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Indonesian and Japanese Impoliteness on X: A Corpus-Based Comparison with Pedagogical Implications

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ABSTRACT

Few studies have compared how Indonesian and Japanese social media users express impoliteness toward their governments. This study coded 50 Indonesian replies on X to a post by the news outlet Tempo about the Free Nutritious Meals program and 50 Japanese replies to a post by the governing Liberal Democratic Party about measures against rising prices. Because the two posts differ in source and topic, the results describe these two corpora rather than the two languages as a whole. Conventionalized impoliteness formulae and implicational impoliteness, following Culpeper (2011), were coded at the segment level and compared at the reply level with Fisher's exact tests and Holm correction. Pointed criticisms/complaints was the only category that differed significantly, appearing in 58% of the Japanese and 24% of the Indonesian replies (adjusted p = .008). Insults were more frequent in the Indonesian replies (34% vs. 16%), but the difference was not significant after correction. In an exploratory comparison, implicational strategies appeared in more Indonesian than Japanese replies (68% vs. 46%). The Japanese replies mainly criticized the government's actions explicitly. The discussion considers how such authentic replies could support pragmatics instruction for Indonesian learners of Japanese.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's internet penetration reached 81.72% of the population in 2026 [1], and platforms such as X have become everyday spaces for public discussion. On X, users can reply directly to posts about government policy, which gives citizens an open channel to scrutinize and criticize those in power. Because users can write under pseudonyms, they may feel less bound by ordinary social constraints, a condition known as the online disinhibition effect [2]. One visible result is flaming, the posting of provocative, harsh, or insulting comments [3]. Replies to posts about heads of government show how ordinary users attack the face of political figures.

Culpeper defines impoliteness as the use of communicative strategies intended, or perceived, to attack face [4]. His framework grew out of an earlier model that mirrored politeness superstrategies

[5], [6]. The later model separates conventionalized impoliteness formulae, recurrent expressions whose offensive meaning is largely conventional, such as insults, pointed criticisms, and dismissals [7], from implicational impoliteness, in which offence must be inferred from form, from a clash with conventions, or from context [4]. The framework has been applied to replies addressed to heads of government on Twitter [8], to Twitter replies to prominent public figures [9], to gender-based aggression against politicians in a Spanish–Greek contrastive design [10], and to reader comments on news sites and official social media pages [11], [12], [13].

Studies of Indonesian online impoliteness have examined YouTube comments on presidential debates [14], TikTok political discourse [15], responses to government policies [16], comments on President Prabowo's first speech [17], and impoliteness formulae in political comments [18]. Research on Japanese has examined impoliteness on bulletin board systems [19], in reader comments on online news [20], [21], in spontaneous conversation [22], and Japanese politeness norms on Twitter [23]. A comparison of Indonesian and Japanese users commenting on public figures' posts examined politeness strategies rather than impoliteness [24]. To date, few studies have compared how both conventionalized and implicational impoliteness are distributed in Indonesian and Japanese replies to the policies of the current heads of government.

The comparison is also relevant to Japanese language education in Indonesia. Interlanguage pragmatic failure among Indonesian (Javanese) learners of Japanese has been linked to limited sociopragmatic knowledge, and researchers have recommended teaching politeness principles beyond keigo [25]. Learners have also shown difficulty understanding their position (*tachiba*) in a Japanese conversation [26], and beginner learners' pragmatic failures can threaten the interlocutor's face [27]. Instruction in pragmatics can help learners notice how speech acts are realized in context [28], and authentic examples of how criticism and offence are expressed can support such noticing.
Politeness norms in the two societies provide the background for this comparison. Much of the literature on Indonesian politeness draws on Javanese culture, in which *tatakrama*, a set of norms for appropriate conduct, is expressed through speech levels (*unggah-ungguh*) that distinguish familiar *ngoko* from respectful *krama* [29], [30]. Javanese ethics rests on the principles of *hormat* (respect) and *rukun* (harmony) [31], and children are socialized into *isin* (shame), *sungkan* (respectful reticence), and *wedi* (fear) as emotions that regulate conduct toward others [32]. *Malu* (shame) is likewise treated as a social virtue in Malay and Indonesian societies [33]. Japanese politeness has been described through discernment (*wakimae*) and the use of honorifics (*keigo*) [34], [35]. A cross-cultural study found that Javanese speakers treated correct speech levels as the main indicator of politeness, whereas Japanese speakers also emphasized attitude toward the interlocutor beyond *keigo* [36]. These descriptions concern everyday interaction and do not show how users address a head of government in replies on X.

This study addresses two questions: (1) which conventionalized impoliteness formulae and which types of implicational impoliteness occur in Indonesian and Japanese replies to posts about the heads of government's new policies on X; and (2) how their distributions differ between the two corpora. The discussion then considers what the findings may offer pragmatics instruction for Indonesian learners of Japanese. The study contributes a quantified, two-level comparison of impoliteness in the two corpora.

