

Apologetic Strategies of ESL Urdu Students: A Study Based on Formal and Informal Socio-Pragmatic Contexts

Arshad Ali Khan ^a Hafiz Syed Muhammad Yasir ^b Amina Khalid ^c

Abstract: The main concern of this paper is to investigate different apologetic strategies in the English language of ESL students who were natives of the Urdu language (n=30), selected through a purposive sampling technique. How differently an apology can be performed in different socio-pragmatic ESL contexts has been investigated based on the context, level of seriousness, and nature of the offense. For this purpose, 'Speech Act Theory' was employed, as proposed by Langshaw Austin (1962). The methodological procedure was informed by the study of Blum-Kulka (1989), in which data was categorized under Blum-Kulka's taxonomy by considering formal and informal apologetic contexts linguistically. Two instruments have been used: a) a questionnaire to estimate the awareness of respondents' preference for apology in different contexts, and b) a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) based on eight formal and informal situations adopted from the study of Shoshana et al. (1989). It was followed by an interview to see the views of respondents about apologetic strategies in the Urdu language. Quantitative analysis of the data was done with IBM SPSS (V21) to calculate mean values (M) and percentages (%) of different taxonomical categories. Findings reveal the minor difference in apologetic strategies in formal and informal contexts. It highlights the awareness of Urdu ESL speakers of performing an apology with more than one strategy based on the context, level of seriousness, and nature of the offense. The highest percentage was for apologies using Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs). On the other hand, respondents intended to apologize in English rather than Urdu, as per the majority's views. The study signifies the importance of communicative competence, which ensures the appropriateness of utterance as per the need and situation.

Keywords: Apology, Speech Act, Pragmatics, Apologetic Strategies

Introduction

An apology is considered a speech act, which is a kind of remedial reaction to an offense by some person (Scher & Darley, 1997). As per the Cambridge Dictionary, it is about feeling sorry for the wrong you have done with the words having an apologetic essence (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). As stated by Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016), an apology leads to a balance between two people or groups after that offense in which one person is an apologist, and one is offended and apologized (Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016). If we look through the linguistic lens, we see that an apology is not as simple as it is observed. Rather, it takes complex pragmatic expressions that may vary from one situation to another according to the context.

As a part of a speech act, it may have an implementation of other speech acts when performing it in a natural communicative context like command, request, order, etc. (Shoshana et al., 1989). However, the meanings behind different apologetic expressions or strategies highlight the implicit behavior, which shows the variation in semantic values in an indirect way. As described by Swan, this indirect meaning of apology can be inferred in a specific, pragmatic context in which that communication occurred (Swan, 1985). Apology signifies the avoidance of any dispute or disagreement in order to prevail in harmony, as

^a Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), School of Liberal Arts (ILA), University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

^b Lecturer, Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), School of Liberal Arts (ILA), University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

^c Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics and Communications (DLC), School of Liberal Arts (ILA), University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

mentioned by Scher and Darley (1997). As explained by Banikalef and Maros (2013), in some situations, an apology is not a response in reaction to any offense, but ignorant or stubborn behavior can also be seen, which is considered the opposite situation of apologetic behavior. In this situation, people do not tend to apologize. Instead, they just show swearing strategies through rigid and static behavior, which further affects the relationship without guilt. However, an apology makes people smoothen the harsh offense and makes them feel guilty for their mistakes. It is considered an activity based on politeness (Scher & Darley, 1997). Thus, an apology is an essential part of our speech in a socio-pragmatic context when it is needed in response to the wrong or offense done, and studying different strategies of apology will make us understand it in multi-dimensional ways as per the situational context and degree of offense along with the knowledge of appropriate use of linguistic expressions.

There is a plethora of literature on apologetic behavior and expressions produced in other languages with respective speakers (Swan, 1985; Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016; Nasiri & Forutan, 2015; Al Ali, 2012; Scher & Darley, 1997; Shoshana et al., 1989), but lack of research in Urdu language has been observed regarding socio-pragmatic formal and informal contexts of apology by ESL Urdu speakers. This study pays attention to the formal and informal context of apology and variations in apologetic linguistic expressions as per the subject and nature or the degree of the offense. According to previous studies, pragmatic behavior in terms of apology is considered weak in ESL students as they feel problematic when apologizing in the target language as ESL students.

