



Apology Strategies of Yemeni EFL University Students

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Bio Data

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Abstract

This paper investigates apology strategies of Yemeni EFL university students in the light of Brown and Levinson's theory (1987). It attempts to systemize the various strategies used for the purpose of apologizing from the pragmatic point of view. The data are studied and analyzed following Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness and face threatening act. It is based on the analysis of the elicited responses of 314 Yemeni university students. The data are collected by a written questionnaire based on that of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984); Trosborg, (1987) and Holmes (1990). The questionnaire was obtained with 1256 apology speech acts and each of the valid responses was analyzed separately to identify the type of strategy used. The study is of a descriptive nature. Frequencies, percentages and the means of these percentages are considered. The prime findings of the study reveal that the subjects intend to use IFIDs mainly 'expressions of regret which are found in every response in the data. It seems that the subjects believe that apologies should consist of this expression as a compulsory component accompanied by any one of the other strategies.

Keywords: Apology strategies; Yemeni EFL learners; politeness strategies.



1. Introduction

“Apologies are defined as primarily social acts, carrying effective meaning” (Holmes, 1990, p. 1550). According to Brown and Levinson, apologies are politeness strategies. An apology is primarily and essentially a social act. It is aimed at maintaining good relation between participants. To apologize is to act politely, both in vernacular sense and in more technical sense of paying attention to the addressee’s face needs (Brown and Levinson, 1987). An apology is a fundamental speech act which is a part of human communication occurs in every culture to maintain good relations between interlocutors.

Goffman (1967: 14) referred to an apology as a remedy, the one essential element in a remedial interchange. This term nicely highlights the central function of apologies to provide a remedy for an offense and restore social equilibrium or harmony (Edmondson 1981: 280, Leech, 1983: 25) (cited in Holmes, 1990: 159). Holmes (1990) defines an apology ‘is a speech act addressed to B’s face needs and intended to remedy an offense for which it takes responsibility, and thus to restore equilibrium between A and B (where A is the apologizer and B is the person offended). Apologies, like compliments, are primarily aimed at maintaining or supporting the addressee’s and in some cases the apologizer’s “face” (Goffman 1967). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), apologies are negative politeness strategies because they are face threatening to the apologizer.”

Reiter (2000: 44) further defines an apology as a “compensatory action for an offense committed by S (the speaker which has affected H (the hearer).”

The main objective of this study is to discuss the speech act of apology and to demonstrate the ways in which Yemeni EFL learners conceptualize apology. It also attempts to investigate how this study demonstrates that apology strategies have implications for politeness theory.



The purpose of this investigation is to identify and describe socio-pragmatic features of Yemeni EFL learners in the communicative act of apology. Specifically, the objective is to determine what politeness features seem to be at work as performed by the subjects and how the various politeness features found are realized pragmatically in their performance.

Crucial to the discussion are examples that emerge from the data analysis. The analysis is based on Brown and Levinson's theory (1987). The researcher adopts a combined socio-pragmatic/pragmalinguistic approach to explain, analyze and interpret the data. How social variables such the social distance (D), the power the hearer has over the speaker (P) and the rank of the imposition (R), affect the choice of politeness strategies.

The data analysis in this study is both socio-pragmatic and pragmalinguistic in nature. Contextual factors ranging from cultural, social and situational to conversational sequences will also be considered.

2. Theoretical background to apologies

Apologies challenge the Gricean (1975) view of polite talk as a deviation from rational and efficient talk. Within a Gricean framework, polite ways of talking "show up as deviations, requiring rational explanation on the part of recipient, who finds in consideration of politeness reason for the speaker's apparent irrationality of inefficiency" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 4). "On most occasions, apologizing for an offense is very evidently in the speaker's interests and thus, at least in the longer term, is undesirably rational behavior and an efficient use of communicative time" (Holmes, 1990: 157). Grice's maxims involve a distorting perception of the functions of much every day talk in western societies they simply don't take account of the paramount importance of social or effective goals in such exchanges.

