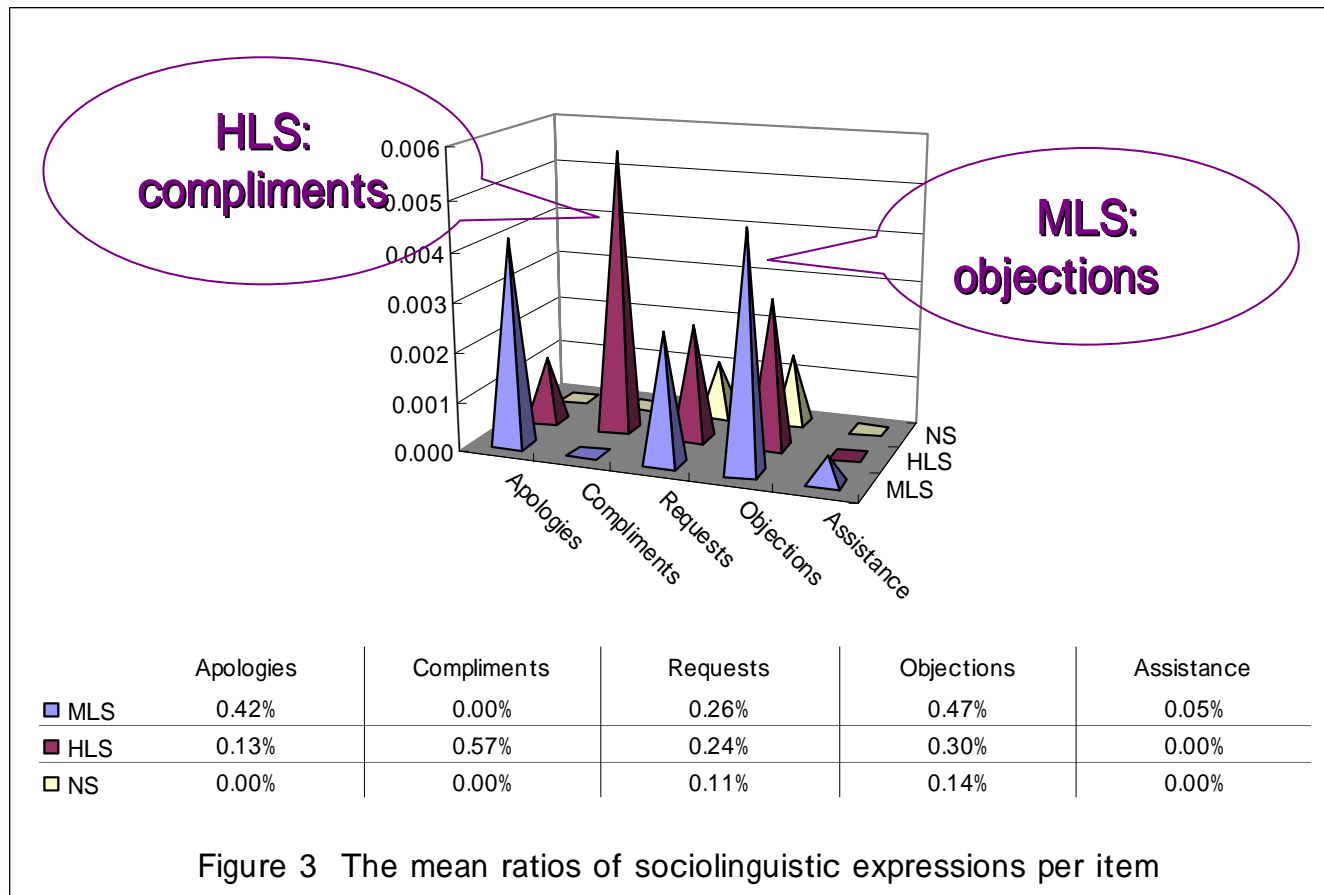


Figure 3 The mean ratios of sociolinguistic expressions per item

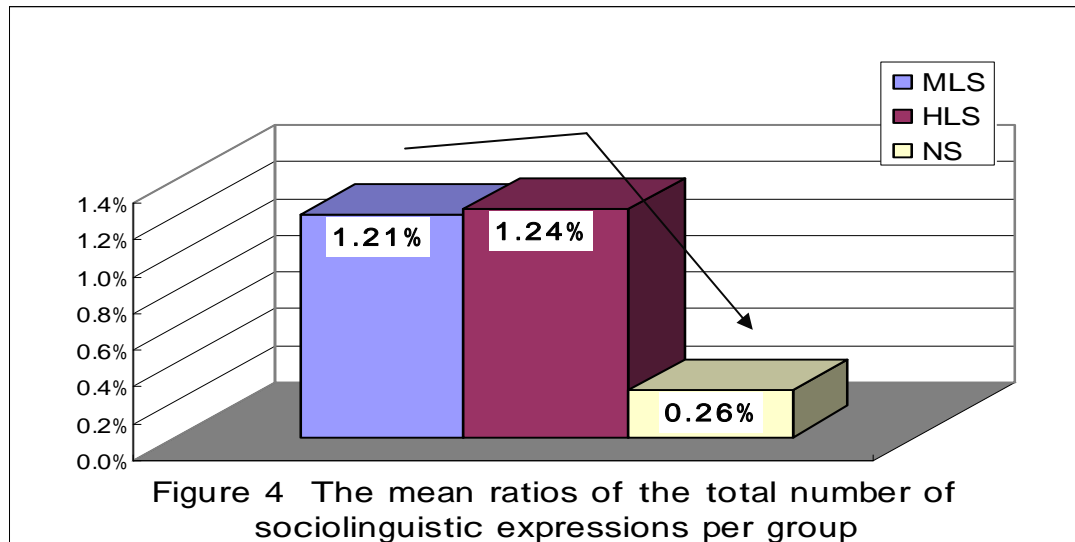
RESULT 4

Mean ratios of the total number of sociolinguistic expressions per group

MLS

HLS

NS



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS 1

Apologies

Excerpt (1) (MLS: Group A, lines 86-88, Group A, lines 93-95)

86 B: Ah! ... Mmm..... Er? (puzzled) *I'm sorry.*

87 A: *I'm sorry.* Harry Potter.

88 B: *I'm sorry.*



Communication
breakdowns

93 C: It's difficult. ((B:laugh))

94 A: *I'm ... I'm sorry.* ((nod)) Do you like music?

95 B: Yes. ((nod))

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS 2

Apologies

Excerpt (2) (HLS: Group B, lines 71-72, Group B, lines 107-109)

71 C: Cold? ((nod)) Why don't you like cold?

72 A: Mmm... Ahaha. I'm sorry I can't explain. ((nod))

107 B: Mmm which do you think, mm, oh, sorry, mm, I can't say.

108 A: Oh...((nod))

109 C: That's O.K. Eh,heh. I understand.
((A:nod)) ((nod))

Expanded range
of expressions

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS 3

Cohen (2003): apologies

- a) expression of an apology **MLS**
- b) acknowledgement of responsibility **HLS**
- c) explanation of account **HLS**
- d) offer a repair
- e) promise of non-recurrence

↓
Proficient

Apologies in Japanese follow this pattern.

Compliments

Compliments

Excerpt (3) (HLS: Group B, lines 126-127, Group D, lines 122-127)

126 B: But you are good at English very well. ((nod)) ((C:nod))

127 A: Oh, thank you. ((nod))

122 B: Heh, heh... You're good.

123 A: Don't.

124 B: Sorry. So good.

125 A: No.

126 B: You look good.

127 A: I want to be, I want to will be ((C:nod)) your, your style.

Compliments in Japanese

- We usually do not accept compliments in a straightforward manner; we prefer to show our modesty, by saying Not at all. or No, no, no. Or at most, we say, Really? Do you think so? This is similar to No-lah in Malay English.
- We also compliment each other, as in the second example in HLS.
