Students’ Ability in the Use of Speech Act (Keigo): A Comparative Study on Two Japanese Study Programs in North Sumatera and Riau

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ABSTRACT

Japanese speech acts are known as keigo consisting of two types, namely sonkeigo and kenjoogo. The first is used to express respect with regard to activities or circumstances of the other person and the persons being discussed. The second is used to denote respect to other persons or persons who become the topic of conversation by humbling oneself. The purpose of this study is to determine the ability of Japanese non-native learners in the use of keigo and to describe the forms of errors and the factors underlying the occurrence of errors in the use of keigo. The research was carried out in two Japanese Literature Study Programs at Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of Sumatera Utara and at Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Riau. The research used qualitative and quantitative methods with its main characteristics for the measurement (the questionnaires) are the same. The result shows that the percentage of students’ abilities in the use of sonkeigo and kenjoogo are 39.3% and 43.11% respectively at the Japanese Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of Sumatera Utara and 35.3% and 35.08% respectively at the Japanese Language Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Riau. The result also shows that, from both institutions, their abilities in using the keigo are low (below 50%) meaning the keigo is considered very difficult because of the large amount of vocabularies and of shape pattern changes.

Keywords: Speech acts, keigo, sonkeigo, kenjoogo, ability

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between speaker (S) and hearer (H) when they make speech cannot be considered easy. Some important factors that affect speech are the power and distance that exist between the speech participants. Power refers to three types of social status relationships between the S and H, namely whether the status of the H is higher, equal, or lower than the speaker. Distance refers to the psychology that exists between the S and H. The difficult material for Japanese non-native learners, like Indonesians, is keigo (soft language); those who do not use local languages in their family environment (they only speak Indonesian which does not have level of subtlety in the language but only has formal and informal forms) face more difficulties in using the keigo. In addition, in Indonesian, an expression that is considered good and right is generally in accordance with the rules of grammar that apply. For example, the word pergi ‘to go’ in Indonesian can be used for all types of subjects, for formal situation or anger and does not have differences in subtle or rough nuances.

The traditional Sundanese has strata and the word pergi may have several variations, such as indit which is used in informal situations or between close friends, and mios which is a soft word for oneself.
and is used to respect others. Misuse in speech acts, namely the use of soft language (keigo) in Japanese can cause problems in the Japanese learning. This is very interesting to study so that problems that occur in foreign language learners, especially Japanese non-native language learners, can be described get the attention from teachers who are to find solutions for the problems.

PROBLEMS
Japanese non-native learners feel that keigo is very difficult because of small number of Japanese who live in North Sumatara and Riau provinces, so it is very rare for them to practice Japanese with native speakers. Thus, they have lack of mastery and even some of them do not understand the proper use of keigo that make them not confident and finally they are completely wrong in the use of keigo. What happens then is they dislike keigo; feeling dislike then becomes the main obstacles to improve their Japanese skills. The problems in this paper are: to what extent do Japanese non-native learners at the two study programs have ability to use keigo and what kinds of errors do they face in their learning process for keigo?

MATERIALS AND METHODS
The research used both descriptive qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze data collected in the forms of Japanese writing tests regarding the use of keigo. The time allotted to do the test was 100 minutes. After the data collection, the next steps are to mark the error sentences, to determine the kinds of errors, and to compare their abilities in the use of keigo. Quantitatively, the data calculation was applied to know the average of correct answers which were then used to get the percentage of students’ ability to use keigo.

There were 46 respondents from semester 6, who attended the two study programs; 19 of them have taken of the keigo (sonkeigo and kenjoogo) in the Bunpo course especially those who used Minna No Nihongo Volume II (lessons 49 and 50). The sampling technique involved non-probability sampling especially the systematic sampling (see Sugiyono (2016: 84). For students at USU, the sampling was based on the order of the population members who were given the serial number, that is, the odd serial number of 23 people.