Brown and Levinson (1987:187) refer to apology only marginally, listing it as intrinsically a negative politeness strategy, which indicates S (speaker's) "reluctance to impinge on its negative face," H (Hearer's) want that his actions be impeded by others. From S's perspective, apologies are FTA, which imply damage to S's positive face



(Brown and Levinson, 1987: 68-76). In Brown and Levinson's terms (1978: 192), apologies are politeness devices expressing attention to the hearer's face needs in context of an offense. Whereas it has been widely assumed that apologies are primarily negative politeness devices, this categorization appears to depend largely on an analysis of apology which anticipate an FTA.

Olshtain (1989: 156) attempts to incorporate these aspects, defining apology as "a speech act which is intended to provide support for the H (hearer) who was actually or potentially malaffected by violation X. Hence the act of apologizing is face saving for the H and face-threatening for the S (speaker), Brown and Levinson (1987). Still, the question remains what face-saving, face-threatening and support mean for different language groups. "It is true that the primary function of apology is to restore equilibrium between the apologizer and the offended person, but this can only be done in a manner appropriate to the culture of the speakers, where being polite is only one of many concerns" Holmes, 1990: 161).

Apologies fall under expressive speech acts in which speakers attempt to indicate their state or attitude. In order for an apology to have an effect, it should reflect true feelings. One cannot effectively apologize to another and truly reach him/her unless one portrays honest feelings of sorrow and regret for whatever one has done" (Fahmi, R. & Fahmi, Rula, 2006: 1903).

On the hearer's negative face, restricting its freedom of action some way apologizing, unlike face attacks such as insults has a positive effect on the part of the hearer (Holmes, 1995: 155). To apologize is to attempt placate or maintain its face; therefore, it is an inherent face-saving act for H (Edmondson et al., 1984: 121) (cited in Nureddeen, 2008: 281). Brown and Levinson (1987: 68) assert that apologies threaten S's positive face because they directly damage S's positive wants.

An apology for Goffman (1971: 140) is one type of 'remedy' among others. For Holmes (1995: 155) it is a speech act that is intended to remedy the offense for which the apology takes responsibility and as a result, to rebalance social relations between interlocutors" (cited in Nureddeen, 2008: 281).

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 20) an apology is called for when social norms have been violated whether the offense is real of perceived. Every society has its own



socio-cultural and communicative behaviors that relate to face (Goffman, 1967) and politeness (Brown and Levinson (1987) cognizant of the fact that interlocutors would under normal circumstances want to maintain the social face and be friendly and thus be liked (positive politeness). Interlocutors pay extra attention to their face needs as well as the face-needs of all other international participants, interactants thus make every effort to save the face of all possible interactional participants. Leech (1983) labels this communicative strategy ‘the tact maxim’ and notes that it is a strategy for avoiding conflict, specifically the goal of an apology as communicative strategy is the maintenance of harmony between interlocutors (Obeng 1999: 712).

Olshain and Cohen (1983: 22) perceive apology as a social event when they point out that it is performed when social norms are violated. Bergman and Kasper (1993: 82) emphasize this view as they see that the purpose of apology is to reestablish social relation harmony after the offense is committed.

For her part, Lakoff (1977) notes that politeness and apologies are devices employed by interactants to help reduce friction in interpersonal communication. Thus, apologies provide a remedy for an offense and help restore harmony as well as social equilibrium (Holmes, 1995; Edmondson, 1981; Leech, 1983).

Apologies are like other speech acts in that they are often performed through conventionalized or ritualized utterances. According to Hudson (1980:52) conventionalizing any linguistic pattern is a matter of historical accident. Once expressions are selected in preference to others to be used to perform certain acts, it becomes a necessity that they be used and interpreted as such. Certain forms are more conventional used more often than others, such as (I am sorry) means “forgiveness” (Blum Kulka and Olshain, 1984).

Blum-Kulka and Kasper (1993: 59) state that speech acts differ in the extent to which conventionalized linguistic form are used; some speech acts, such as apologizing and thanking, exhibit more conventional usage than others do.

It is in the area of negative and positive politeness strategies that deviates from Brown and Levinson’s framework begin to appear. Leech (1983), for example, would classify apologies as positive politeness strategies. Holmes (1990) argues that apologies can address both positive and negative face needs.