This study hypothesizes that different variations are used by Urdu ESL students when they apologize in the target language in a social context by considering the situation, subject, pragmatic values, as well as the degree of offense and extent of the seriousness of the situation by the offender. At one level, this study will reveal the variation in linguistic expressions of apology, which are pregnant with socio-pragmatic integrations. On the other hand, different variants of apologetic expressions will yield different pragmatic values, which highlight the level of formality or informality of the situation. In addition, these expressions will be based on the subject estimation as well as the nature of the offense.

Research Questions

Under the above-mentioned objectives, this research addresses the following research questions:

1. Whether Urdu ESL students are aware of the socio-pragmatic value of the degree and nature of offense in formal or informal social context?
2. What strategies and linguistic expressions are used by Urdu ESL students for apology in formal and informal contexts?

The first question has been included to evaluate the awareness of Urdu ESL students in terms of the socio-pragmatic value of apology and whether they are able to understand the offense: its degree, nature, and situation, on the basis of which formal/informal apologetic expression will be used by these speakers. Secondly, the next question will deal with those linguistic expressions based on apologetic behavior used by Urdu ESL students, which highlights the level of formality or informality based on the subject as well as the degree of the committed offense by the offender.

Literature Review

An apology is considered a speech act that is offered to the person and has a regretful tone in order to restore the relationship to a balanced normal routine. Goffman (2009) takes 'apology' as a remedial strategy, which shows that the offender is guilty of the wrong he has done. Like other speech acts, apology also comes under the parasol of the same theory of speech act, which includes order, invitation, divorce, and so on (Shoshana et al., 1989). 'Speech acts' are the words or expressions that are used to perform some specific tasks, and they ensure the accomplishment of the task when uttered in a social communicative context (Vanderveken & Susumu, 2002). For example, 'apology,' when said to someone, completes the action, i.e., feeling sorry or asking for an apology. Thus, apologizing strategies and expressions are considered as a part of Speech Acts, and according to Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016), it is referred to as 'Speech Acts of Apology'.

Previous studies conducted on apology as a speech act, along with different strategies of performing it, show data in regard to different language speakers who are using English as a foreign language or English as a second language. Nasiri and Forutun (2015) studied apology strategies in the EFL context of Iranian teachers and how they perform apologies by adapting different apologizing strategies. This study was conducted with EFL Iranian teachers of high schools at the senior level or some private institutes. This particular speech act of apology was studied with the help of the course book these teachers were teaching in private institutes. Results showed the difference in strategies of apologizing in different teachers teaching at private institutes and teachers teaching at language institutions. The same difference was found in the books they were consulting to teach their students in private institutes and, on the other hand, in language centers (EFL context). The DCT (Discourse Completion Task) method was adopted to complete the study's methodological procedure (Nasiri & Forutun, 2015). Thus, this study of Iranian teachers strengthens the claim of Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016) that apologetic strategies have different variants that are dependent on the socio-pragmatic context as well as the nature of the offense or wrong done. Arab Speakers in the EFL context are aware of the pragmatic significance of apology, and the use of their linguistic expressions shows the students evaluate the nature of the offense and adapt their linguistic choices with varied intensity in the different formal and informal communicative situations (Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016)

Shariati and Fariba (2010) studied the speech act of apology in the context of the Persian language. The aim was to investigate Persian apologies as compared to the English language by considering the protocols of the ethnographic method of data collection. Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) were found to be used by Persian speakers in a dominant way in the form of an offer or request of apology in a speech context. Thus, this study concluded that the speech act of apology can be considered culture/context-specific and varies accordingly (Shariati & Fariba, 2010). In the same language's context of Persian, Ghanbaran et al. (2014) investigated the use of intensifiers with that of apology and how these intensifiers are chosen in a socio-pragmatic speech context (Ghanbaran et al., 2014). According to the study, an apology in the Persian context is adapted to the appropriateness of the subject's views and gender. In the study of Shoshana et al. (1989), the taxonomy of speech acts of apology was used in analyzing data taken from fifty participants from Iran's university. Blum Kulka et al. (1989) discussed that Persian speakers use different intensifiers that complement the situation and the level of seriousness. These speakers have chosen these intensifiers extensively to adapt their apologetic strategy for the addressee. Gender-based intensifiers were not to the level of significance but in the case of females (Shoshana et al., 1989).