The instruments used in this study were given in the forms of tests and non-tests; the first was carried out by written tests and the second test used questionnaires. The keigo materials were taken from KCP International Language Institute. 1993. Nihongo Shinkiso II Bunkei Reshuuchou. Tokyo: Kabushiki Gaisha and Suriee Netto Waaku's book. 1999. Minna No Nihongo Sokyuuu II Hyoujun Mondaishuu. Tokyo: 3A Corporation. This research was conducted at two Japanese Study Programs at the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of Sumatra Utara being held on July 2, 2019 in Medan and at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Riau on July 8, 2019 in Pakan Baru, Riau.

LITERARY REVIEW
Language Politeness
Nurjamily (2017: 4) argued that communication requires politeness for several reasons that polite person is generally judged by his polite language, soft speech, or 'soft language', that a polite language will facilitate the delivery of messages in communication, that inappropriate language often hurts the feelings of others, so that it can be a source of conflict, and in social life politeness and good language are two important aspects to maintain.

Definition of keigo
Lexically, keigo means words of respect or expression of respect (Mawitjere, 2019: 1). Mawitjere stressed keigo is a way of using language based on various relationships between the speaker and the interlocutor and between the listener and the person who is the subject of conversation.
and the form of expression that explains the relationship between humans. In short, 
keigo is the form of expression that explains the relationship among persons (human
relations).

Use of keigo
Sutedi (2011: 246) thought that 
keigo may be used depending on who is the 
interlocutor, whether the person is in a 
higher position, equal, or subordinate or 
whether he/she is already familiar or not 
(the first time meeting).

Types of keigo
Supardjo (2012: 161-163) argued 
keigo is divided into two types, namely 
sonkeigo and kenjoogo. Nomura and Koike 
Seiji added (in Sudjianto and Ahmad 
Dahidi, 2004: 190) also divided the 
keigo「敬語」 into sonkeigo 「尊敬
語」 (words for respect), and kenjoogo 「謙
譲語」 (humble words).

Types of sonkeigo formation
Sonkeigo is an expression used to 
respect another person (or party) who 
becomes the topic of a conversation by 
raising the person’s degree (Sutedi, 2011:
246). In 3A Corporation (2018: 150) the 
sonkeigo can be used to respect something 
related to the activity and to property or 
matters of the person to whom he/she is 
talked to. The types of sonkeigo consist of 
the formation of verbs and nouns. In 3A 
Corporation (2018: 150) there are four 
forms of sonkeigo, as discussed in the followings.

(1) Verbs for respect
Wulandari (2013: 68) said that the meaning 
of sonkeigo can be applied to a person who 
does an action and the expression can be 
characterized by use of [～reru and ～
rareru] to the verb that describes the action. 
Consider the examples in (a)-(c).
(a) yomimasu 読みます → 
yomaremasu 読まれます
(b) tabemasu 飲べます → 
taberaremasu 飲われます
(c) kimasu 来ます →
koraremasu 来られます

(2) Verb forms (ます)になります)
In 3A Corporation (2018: 150) it is stated 
that the pattern of お verb forms (ます)に
なります) seems more respectful and 
polite than the verb sonkeigo in (a)-(c). 
Some examples of the formation patterns of 
[o ~ ni naru] can be seen in (d)-(e).

(d) yomimasu 読みます → o yomi
ni narimasu お読みになります
(e) tabemasu 飲べます → o tabe
ni narimasu お食べになります

(3) Special words for respect
According to 3 A Corporation (2018: 150) 
there are a number of verbs that are used for 
special respect (Tokubetsu na Sonkeigo 
「特別な尊敬」) representing the 
same level of respect for sonkeigo in (d)-(e) 
above (see also Table 1).

(4) Request for respect (お / ご ～ く ださ
い)
This sentence pattern is used to show 
respect when requesting and inviting the 
another person. In 3 A Corporation (2018:
150) the verbs in group I and II become 
have the form [Verb (Form ます) く だ
さい], and the verbs in group III becomes the 
form [ご Nomina く ださ い]. The example あ
ちらからお入りください。means ‘please enter from there.’