2. METHOD

The study is a quantitative content analysis of qualitatively coded data. Each reply was first coded for impoliteness strategies in its pragmatic context, and the frequencies of the coded categories were then compared across the two corpora.

The data were replies to two posts announcing new policies of the heads of government. The Indonesian post was published by the news outlet Tempo (@tempodotco) on 25 March 2026 [37] under the headline Prabowo Tak Akan Hentikan MBG: Uang Kita Ada ('Prabowo will not stop MBG: We have the money'), reporting President Prabowo Subianto's commitment to continue the Free Nutritious Meals program (Makan Bergizi Gratis, MBG). The Japanese post was published by @jimin_koho, the official X account of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) headquarters [38], on 31 January 2026 [39] and listed the Takaichi government's measures against rising prices, including

cash support for households and families with children, subsidies for electricity and gas, the abolition of the provisional gasoline and diesel tax rates, and an income tax cut through a higher tax-free income threshold, under the slogan 日本列島を、強く豊かに (Nihon rettō o, tsuyoku yutaka ni, 'Making the Japanese archipelago strong and prosperous'). Tempo is a press outlet outside the government, whereas the LDP is the prime minister's governing party. Japanese users therefore replied directly to the party responsible for the policy, while Indonesian users commented on a third party's report. This asymmetry is treated as a limitation of the design.

Replies were read one by one, and neutral, supportive, spam, and unrelated replies were removed. A reply was retained when it (1) was directed at the head of government or his or her policy, (2) had an interpretable meaning, including wordplay and minor typographical errors, and (3) contained at least one attack on the target's face. Replies were screened in the order shown by X's default reply view on 18 August 2026 until 50 eligible replies had been obtained in each corpus. This required screening the first 70 Indonesian and 71 Japanese replies, of which 20 Indonesian and 21 Japanese replies were excluded under the criteria above; exclusions were not recorded by individual reason. This consecutive selection avoided subjective sampling, but it is not a random sample, so the statistical results describe these corpora rather than all X users. Replies are cited with case identifiers (ID-K-xxx for Indonesian, JP-A-xxx for Japanese) carried over from the project files, and account names are not reported.

The replies were imported into MAXQDA 24 as two document groups. The codebook comprised the nine conventionalized impoliteness formulae (insults; pointed criticisms/complaints; challenging or unpalatable questions and/or presuppositions; condescensions; message enforcers; dismissals; silencers; threats; and negative expressives), based on [7] and Chapter 4 of [4], and the three types of implicational impoliteness (form-driven, convention-driven, and context-driven) described in Chapter 5 of [4]. The unit of coding was the segment. A reply could contain several segments, and a segment could receive both a formula code and an implicational code. Because the data are written, prosodic cues [40] were approximated by orthographic cues such as capital letters, letter lengthening, repeated punctuation, emoji or kaomoji, and laughter markers (e.g., wkwk, w, （笑） wara). All replies were coded by the first author following a codebook that defines each category and gives examples, and cases that were difficult to classify were discussed with and confirmed by the co-authors. No second independent coder was used, so inter-rater agreement could not be calculated; this is acknowledged as a limitation.

Segment frequencies were reported descriptively. Because segments within the same reply are not independent, inferential tests were run at the reply level. Each reply was scored for whether it contained at least one segment of a given category. Each category was compared across corpora with Fisher's exact test on a 2 × 2 table, and p-values were adjusted with the Holm procedure [41] separately for the nine formulae and the three implicational types. Effect sizes are reported as odds ratios (OR; with a 0.5 correction when a cell was zero) and phi (φ). The number of segments per reply was compared with the Mann–Whitney U test. Analyses were run in Python 3 with SciPy 1.18.1. The twelve category comparisons (Tables 2 and 3) answer the second research question and were treated as confirmatory, with Holm correction applied within each family. The comparisons of segments per reply, of reply types, and of the presence of any implicational strategy were exploratory and are reported without correction.

The replies were publicly accessible on X at the time of collection. No contact was made with the users, account names and handles are not reported, and replies are cited by case identifiers only. Examples are quoted verbatim because the analysis depends on their wording, spelling, and script; quotations are limited to the coded segments, and no reply that identified a private individual was quoted. The IDs of the two parent posts are given in the reference list. The reply IDs and the coding data are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Overview

Every reply contained at least one coded segment. The Japanese corpus contained more segments (114) than the Indonesian corpus (89), as shown in Table 1. The number of segments per

reply did not differ significantly overall (U = 997.5, p = .064), but the Japanese replies contained more formula segments per reply (M = 1.56 vs. 1.00; U = 969.5, p = .042, rank-biserial r = .22). Sixteen Indonesian and 27 Japanese replies used only conventionalized formulae, 20 and 12 combined formulae with implicational impoliteness, and 14 and 11 used implicational impoliteness alone; this distribution did not differ significantly ($\chi^2(2) = 5.17$, Monte Carlo p = .079, V = .23).