Another study (Bataineh & Bateineh, 2006) was conducted using a quantitative methodological procedure to check the relationship between apologizing strategies and gender. This study was based on Jordanian Arab students who were studying at university in the EFL context. The sample was 100 participants selected across the population of that university in order to complete the DCT (Discourse Completion Task). The analytical procedure was based on the classification proposed by Sugimoto's (1997) study. Accounts and regret were there as the main apology strategies used by the participants. There was a gender-based difference in using different apologetic strategies as male participants used accounts and tended to blame the offender, but on the other hand, female participants were found to be more guilty, and they used compensatory linguistic expressions that they wouldn't be repeating this kind of offense as a promising behavior. Avoidance of that particular offense was also observed in the case of females. They used to avoid that offense from repeating (Bataineh & Bateineh, 2006).

The role of social aspects like status and the close nature of relationships were studied by Banikalef and Maros (2013) in the Malaysian context by taking Jordanian EFL students. It highlights how social values affect our apologizing strategies in different contexts. Social determinants were taken as the aspects to study in relation to the apologetic strategies. The study uses Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) research to pin the model and set the research method. The DCT method, along with an interview (semi-structured), was used to take data from sample participants, which were comprised of 40 Jordanian students studying in Malaysia. As per the findings of the study, IFID and apologetic behavior, such as accepting the wrong and responsibility, were observed. Moreover, new ways of reacting to apologetic conditions were also found in

males' behavior, like being rude, arrogant, and blaming as opposed to the reality, along with some swearing examples originated from this study from Jordanian participants (Banikalef & Maros, [2013](#)).

Theoretical Framework

This heading deals with the "Speech Act Theory" as the theoretical base taken to see, analyze and interpret the data collected with its supportive relevant concepts.

Speech Act Theory

Apology is considered as the speech act in which action is done by uttering it. Thus, to analyze the data, the 'Speech Act' theory was pinned in this research, which was proposed by John Langshaw Austin ([1962](#)). At that time, the main focus of language-related studies was to analyze, evaluate, and investigate grammatical and structural aspects of language, but Austin's study diverted attention to the functional facet of language that is currently known as Speech Act Theory, considered under the parasol of 'Pragmatics' as per the modern Linguistics. Discussion on this theory was started with Austin's famous work ([1962](#)) *How to Do Things with Words?* This found the basics of the notion that meaning is not the only thing found in the utterance, but the performance of an action is integrated, which can implicitly be found in utterance. The speech act of apology presents the speaker's use of language to perform an action of apology in the context of socio-pragmatic speech.

Speech Act's theory highlighted different examples like command, order, promise, and so on. However, the classification of speech acts is comprised of three sub-categories.

- 1) Locutionary speech acts
- 2) Illocutionary speech acts
- 3) Perlocutionary speech acts

An act of creating any meaningful utterance will be known as a locutionary act, which is simply based on saying something. While illocutionary acts are the concern of this research, which highlights the performance of an action by just uttering relevant words, it makes sense that how saying leads to the completion or performance of that particular action (e.g., apology usually takes this general expression: "I'm sorry"; thus, by just uttering this statement, an apology is performed which is an example of illocutionary speech acts). On the other hand, perlocutionary speech acts deal with the post-utterance effects on the listener or addressee of a communication.

Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

As mentioned in the last part, every utterance has words that contain some semantic significance and form locution, but this locution may hit with the pragmatic force that enables words to perform an action by conveying the action's meaning, complements the illocution. In some cases, meaning is inferred by the listener directly when the speaker explicitly conveys his message. On the contrary, some communication-based instances are comprised of wording that indirectly conveys the message in an implicit manner, which is interpreted or decoded by the listener in that socio-pragmatic context. In the case of apology, if the offender says "I'm sorry", it means he's directly apologizing to the person offended. On the other hand, if he says, "I'm ashamed, and I'll try not to repeat it," he indirectly shows an apologetic strategy of the person apologizing. In this way, speech acts work as per the psychological state of the speaker and the pragmatic context.

Research Methodology

Studies related to the apology as the speech act in different lingual backgrounds particularly focus on the linguistic expressions of the apology as chosen by the people in a practical speech context (Al Ali, [2012](#); Nasiri & Forutan, [2015](#); Shariati & Fariba, [2010](#)). This study will also demonstrate how an illocutionary act of apology is conveyed by the people following a particular set of linguistic productions of apology, revealing the socio-pragmatic context. Thus, linguistic specifications of apology by different respondents will be seen in two different contexts: formal speech context and informal speech context.