Apologies, although classified by Brown and Levinson as negative politeness strategies, could be viewed as requests for exoneration (e.g. please forgive me, please excuse me) and as requests would be threats to H's face, which would bring their status as a politeness strategy into question.

2.1 Apology strategies

One of the most influential views on the classification of apologies is Goffman's (1971), in which he distinguishes two types of compensations: ritual and substantive' (Nureddeen, 2008: 282). Following this distinction, Fraser (1981: 265) provides two motivations associated with substantive and ritualistic apologies; in substantive apology the speaker wants to remedy the damage or harm caused by the offense while the ritual apology may be produced as a kind of habit associated with certain routines or when the respondent is not responsible for the offense.

Another classification of apology is proposed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1999), to describe apology strategies in French. The classification outlines two main ways of performing an apology: act of apology and act of justification for wrongdoing. The first, which is an explicit apology, is the primary component while the second, which is an implicit apology, is a secondary one. Accordingly, apologies are either explicit (e.g. forgive me, and I'm sorry), implicit (use of one of the other strategies or complex (explicit apology + implicit apology). However, Obeng (1999) adds a compound apology (implicit apology + implicit apology), which can be seen as a fourth type of apology within the same paradigm (cited in Nureddeen, 2008: 282).

People usually apologize by means of semantically different types of expressions; therefore, apology strategies are often described according to their semantic formulae. Different classifications provided by different scholars often overlap and while some lists are extended and detailed, others are rather broad. It is also worth mentioning here that newer classifications build on and consequently provide more comprehensive views than previous categorization models such as (Fraser, 1981; Olshtain and Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Holmes, 1989; Bergman and Kasper, 1993).

Another classification of apology strategies is proposed by Blum Kulka and Olshtain (1984, p. 206). However it is almost a rearrangement of the set of strategies proposed by



Olshtain and Cohen. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) provide five verbs (regret, excuse, be sorry, forgive, pardon) beside (apologize) which they consider as performative verbs in English and hence IFID while for Fraser (1981) only those expressions with an explicit mention of the verb ‘apologize’ are considered performatives.

Bergman and Kasper (1993: 94) used another model to analyze their data: IFID, downgrading (reducing the severity of offense, and reducing responsibility – including excuse and justification, claiming ignorance and denial); upgrading of use of adverbial (i.e. intensifying of IFID); taking on responsibility or admitting the offense (including self blame, lack of intent and admission of face); offer of repair; and verbal address (concern for the hearer and promise of forbearance).

The researchers found that the linguistic realization patterns of the act of apology can be performed in one of the two forms or a combination of both. The first and the most direct is done via explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFIDs), which are performative verbs expressing apology. Examples of these expressions include: “I’m, sorry,” “excuse me,” “I apologize,” “Forgive me and “pardon me.” The other way for performing an apology is using four potential strategies (with or without IFID). These strategies are (i) expression of responsibility; (ii) explanation or account of the cause brought about by the offense; (iii) an offer of repair and (iv) promise of forbearance. The first strategy, expression of responsibility was categorized to range from responsibility acceptance and explicit self-humbling to placate the complainer to a complete denial of the fault and evasive responses. The other three strategies were related to the type of violation which occurred. According to the researchers, an explanation occurs when X intends to justify the offense which he/she has no control. Such explanation may be expressed explicitly or implicitly.

In situations where the function can be compensated, an offer of repair is used either specified or unspecified. Lastly, the offenses which call for a promise of forbearance, is also a way for admitting responsibility but not necessary via an explicit apology. Moreover, the researchers noticed that there are some cases where the apologies opt for intensifying the apology either by using adverbials and repetitions of IFID or by



combining the IFID with one or more of the apology strategies. To conclude, the apology strategies used to analyze the data of this study which are conducted by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Trosberg, 1987; and Holmes, 1989 can be categorized as follows:

2.1.1 An expression of apology (an offer of apology / IFID; an expression of regret, and request for forgiveness. For in this category, an apology is done via an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) (Searle, 1969: 69). IFID is a category encompassing the explicit use of apology expressions that mean sorry, forgive me etc. (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 206). It is the most commonly used strategy in the present study.