Types of Kenjoogo Formation
According to Sutedi (2011: 246), kenjoogo 
is an expression used to respect another 
person (or party) who becomes the indirect 
topic of conversation by lowering the 
speaker’s own position or behavior. 
According to 3A Corporation (2018: 156) 
there are two forms of kenjoogo, as noted in 
(A) and (B).
(A) Form of [お / ご 〜 します] "o / go 〜 ni suru"
(f) Verbs in group I / II) (Form ます) します as shown in the example お持ちしますね。(o 持ち し ま し ょう か。 meaning ‘to look heavy huh. Let me bring it.’

(g) Verbs in group III) as noted in the example 江戸 東京 博物館 へ ご案内 します。which means ‘let (me) take (you) to the Tokyo Edo Museum.’

(B) Special words for humberness
Some verbs have a special self-degrading strategy (or Tokubetsu na Kenjoogo 「特別な 謙続」) as explained in 3A Corporation, 2018: 156)(see also Table 1). Examples can be seen in (h)-(i) below.

(1) A: あしたはだれが手伝いに来てくれますか。
B: 〜があります。

‘Who will come to help tomorrow? ’
‘I am coming’

Table 1 shows special words for respect (tokubetsu na sonkeigo) and special words for condescension (tokubetsu na kenjoogo) and their meanings in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Sonkeigo</th>
<th>Kenjoogo</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>行く 'iku'</td>
<td>いらっしゃい 'irasshaimasu'</td>
<td>参ります 'mairimasu'</td>
<td>To go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>来る 'kuru'</td>
<td>いらっしゃい 'irasshaimasu'</td>
<td>あります 'maimasu'</td>
<td>To come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>いる 'iru'</td>
<td>いらっしゃい 'irasshaimasu'</td>
<td>おります 'maimasu'</td>
<td>there is / there are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>食べる 'taberu'</td>
<td>召し上がります 'mashiagarimasu'</td>
<td>いただきます 'itadakimasu'</td>
<td>To eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>飲む 'nomu'</td>
<td>召し上がり 'mashiagarimasu'</td>
<td>いただきます 'itadakimasu'</td>
<td>To drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>もう 'morau'</td>
<td>いただきます 'itadakimasu'</td>
<td>To accept</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>言う 'i'</td>
<td>おっしゃいます 'oshaimasu'</td>
<td>申します 'shimasu'</td>
<td>To say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>知っている 'shite iru'</td>
<td>存じです 'gonzōji desu'</td>
<td>ございます 'zonjimasu'</td>
<td>To know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>見る 'miru'</td>
<td>ご覧になります 'goran ni narimasu'</td>
<td>お見せします 'haiken shimasu'</td>
<td>To see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>する 'suru'</td>
<td>なさいます 'nasaimasu'</td>
<td>いたします 'itashimasu'</td>
<td>To do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>くれる 'kureru'</td>
<td>くださいます 'kudasaimasu'</td>
<td>〜します 'kaikanimasu'</td>
<td>To give</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>きく 'iku'</td>
<td>〜します 'kudasaimasu'</td>
<td>〜います 'kakaimasu'</td>
<td>To ask, to listen, to visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>よく 'u'</td>
<td>お目にかかります 'omenni kakerimasu'</td>
<td>〜立ちます 'otamari kakerimasu'</td>
<td>To meet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factors that Cause Errors
According to Lightbown and Spada (2006: 78-79) there are four reasons why errors occur, namely: over generalization, ignoring rule of restriction, incomplete application of rules, false concept of hypothesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
With regard to keigo there are five problems provided. Problem 1 with four questions is directed to change from verb form 〜て ください to the form お / ご 〜 ください. After the test, it is found that the ability of students from USU and UNRI is 38.04% and 21.04% respectively. In case of form of errors, the students cannot distinguish that in group III the verbs use ご noun ください, not お noun くだ さい. With reference to problem 2 with four questions, the direction is that students should answer question sentences from the form 〜てすか to the form お 〜 されます. The students’ ability from USU and UNRI is 34.78% and 31.58% respectively. The form of error shows that students do not understand the basic form of verbs from group I and II. In case of problem 3 (8 question), the instruction is to change the verbs in parentheses into special sonkeigo verbs. After the test, it is found that the ability of students from USU and UNRI is 67.15% and 59.24% respectively with the form of error indicates that students do not
understand the specific form of sonkeigo verbs. For problem 4 (8 questions), the students are directed to change the verbs in parentheses to the sonkeigo verbs by adding the auxiliary verb "〜reru and 〜raru" in the verb. The students’ ability from USU and UNRI is 34.78% and 44.07% respectively. For form of error, the students from both institutions often feel confused with the use of adding 〜reru to the verb in group I and 〜raru to the verb in group II.