Sample of the Study

Respondents were selected from University of Management and Technology by using purposive sampling technique as only Urdu native speakers were chosen to participate in the study. Population was including those students studying English 'Cohort Courses' (English-I, English-II, English-III) and pursuing their graduation in the said university. They belonged to the age group of 18-25 and using English as a Second Language (ESL context). Only willing Urdu ESL students were taken to participate in the study.

- Selected Purposive Sample: n=30

Instrument Used

Two instruments have been used in the research. The first instrument is based on the questionnaire to evaluate respondents' awareness about the apology and whether to apologize in case of a serious offense or not. This questionnaire includes questions to check whether the subjects prefer to apologize when needed in a speech context after the offense. This strategy was used by some authors like Shoshana et al. (1989) and Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016) to determine the choice of respondents for probable apologetic situations to happen. Three items were on the questionnaire to respond to with the help of the Likert scale, which had five points. On the other hand, the DCT (Discourse Completion Task) method was used in the study, and it was based on eight scenarios (four formal and four informal contexts). These scenarios will be provided to the students in order to complete the discourse and get their regular apologetic replies as per the specified situation, i.e., formal and informal. These DCT scenarios were taken from Blum-Kulka's study (1989) and adopted with no change in order to get data from ESL Urdu speakers. DCT is attached in Appendix A.

On the other hand, an interview (semi-structured) was conducted with each participant, which focused on the respondents' views of apologies in the Urdu language. Open questions asked revolved around their use of Urdu language in apologizing and their meaningful perceptions. These interviews gave us data on students' opinions on whether they want to use their native tongue in apologies or not. Secondly, it yielded to the stance that why they prefer English in the form of words, phrases, or sentences in apologetic situations over Urdu (their mother tongue).

Data analysis

The data analysis was based on two steps, which started with the questionnaire with three items to check to what extent respondents were aware of the apologetic situation and nature of the offense. Quantitative data was analyzed using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 21 to get the result. Secondly, DCT, which is comprised of eight different scenarios with four formal and four informal contexts, will be analyzed as per the framework and research procedure of Blum-Kulka's study (1989). The actual apologetic performance of respondents was analyzed with the help of Blum-Kulka's coding scheme. Relevant percentages and frequencies were taken of apologetic strategies by using IBM SPSS (version 21).

Moreover, respondents' perception about apologies in Urdu language has been discussed with the main themes which highlight the causes of their preference of L2 (English) where apologies are intended.

Classification of Apology's Speech Act

Various levels are involved in the apology speech act, which was proposed and evaluated by Blum-Kulka (1989).

Condition 01: This strategy involves apologetic strategies by using IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices) of normal-routine expressions or phrases having the basic essence of regret of being sorry. This explicit use of apologetic IFID is the integration of performative verbs in the form of sorry, forgive, pardon, excuse, regret, and related verbs. These performative verbs show the sense of being sorry for an offense committed by the apologizer.

Condition 02: This strategy is having the use of apology without using illocutionary force indicating devices (IFID) by stating some reasons which might be of personal nature or any external reason. It may have some variants based on sub-strategies depicting different reasons.

- a) It may take a promising act of not repeating the offense again, as if *I won't do it again*.

- b) To express the responsible or non-responsible behavior is another way of this condition like *Totally, I'm responsible of this act. or It's my negligence.*
- c) Offering compensation or repair can also be there. For example, if someone has damaged someone's property then repair can be the apologetic response. E.g. *I'll pay for it., or I'll definitely bear this loss's expense.*
- d) By showing the reason of the offense may fulfil the purpose that situation was not in offender's control, like *heavy traffic made me to get late.*
- e) Another different situation is refusing to apologize by not accepting the offense. For example, *I'm not at fault in this situation.*

Condition 03: In this condition, an apology by using IFID is made for the use of intensifiers, internal or external. Internal intensifier takes the position within the utterance, and *I'm really very sorry.* But external intensification has the use before or after the utterance, as *I'm sorry. Were you there in time?*

Perception of Urdu Language

Respondents' perceptions of apologetic strategies in Urdu were analyzed by conducting semi-structured interviews. 23 participants preferred to respond in the English language in a situation that demands an apology in normal situations. Five participants went with the neutral option by not showing favor to any of the languages. 2 participants showed willingness or preference for the Urdu language where required. Inclination of Urdu apologies was shown by participants in case of serious and complex issues.