Table 1. Coded segments and replies by corpus

Measure	Indonesian (Tempo)	Japanese (@jimin_koho)
Replies	50	50
Coded segments	89	114
Formula segments	50	78
Implicational segments	39	36
Segments per reply, M (SD)	1.78 (0.68)	2.28 (1.23)
Replies with ≥1 formula	36 (72%)	39 (78%)
Replies with ≥1 implicational strategy	34 (68%)	23 (46%)

3.2. Conventionalized impoliteness formulae

Table 2 shows that pointed criticisms/complaints was the most frequent formula in the Japanese corpus (57 segments in 29 of 50 replies) and the only formula whose distribution differed significantly after correction (24% vs. 58% of replies; OR = 0.23, Holm-adjusted p = .008, φ = −.35). Japanese criticisms typically evaluated the government's performance or the cost of its decisions, as in examples (1) and (2).

(1) コメント差し控える時点で総理の器じゃない
Komento sashihikaeru jiten de sōri no utsuwa ja nai
'The moment you decline to comment, you are not prime-minister material.' (JP-A-004)

(2) 850億円あれば高額療養費の限度額引き上げは中止できた。
Happyaku gojū oku en areba kōgaku ryōyōhi no gendogaku hikiage wa chūshi dekita.
'With 85 billion yen, the rise in the high-cost medical care ceiling could have been cancelled.' (JP-A-005)

Part of the segment count comes from a few long replies. JP-A-037 contained five criticism segments and two other replies contained four each, so the comparison uses reply-level percentages instead of raw segment counts.

Table 2. Conventionalized impoliteness formulae in the two corpora

Formula	Seg. ID	Seg. JP	Replies ID n (%)	Replies JP n (%)	OR	p (Holm)
Insults	18	9	17 (34)	8 (16)	2.70	.444
Pointed criticisms/complaints	16	57	12 (24)	29 (58)	0.23	.008*
Challenging/unpalatable questions	4	4	4 (8)	4 (8)	1.00	1.000
Condescensions	4	2	4 (8)	2 (4)	2.09	1.000
Message enforcers	3	2	3 (6)	2 (4)	1.53	1.000
Dismissals	2	4	2 (4)	3 (6)	0.65	1.000
Silencers	0	0	0 (0)	0 (0)	–	–
Threats	1	0	1 (2)	0 (0)	3.06[a]	1.000
Negative expressives	2	0	2 (4)	0 (0)	5.21[a]	1.000
Total	50	78				

Note. Fisher's exact test on reply-level presence; Holm correction across nine formulae. * p < .05. [a] OR with 0.5 correction for a zero cell.

Insults were more frequent in the Indonesian corpus (17 vs. 8 replies). Many targeted the president's intelligence or mental capacity. Example (3) says he lacks a brain, and example (4) calls him demented and delusional. Japanese replies also contained insults, such as example (5).

(3) Uang kita ada, otak bapak yang gaada.
'We do have the money; it is your brain, sir, that is missing.' (ID-K-001)

(4) Inilah hasilnya mengkasihani kakek-kakek dementia-delusional.
'This is what we get for pitying a demented, delusional old man.' (ID-K-018)

(5) 国民を騙すクソクズ政権！
Kokumin o damasu kusokuzu seiken!
'A scumbag government that deceives the people!' (JP-A-032)

The difference in insults was not significant after correction (Holm-adjusted p = .444), so this sample shows only a tendency. In the codebook of this study, an attack was coded as an insult when it targeted the person and as a pointed criticism when it targeted the person's actions or decisions. Under this coding, the Japanese replies more often attacked what the government did, whereas more Indonesian replies attacked the president himself. A similar orientation toward competence rather than appearance was reported for Spanish and Greek replies to politicians [10]. The remaining formulae were infrequent in both corpora, and silencers did not occur.

3.3. Implicational impoliteness

As shown in Table 3, form-driven impoliteness was the most frequent implicational type in both corpora and occurred in exactly the same number of replies (19 each), although the Japanese corpus had more segments (31 vs. 23). Rhetorical questions were common, as in examples (6) and (7), the latter phrased in the polite style; marked spelling such as letter lengthening also signalled mockery, as in example (8).

(6) ada tapi ngutang?
'The money exists, yet we borrow?' (ID-K-003)

(7) いつ貰えるんですか？
Itsu moraeru n desu ka?
'When exactly will we receive it?' (JP-A-014)

(8) Tak Masuukk Logiiiikaaaa
'Doesn't make seeeense.' (ID-K-007)

Wordplay could also carry an insult. Example (9) can be read as うんこ臭い (*unko kusai*, 'smells like poop'), so the offence is delivered through a pun (*dajare*) rather than an explicit insult word.