2.1.2 An explanation or account: An explanation in this study is an expression that gives an account of the cause of the offense. IN other words, the speaker explains why violation or damage happened. Both explicit and implicit explanations have been considered. In the present data, it appeared in a rarely frequent occurrence (used only by 3 respondents).

2.1.3 An acknowledgement of responsibility: This term refers to expressions in which the apologizer admits to having responsibility for the offense. In this study taking on responsibility is limited to expressions in which the respondent explicitly takes responsibility for the offense, such as accepting the blame, regretting, committing the offense, expressing self deficiency, recognizing that the offended is entitled to an apology, indicating lack of intent and for admitting the offense. Taking on responsibility is the most explicit, most direct and strongest apology strategy.

2.1.4 An offer of repair: S may attempt to repair or pay for the damage caused by the offense. An offer of repair is usually expressed explicitly. While expressing an offer of repair is usually associated with the future time, expressions that show that the repair has already been done are also classified as offer of repair in this study.

Tables (1-4) show that the subjects offered more repair in all situations. This strategy occurred in 27 % of the responses. It appeared mostly with other strategy in the subjects' performances.

2.1.5 Promise for forbearance: In certain situations, the speaker may promise not to repeat the offense in future. While in most studies of apologies, promise of forbearance is a separate category. In Bergman and Kasper (1993) it is classified alongside 'concern



for the hearer' as verbal redress. In this study it is seen that each strategy reflects a different attitude and is therefore considered as separate strategy. Promise of forbearance is a clear confession of being responsible for the offense and performing it damages S's positive face wants, while concern for the hearer does not necessarily imply any sense of responsibility and carries no risk of damage to S's face.

The informants supplied few occurrences' or promises of forbearance (8.1% see table 5). It was rarely found separately. The most frequent occurrences of this strategy is in situation three (arriving late at the college) (40%).

2.1.6 Concern for the hearer

There are linguistic patterns that show concern for the hearer. In some previous studies, this strategy was not explicitly addressed (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Holmes, 1989). In the present study, the informants applied a few occurrence of this strategy.

2.1.7 Intensification

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) treated intensifications as an element within an apology strategy and not a separate strategy. However, the force of apology depends not only on the choice of an apology strategy but also on the number and type of strategies used in an apology that consists of an IFID only (I'm sorry) does not have the apologetic power of another that contains an IFID and an intensification marker (I'm deeply sorry); therefore, in this study intensification is treated as a separate apology strategy. Alongside the use of adverbials (e.g. very) with the IFID and the repetition of the IFID, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) classified 'concern for the hearer' and use of more than one strategy as intensification using multiple strategies as an intention of intensification is dependent on the type of strategies used. In this study intensification refers only to the use of adverbial (e.g. terrible, very, extremely etc) and repetition of IFID (e.g. I'm sorry, please forgive me). Since these examples clearly indicate the speaker's explicit intention of intensification.

The data analysis shows that the routine formula (I'm sorry) is by far the most commonly used form of expression and is often extended by means of adverbial intensifiers (really/ terribly/awfully sorry). This study investigates how Yemeni EFL learners handle the act of apologizing.



It aims at extracting and categorizing the range of strategies used in performing the speech act of apology by Yemeni learners of English as a foreign language.

The other issue in this study is the investigation of the effect of the values assigned to two contexts – external variables of social distance and social dominance on the frequency of the apology intensifiers. To this end, Yemeni apologetic utterances were collected via a discourse completion test (DCT).

The test consists of four situations representing different social contexts. All contexts in the test are controlled by situational variables, i.e. 'social distance' and 'power', and culture-specific factor, i.e. the degree of imposition in an FTA. Three different levels of social distance were used to roughly represent different & degrees of familiarity between participants, closeness is represented by the relationship between friends, distant relationship by participants who don't know each other (strangers) and a middle status of social distance is represented by acquaintances. Power is represented by two levels: low-high (the hearer has power over the speaker) and equals (no participant has power over the other). As much as possible, offenses represent different types. Offenses used in these situations are described as mild or serious. Judgment of the offense as mild or serious is determined without looking at the offense in its context.