In addition, causes highlighted the fact that respondents don't take Urdu's apology to be used in every apologetic condition because, as per their opinions, apologetic expressions in the Urdu language are heavier in meaning and essence. By focusing on the seriousness and complexities, they may switch to the Urdu language. For example, *Me maafii maangna chahun ga* (I want to apologize) has a stronger effect on the Urdu language, as shared by some participants. Other expressions of Urdu language which are used by respondents are: *Mee maazrat krun ga., Aainda esi ghalti ni duhraoga., Kya me maafii ka haqdaar hun?, Mujhe apne kie pe shrmindgi hai.*

All these expressions carry the heavy meaningful essence which is encapsulated with actual embarrassment as well. In contrast, ESL Urdu students use English apologies in all their normal conditions which is comprised of the majority of their daily situations.

Findings And Discussion

Data was taken from two sources, i.e., a questionnaire, to get the estimation of the subject's preference for apology situations. Secondly, data from DCT was used to get the actual performance of respondents, to see their linguistic choices, and to show their apologetic behavior. The questionnaire's responses showed agreement as a whole as per the respondents' views. It highlights that the majority of the people were in favor of apology in such offending situations, which may happen in formal or informal contexts. The following table (Table 1) shows the quantitative findings of the estimation questionnaire by showing the sample mean (M), which presents the average responses of the respondents:

Table 1

Questionnaire's Responses by Respondents with Mean Value

Item No.	Question	Mean (average)	Total Scale
1.	Apologetic situation is real and likely to happen	3.5	5
2.	I would prefer to apologize when an offense is committed by me	4.4	5
3.	The offense is serious and needs a strong apology in this situation	4.3	5
Result Percentage: 81.3%			

According to the questionnaire's responses, 81.3 percent of students were aware of the situation in which an apology was needed. On the other hand, DCT showed the use of different strategies for expressing different linguistic expressions of apology situations. As data was based on the taxonomy of Blum-Kulka's studies (1989), DCT's data has been shown in the following table (Table 2.) along with the sub-categories

with examples and contextual functions categorically which depict respondents' use of apology as a speech act with variation as per the context in formal and informal context.

Table 2

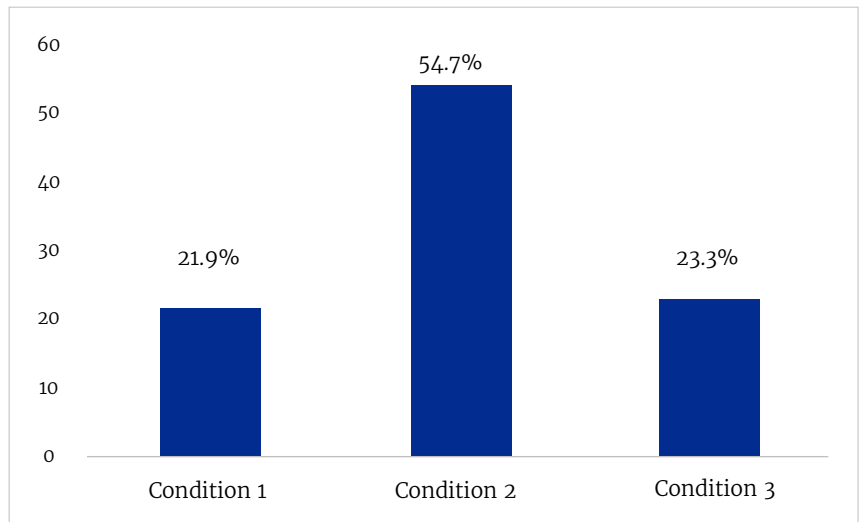
Classification of Apology: Strategies and Devices Used (as per the Data Collected)