With reference to problem 5 (8 questions), the direction of answer questions is to select one word in the box and change it to sonkeigo (〜と 〜ださい), and also fill in the verbs in accordance with the context of the content of the sentence. The students’ ability from USU and UNRI is 21.74% and 20.39% respectively with the form of error is related to students’ wrong choice for words and they wrongly change in the form of sonkeigo. Table 2 shows that the total percentage of students’ abilities in using sonkeigo from USU and UNRI is 39.3% and 35.3% respectively. Figure 1 indicates that the students’ ability from both institutions when using sonkeigo is low (under 50% on average).

Table 2. The percentage of students’ ability from USU and UNRI in answering Sonkeigo questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>USU</th>
<th>UNRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number 1</td>
<td>38.04%</td>
<td>21.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 2</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>31.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 3</td>
<td>67.15%</td>
<td>59.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 4</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
<td>44.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 5</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>20.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With regard to kenjoogo there are three problems provided. In problem 6 (4 questions) students are requested to change the existing verbs to special kenjoogo verbs. The students’ ability from USU and UNRI is 46.73% and 23.67%. For the form of error, students do not yet understand the special form of kenjoogo verbs. For problem 7 (4 questions) the students should select one word in the box and change it to kenjoogo in the form [お/ご〜します] "お/ご〜に suru", and fill in the verbs according to the context of the sentence. As a result, the students’ ability from USU and UNRI is 41.30% and 56.57% respectively. In case of form of error, students cannot distinguish and tend to be confused with the use of "お verb (group I. II) (form ます) します" with "ご verb (group III)". With reference to problem 10 (8 questions) the students are requested to change the verb in parentheses to the kenjoogo verb in the form "お vera (form ます) します". The percentage of students’ ability from USU and UNRI is 41.31% and 24.99% respectively. For form of error, students do not understand the basic form of verbs, and the formation of kenjoogo.

Table 3 shows that the percentage of students’ abilities in using kenjoogo from USU and UNRI reaches 43.11% and 35.08% respectively. Meanwhile, figure 2 indicates that the students’ ability in using kenjoogo from both institutions is low (under 50% on average).

Table 3. Students’ ability from USU and UNRI in answering Kenjoogo questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>USU</th>
<th>UNRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number 6</td>
<td>46.73%</td>
<td>23.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 7</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>56.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 10</td>
<td>41.31%</td>
<td>24.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With reference to sonkeigo and kenjoogo, there are only two problems provided for students from USU and UNRI.
For problem 8 (4 questions), students are advised to answer sentences from tokubetsu na sonkeigo (special respect) to form tokubetsu na kenjoogo (special humbling words). The percentage of students’ ability from both institutions is 39.12% and 19.73% respectively and for form of error, students are often confused between the verbs of special forms of sonkeigo with the special form verb kenjoogo. In case of problem 9 (6 questions), students should respond to question and answer sentences between A and B. They are asked to change question sentences from ordinary verbs to sonkeigo (special respect) and to change the answer from normal verbs to kenjogo (special humble words). The percentage shows that the students’ ability is 15.94% and 2.63% respectively from both institutions. For form of error, students are often confused between the verbs of special forms of sonkeigo with the special form of kenjoogo verb.