Each situation was designed to represent a unique social context to make it liable to elicit various strategies. These situations were chosen because they represent context with controlling factors that were required in the study, and they are appropriate in Yemeni cultural context. The Situation (late for lecture in the college low/ high) was constructed to provide another context of power differential, were selected to test informants' reactions to time offenses).

3. Review of the literature

Requests and apologies are the best studied speech acts in descriptive cross-cultural pragmatics. This is so far good reason to investigate politeness strategies among the speech acts. In a speech community, participants need to be able to engage in remedial verbal action upon committing an offense, that is, to apologize. While the speech act of



apologizing can thus be regarded as a pragmatic universal, the conditions which call for apology are clearly not speech communities differ in what counts as an offense, the severity of same offensive event, and appropriate compensation. These perceptions will in turn be mediated by social factors such as the interlocutors relative status and familiarity.

In a series of studies Olshtain and Cohen (1983, 1989) point out that apologies can be carried out by a finite set of conventions of means, or strategies, all of which are related to the offensive act and serve as the speaker's attempt to make it 'go away'; either by conveying regret and proposing remedy, or by diminishing the offense or the speaker's responsibility for it. The strategies, offering an explicit apology and assuming responsibility for the offense were found to be used in remedy for most offenses, irrespective of the specific contextual circumstances. The remaining strategies, upgrading apologetic face, downgrading the service of the offense or speaker's responsibility, offering repair, and placating the offended party by different kinds of verbal redress are clearly cross-culturally available, yet their use is highly sensitive to contextual conditions, and subject to cross-cultural variation (Kasper et. al., 1996: 158). Apologizing speech act is determined by a variety of factors. Some of these factors are context-internal, others are context-external. One of the context-internal factors is the nature of the offense. Borkin and Reinhart (1978:61) suggested that "excuse me" is used to remedy "a breach of etiquette or other light infraction of social rule," whereas "I'm sorry" is used as an expression to dismay or regret about "a violation of another person's right or damage to another person's feelings" (cited in Kasper et al 1996: 158).

One of the most significant developments in speech acts studies is the cross-cultural speech act realization patterns (CCSAP) which was conducted by Blum-Kulka/Olshtain (1984). This project aimed at investigating the realization patterns of the speech acts – requests and apologies – across a range of languages and cultures in order to establish similarities and differences in these patterns cross linguistically and between native and non-native usage to the same social constraints. The languages investigated were English, French, Danish, German, Hebrew and Spanish. They assumed that the observed diversity of the speech acts in question stems from three different types of variability.



These are (i) intracultural, situational variability; (ii) cross-cultural variability; and (iii) individual variability.

After this experiment, research in the speech acts has been developed very fast. Researchers started too deeply in this area especially in requests and apologies.” Linguists classify the apology act according to various criteria. Divisions are primarily based on external factors such as the situation or object of regret (Nureddeen, 2008: 281). For Goffman (1971: 112), however at a certain level, apology is a class in itself within a broader category: what he calls remedial work. For him, the remediation can be carried out via one of three devices: accounts, requests and apologies. The common usage for an account is an excuse or an explanation, in an attempt to transfer responsibility to a third party. Strategies used to so include not admitting commission of the act, claiming ignorance of the effects of the act and claiming impaired competence. Requests consist of “asking license of a potentially offended person to engage in what could be considered a violation of these rights.” An apology, similar to an account, is produced after the offense but it is different in that the offender is accepting responsibility for the offense and, by apologizing, expressing regret, which is not clear in accounts.

The factor that has been shown to have the strongest effect on apology realization is the severity of the infraction. Comparison of apology in Hebrew, Australian, English, Canadian French and German with assessments of contextual factors in different offense contexts suggests that “severity of offense is the representative contextual factor in the socio-pragmatic set of the apology (Olshtain, 1989:160).

Apology research, both in western and eastern languages, has primarily addressed the production of apology, i.e. the strategies used to convey the illocutionary act and the contextual factors that influence the choice of these strategies. This is understandable since the other genus of research is dependent on the investigation of speech act perception. To investigate the reaction of the hearers to different apology strategies in a specific cultural setting requires a prior knowledge of the type of strategies used in apology in that cultural context; therefore, this pioneering study focuses on the production of apology strategies, namely the type and extent of apology strategies used.