Blum-Kulka's (1989) Classification of Apology (Strategies and Devices Used) S=Subject; X=violation; H=Hearer			
1. Apology with IFID (explicit apology with performative verbs but no modification) Condition: 01			
Strategies	Sub-classification	Examples	Functions
a) Use of explicit IFID	Linguistic expressions of being sorry or of regret by having the use of performative verbs.	- I am sorry that I got a bit late. - I beg your pardon for being late. - Excuse me, please, for getting late. - I regret that I won't help. - I apologize for being here late.	Represents the regretful behavior with the use of performative verbs in apologetic utterances. S is showing regret for committing X in order to get the goodwill of H.
2. Apology without IFID (stating reasons: external or personal) Condition: 02			
Strategies	Sub-classification	Examples	Functions
a) S showing responsible behavior for X and S is at fault.	Showing self-blame or accepting mistake/offense	- It is no doubt a mistake of mine. - I'm forgetful as I'm never early.	S is trying to show responsible behavior by accepting X and accepting the offense in front of H to normalize the situation.
b) Refusal to take responsibility by S on X	Shows denial of accepting the offense; thus, no apology is intended	It's not my mistake that it happened.	When cause of the X is out of S' control then rejection can be seen by S to apologize on X.
c) S's promise of never repeating X	The promise of not repeating the committed mistake is a kind of apology and commitment as well.	It won't happen again.	S' commitment to X in a promising way is an apology to H.
d) Giving an account of the reason for X by S	Implicitly or explicitly giving the reason out of S's control	- As you know, the situation is heavy traffic. - The bus reached late, so...	In this way, reason highlights the apologetic behavior as apologizer is aware of the mistake committed and words showing cause fulfills the essence of apologetic expressions.
e) Repairing strategy by S on X	Repairing offers for the damage done can be apologetic in terms of a promise to compensate for the loss.	- Damage will be repaired at my expense. (Direct promise) - I'll see to manage it. (Indirect promise)	Offering repair to the damage can be considered an apology under compensation and apologetic behavior.
3. Apology with IFID (having intensification: external/internal) Condition: 03			
Strategies	Sub-classification	Examples	Functions
a) Internal intensification within the utterance	Use of adverbials, intensifiers (single or double), repetition of words	- I am ...very sorry - I'm really...really sorry	The apology's speech is intensified with intensifiers or adverbials to get H's sympathy.
b) External to IFID with explicit concern	Used before illocutionary force indicating devices	I feel sorry. Were you waiting for me for long?	Shows caring behavior of S for H on X by externally adding concern to IFID.

So, the above table (Table 2. Blum-Kulka's (1989)) highlights the different apologetic conditions along with some relevant examples taken from the responses collected through DCT. Considering formal and informal contexts together, respondents showed the following results (Figure 2.) as per the three taxonomical categories. Apologetic strategies without IFID by stating cause or reason which might be personal or any external (Condition: 02) were at the top in terms of responses' percentage, i.e. 54.7. Condition: 01 based on explicit use of apologetic expressions by having performative verbs in the utterance comprised 21.9 percent. The least of all was condition 03, based on the apology with IFID using intensification (internal or external), which was 23.3 percent.

Figure 1

Percentage of Different Apology Conditions

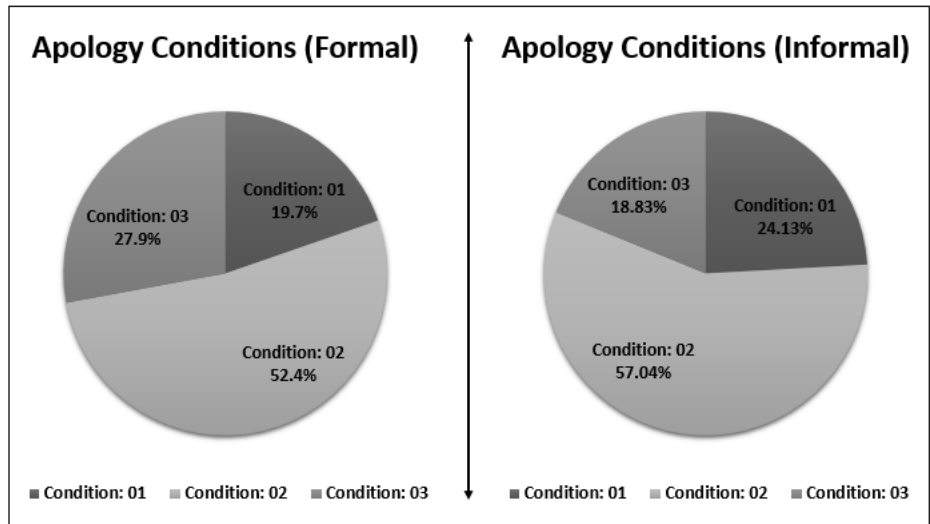


Note: This picture shows the percentage of different apology conditions taken from DCT's responses