Table 4 shows that the percentage of students’ abilities in choosing the verb keigo (sonkeigo and kenjoogo). Their ability is: 27.5% and 11.2% respectively from both institutions. While, figure 3 indicates that the students’ ability is low (under 50% on average) when using keigo.

Table 4. Students’ ability from USU and UNRI in answering Keigo questions (Mix of Sonkeigo and Kenjoogo)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>USU</th>
<th>UNRI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number 8</td>
<td>39.12%</td>
<td>19.73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 9</td>
<td>15.94%</td>
<td>2.63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case of results from questionnaire, the following is an overview obtained from students from USU and UNRI. To the question ‘Do you think keigo is difficult? ’, consider the result in (A) and to the question ‘Which type of keigo do you think is the most difficult?’, pay attention to (B) below.

USU students: a. yes (difficult) = 52%
  b. very difficult = 48%

UNRI students: a. yes (difficult) = 48%
  b. very difficult = 52%

(B) USU students: a. sonkeigo = 2%
  b. kenjoogo = 19%
  c. sonkeigo and kenjoogo = 75%
  d. No answer = 4%

UNRI students: a. sonkeigo = -%
  b. kenjoogo = -%

Table 3. Students’ ability from USU and UNRI in answering Keigo questions (Mix of Sonkeigo and Kenjoogo)

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USU students: a. yes (difficult) = 52%
  b. very difficult = 48%

UNRI students: a. yes (difficult) = 48%
  b. very difficult = 52%

(B) USU students: a. sonkeigo = 2%
  b. kenjoogo = 19%
  c. sonkeigo and kenjoogo = 89%
  d. No answer = 11%

The following points are the general reasons why students think that keigo is very difficult:

They feel very difficult to distinguish and use the words sonkeigo and kenjoogo when they are in sentences.

The changes in shape and use is complicated.

Keigo is rarely used in everyday conversation but only ordinary verbs are used instead of keigo.

They feel doubtful to choose the right words when distinguishing the use of sonkeigo and kenjoogo.
It is very difficult because its use depends on certain situations so they must determine who talks to whom and who is speaking.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Japanese non-native speakers’ skills from semester VI from two Japanese study programs at University of Sumatera Utara (USU) and University of Riau (UNRI) indicate that the overall causes of errors are related to the lack of competence they get. Their ability in *keigo* low (under 50%). This is due to the changes in form and use and to the strategy to memorize and use it, because Bahasa Indonesian does not have language levels. Based on the test of errors and of information related to the use of *keigo*, four potential factors of errors are the over generalization (learners assume parts or rules in other parts that might be expected by them), and the ignorance of rule of restriction and ignorance of the rules that govern the rules to use the *keigo* (*sonkeigo* and *kenjoogo*); instructor is predicted to be unclear in explaining *keigo* materials, such as sentence structure, verb placement, conjugation etc. The third factor is incomplete application of rules, namely the learner's carelessness in using *keigo* and all this causes the wrong choice to select vocabulary and the wrong perception change verbs for special forms of *keigo* (*sonkeigo* and *kenjoogo*). The last is false concept of hypothesis, namely the learner's misunderstanding to interpret the meaning and function of the material given for *keigo*, *sonkeigo*, and *kenjoogo*.

**REFERENCES**


How to cite this article: Malayu SM, Muliadi YA. Students’ ability in the use of speech act (*Keigo*): a comparative study on two Japanese study programs in north Sumatera and Riau. *International Journal of Research and Review*. 2019; 6(11):92-98.

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