- * The first example follows the NS practice, since she accepts the compliment, saying Thank you.

Requests 1

Requests

Excerpt (4) (MLS: Group A, lines 10-14, HLS: Group B, lines 59-62)

10 B: ...belong to track and field club. ((A:nod))

11 C: *What is it?* Requests

12 B: Ah.. Track and field club?

13 C: Yeah. ((nod))

14 B: Uh... running.

59 A: Do you like cold, cold place? ((nod))

60 C: Ah... cold place? ((nod)) *What?*

61 A: Cold place.

62 C: Yeah, I like cold place. But...



Direct & strong
questions

Requests in Japanese

When we request something in formal situations, we follow the sequence of

Thanking, Apologizing and Requesting; e.g., I am always very grateful to you. I am really feel sorry to ask you in such a short notice, but would it be possible to come to my house on Sunday? (Translation)

Therefore, in Japanese English at this level, due to the lack of linguistic resources, the utterances sound very direct and strong to us.

Requests 2

Requests

Excerpt (5) (MLS: Group B, line 73, HLS: Group A, line 28)

73A: *Please tell me about your best friend.*

28 C: *Please give me something when you come home.*



Nakano et al. (2000, 2003):

Japanese overuse “imperative + *please*”

Objections

Objections

MLS: simple questions and answers

“Do you . . . ?” “No.” breakdowns

MLS & HLS: mitigation (HLS > MLS)

Try not to offend other speakers

NS: indirect

SUMMARY

- ◆Quantity: few
- ◆Apology
 - MLS: apologized for breakdowns using only “I m sorry.”
 - HLS: described the reason and responded to the apology
- ◆Compliment: HLS
- ◆Imperative + *please*: MLS & HLS

Some features of JE

◆ Quantitative analysis

not sufficient but showed some implications for teachers

◆ Some characteristics of JE at this level

Apologies: overuse of I m sorry.

They tend to compliment each other.

Their requests are too direct and strong.

Overuse of please + imperatives.

A Note on Our Old Traditions

- 仁 (Considerations for Others, Generosity, and Equality)
- 義 (Fairness, Justice,)
- 礼 (Courtesy and Order in the society)