If we talk about the differences between formal and informal contextual apologetic strategies, the data showed the same categorical illustration. Levels of three categories were found to show minor differences in formal and informal situations, i.e., an apology without IFID (stating reasons), an explicit apology with no modification, and an apology with IFID along with intensification, respectively. The following percentage pie charts (Figure 2.) show the statistical data of formal and informal contexts of different apologetic conditions.

Figure 2

Formal and Informal Conditions of Apology



Note: Percentages of different apology conditions in formal vs. informal contexts are shown in this picture.

Findings are based on the stance that how Urdu ESL speakers apologize in the English language when they are found guilty of committing some offense. So, their formal and informal contexts of apologizing expressions show variation as per the context, which was based on eight different categories and sub-categories (Table 2) as depicted by Blum-Kulka's (1989) study. The respondents of the study took apologizing situations seriously, and their different responses enabled us to know the difference in context (formal and informal) as well as the degree and nature of offense. The nature and structure of the apology were also based on these two factors, and respondents tended to adapt their apologetic expressions to the intensity of the situation. The high degree of offense yielded strong apologetic expressions, and some respondents used intensifiers and adverbials to enhance their effect apologetically.

In the case of Condition 02, if the subject thinks that the offending situation was not under his control, then the strategy of denial was seen, which shows that the offender is actually not interested in an apology and, by stating an uncontrolled condition, is trying to show denial for the apology as found in the study that offender's first priority was to just apologize in case of any mistake or wrong done. It was to use apologetic expression to normalize the situation and to gain the sympathy of the person offended. If not normalized, then the next step was to offer a repair if it caused any damage or loss. In the hypothetical scenario, the respondent was to take all the responsibility for not submitting his friend's assignment to the professor. This showed that the repair strategy was more soothing than that of apology.

The findings of the study are correlated with some of the previous studies done in different contexts. As formal and informal contexts have similar percentages (with minor differences) of different apologetic conditions, thus it supports the study of Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016). As this study was based on Arab students who were non-native to the English language, the same contextual background of this study makes the findings the same to a greater extent. Intensification of apologetic expressions is having second standing in a formal setting, which relates to the findings of Shariati & Fariba (2010). Furthermore, the differences in findings have been seen in one study (Bataineh & Bateineh, 2006), where expressing self-blame's tendency was more than in this study. On the other hand, repairing strategies of apology had a high number in their study, which contradicts this research by having normal and moderate occurrences as per the data.

Furthermore, using uniform apologetic expressions is not the case in ESL Urdu speakers who are able to use different pragmatic strategies to apologize. Difference in apologetic expressions highlights the competence of ESL Urdu speakers of using diverse apologetic words, vocabulary, or expressions to express their apology as a speech act but different expressions are dependent on the situation, offense and level of seriousness.

Conclusion

This research investigated the use of apology as a speech act by ESL Urdu speakers and how these speakers apologize in the English language. Data revealed the fact that apologetic expressions are based on a situation that might be formal or informal. Other factors inculcate the seriousness of the situation and the seriousness of the offense in a socio-pragmatic context. Data was collected with two instruments, i.e., a questionnaire to estimate respondents' preference for apologizing in case of offense (Table 1) and the help of a discourse completion task (Appendix A) to investigate the actual apologetic performance by different respondents. The taxonomy of 3 different categories was set as the parameter to compare different apologetic expressions (by DCT) accordingly. These conditions are comprised of an apology with illocutionary force indicating the device having regret and explicit use of the apology's words as a speech act, and the opposite of it was an apology without IFID, having reasons that were personal or external. The next category was those apologetic expressions that enhanced their apologetic effect by using repetition, intensifiers, or adverbials.

Overall, Urdu ESL students used an apology strategy regardless of the nature of the situation (formal and informal), and this caused a minor difference in the statistics of both situations mentioned in the given pie charts (Figure 2.). Not a single respondent used a single apologetic strategy or expression in all the scenarios mentioned in DCT, which strengthens the fact that an apology is a diverse speech act that can be performed with different expressions as well as per the situation and socio-pragmatic context.