(9) うん国債
Un kokusai
'Yeah, government bonds.' (JP-A-054)

Table 3. Implicational impoliteness in the two corpora

Type	Seg. ID	Seg. JP	Replies ID n (%)	Replies JP n (%)	OR	p (Holm)
Form-driven	23	31	19 (38)	19 (38)	1.00	1.000
Convention-driven	7	2	7 (14)	2 (4)	3.91	.364
Context-driven	9	3	9 (18)	3 (6)	3.44	.364
Total	39	36				

Note. Fisher's exact test on reply-level presence; Holm correction across three types.

Convention-driven impoliteness (7 vs. 2 replies) and context-driven impoliteness (9 vs. 3 replies) were more frequent in the Indonesian corpus, but neither difference was significant after correction. Convention-driven cases combined a polite or approving frame with an attack. In example

(10), the agreeing *Betul* ('True') frames a complaint about taxation, and in example (11) the praise marker さすが (*sasuga*, 'as expected of') and the polite ですね (*desu ne*) frame an accusation.

(10) Uang kita banyak pak. Betul. Selama rakyatnya yg jd obyek pajak dan retribusi masih ada.
'We have plenty of money, sir. True. As long as there are still citizens to tax and levy.' (ID-K-023)

(11) さすが統一教会の裏金総理ですね（笑）
Sasuga Tōitsu Kyōkai no uragane sōri desu ne (wara)
'Just what you would expect from the Unification Church slush-fund prime minister (lol).' (JP-A-052)

At least 12 of the 50 Indonesian replies reused wording from the headline's claim *uang kita ada* ('we have the money') and turned it against the president. Examples (3) and (10) do this. Context-driven cases relied on the situation for their force. Example (12) questions the ownership of the money without any impolite expression, and in example (13) a polite request to count the election's cost as an 'achievement' attacks the government indirectly.

(12) Uang siapa?
'Whose money?' (ID-K-024)

(13) 真冬の解散総選挙で850億かかるのも、実績に入れてくださいね。
Mafuyu no kaisan sōsenkyo de happyaku gojū oku kakaru no mo, jisseki ni irete kudasai ne.
'Please do count the 85 billion yen spent on a midwinter snap election among your achievements.' (JP-A-035)

At least one implicational strategy appeared in 68% of the Indonesian and 46% of the Japanese replies (Fisher p = .043, unadjusted and exploratory). Earlier work led us to expect Japanese users to prefer indirect forms [19], [22]; in this sample, however, the Japanese replies relied more on explicit criticism. This pattern may reflect the source asymmetry described in the Method section, since Japanese users addressed the governing party directly, and topic has been found to shape the degree of impoliteness in online comments [21].

3.4. Possible pedagogical implications

The findings suggest three points for Japanese language teaching in Indonesia. First, the Japanese replies offer authentic examples of explicit criticism of the government, which learners can analyze alongside the polite forms they study. Second, polite forms such as です/ます (*desu/masu*) and evaluative markers such as さすが (*sasuga*) can carry an attack, as the convention-driven examples show. Pointing out this mismatch to learners is consistent with calls to teach politeness beyond *keigo* [25]. Third, contrasting Indonesian and Japanese replies to similar policy posts can make sociopragmatic differences visible. Teachers can use anonymized authentic replies in noticing tasks, asking learners to identify what is attacked (the person or the action) and how (explicitly or by implication), in line with research on explicit instruction in pragmatics [28]. Such tasks should stay limited to recognizing and interpreting offensive language. These suggestions are drawn from the corpus findings and the literature; the study did not collect learner data, so their classroom value remains to be tested.

3.5. Limitations

The corpora are small (50 replies each) and were selected consecutively in X's default display order, which limits statistical power and generalization. The Insults difference in particular may reach significance only with larger samples. The two parent posts differ in topic and source type, so differences cannot be attributed to language or culture alone. Prosody was approximated by orthographic cues. The pedagogical discussion is not based on learner data. Finally, the coding was carried out by a single coder and inter-rater reliability was not statistically tested, so the frequency comparisons rest on one coder's judgments.

4. CONCLUSION

Both corpora used a similar range of strategies, but they differed in one formula: Japanese replies used pointed criticisms/complaints significantly more often, mostly evaluating the government's actions and their costs. Indonesian replies tended to insult the president's person and to

rely more on implicational strategies, although these differences were not significant after correction in this sample. For Japanese language education, the results show that Japanese online discourse can be explicitly critical and that polite forms can carry an attack. Future research should test these patterns on larger samples, on posts matched for topic and source, and in classroom studies of how learners interpret such replies.

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