This research finds its place in ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts where linguistic competence can be compared in this regard. Linguistic competence is not as advanced as the communicative approach, which can be found in possession of this study's possession. As per the view of communicative competence, different suitable expressions are chosen that appropriately fit the relevance of the situation. The respondents of the study showed their communicative competence by using different apologetic expressions that were appropriate for the situation, including seriousness, offense, and offended person. Thus, through communicative competence, the best communication goals can be achieved harmoniously.

Interviews about the perception of Urdu apologies revealed their use of Urdu apologetic expressions in very serious and complex matters. As the native tongue is connected with the soul, words used in apologetic situations are also actually meant by them. Thus, respondents prefer to use simple English words in normal apologetic conditions, such as sorry, I apologize, it's my fault, and so on. On the other hand, expressions of Urdu like *Mee maazrat run ga.*, *Aainda esi ghatti ni duhraoga*, *maafi chahta hun*, etc., are not frequently used by them because their apologetic preference is in the English language as per the data collected through interviews.

Furthermore, this study also signifies the importance of pragmatic competence with sociocultural context according to which expressions are chosen, adapted and uttered. Thus, it recommends ESL and EFL teachers to focus on students' communicative and pragmatic competence along with the linguistic competence to fit best your communication according to the situation.

Limitations

As data was based on a limited number of participants, thus it can be increased at a larger level to have generalized findings. In the same way, the age group of the selected sample was from 18 to 25, which can be changed, and it is recommended to consider different age groups as our linguistic choices and performance also get changed with age factor. Moreover, gender's role in language usage can't be compromised as different ways and different styles are associated with different genders' usage of language. This student can be taken as a framework to study different genders separately to know of the difference on the basis of gender. Other languages' native speakers can also be studied in ESL or EFL context to investigate their pragmatic competence.

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Appendix A.

Discourse Completion Task for Apology

Situation 1

You are attending a new class with a professor. At the end of the lecture, you borrowed his/her book which you promised to return next day, but you forgot to bring it.

– Professor: “Have you brought the book?”

– You :

Situation 2

Parking in college parking area, you ran into a car of a professor. It was clearly your fault. You damaged the side door of his/her car. S/he got out and said:

– Professor: “Can’t you look where you are going? See what you have done?”

– You :

Situation 3

You are a student in the university attending a class with a professor. Your professor asked you to revise a term paper and return it the second day. You didn’t finish revising it that day. You called your professor to apologize. Your professor gets in the line and asks:

– Professor: “Have you finished revising the term paper?”

– You :

Situation 4

You completely forgot a crucial meeting with your supervisor. An hour later you called him/her to apologize. The problem is that this was the second time you forgot such a meeting. Your supervisor got in the line and asked:

– Supervisor: “What happened to you?”

– You :

Formal Situations (1 to 4)

Situation 5

You forgot to get together with a close friend. You called him/her to apologize. This was the first time you forgot such a meeting. Your friend asked over the phone:

– Friend : “What happened?”

– You :

Situation 6

Your classmate whom you are very close to was sick and could not go to college. S/he had to submit his/her final project that day so not to get a zero. S/he asked you to give the assignment to her supervisor. You promised to do that but failed.

– Your classmate: “Oh, my God! You forgot and you promised!”

– You :

Situation 7

Your close friend has to pay the house rental, but s/he hasn’t received the fund yet. S/he called you to borrow some money. Unfortunately, you have just paid the study fees and run out of money. This is the first time your friend asks you to lend him/her money. Your friend asks over the phone:

– Friend: Could you lend me a hundred dollars? Actually I need to pay the rental and still haven’t received my fund.

– You :

Situation 8

You and your close friend were working on a project in the study room at college. By mistake you spilled a cup of coffee on his/her laptop. It was clearly your fault. The laptop stopped working. Your friend got angry.

– Your Classmate: “Can’t you look? See what you have done?”

– You:

Informal Situations (5 to 8)

Appendix B

Abbreviations

Sr. No.	Abbreviation	Stands For
1.	DCT.	Discourse Completion Task
2.	EFL	English as a Foreign Language
3.	ESL	English as a Second Language
4.	H	Hearer (Offended)
5.	IFID	Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices
6.	M	Mean Value (Average)
7.	S	Subject (Offender)
8.	X	Violation (Offense)