The impact of social distance on apology behavior varies across studies with few limited exceptions. Olshtain (1989) did not establish any relationship between social distance and use of apology strategy. Bergman and Kasper (1993) found that the closer the interlocutors, the more likely the offender was to expressly assume responsibility for the offensive act. This finding is contrary to that of Wolfson, Marmor and Jones (1989), in whose study most responsibility was expressed between acquaintances and equally little at the two opposite ends of the social distance continuum. This finding was interpreted as further evidence in support of Wolfson's bulge hypothesis (1989). However, neither Wolfson et al (1989) nor Bergman and Kasper (1993) investigation include intimate interlocutor relationship. Hence neither of the two studies has demonstrated evidence for or against the bulge hypothesis (cited in Kasper, et al 1996:160).

Apology strategies were analyzed in the performance of Yemeni EFL speakers. The discussion in this study will first deal with an analysis of apologies in the performance of Yemeni EFL learners. The situations varied according to the social factors of distance and power, and contextual factor of the severity of the violation.

3.1 Previous studies

After a review of the relevant literature, as per the knowledge of the researcher, to date, no study conducted to investigate apology strategies of Yemeni EFL learners, but some studies have attempted to make some interlanguage pragmatic studies of Arab learners learning English as a foreign language. For instance, Rizk (1997) analyzed the apology strategies used by 110 Egyptian, Saudi, Jordanian, Palestinian, Moroccan, Lebanese, Syrian, Tunisian, Yemeni and Libyan learners of English. His results show similarities between the apology strategies used by native and non-native speakers of English in all situations but one. Unlike native speakers of English, Arabs do not apologize to children but try to make the child forgive them through sentences such as do not feel sad, baby. Furthermore, Arabs were found to express apology through offering food – a practice which although it may seem rude to native speakers of English, is culturally correct since food in some cultures is an acceptable offer in that has the power to wipe off a lot of hurt.



Another study deals with apology strategies of Jordanian EFL University students, is conducted by Fahmi Raba and Fahmi Rula (2006). This study is an investigation of Jordanian EFL University students' apologies, using a 10 item questionnaire based on Sugmoto's (1987). The researchers tabulate and compare the strategies used by male and female respondents for the purpose of uncovering whether or not sex differences exist. The findings revealed that male and female respondents used the primary strategies of statement of remorse, accounts, compensation, promise not to repeat offense and reparation. They also resorted to the use of non-apology strategies such as blaming victim and brushing off the incident as unimportant to exonerate themselves from blame. The findings further revealed that male and female respondents differed in the order of the primary strategies they used.

4. METHOD

4.1. Subjects

The participants are 314 Yemeni EFL learners. The participants are university students, studying at the undergraduate level belonging to four colleges of two Yemeni public universities. The respondents are relatively homogenous in terms of their cultural background (Yemeni Arabs), academic / linguistic experiences and age. They are between 22 to 23 years old from level four majoring in English.

4.2. Instrument

The data of this study was collected through a controlled elicitation method based on questionnaire which is a modified version of 'Discourse completion Tests' (hereafter DCT) used in CCSARP (Blum-Kulka 1984). This type of questionnaire enables the researcher to reach large numbers of respondents and statically control for variables and analyze the data accordingly. The researcher designed a questionnaire to analyze politeness strategies used by Yemeni EFL learners. The questionnaire consisted of four hypothesized situations. For each situation, subjects were instructed to fill in with what they would say in each of the four contexts. The respondents were asked to put themselves in real situations and to assume that in each situation they would, in fact, say something. They were asked to write down what they would say. The researcher



administered the questionnaire in the first semester of the academic year 2009.

5. Data Analysis

The analysis is based on the assumption that the response given closely approximates what the informant would say in a similar situation. The researcher identified the strategies used by the respondents and then classified them based on that of Blum Kulka (1984); Trosborg (1987) and Holmes (1990). He started by tabulating the strategies used by the participants in order to identify the apology strategy they used. The tabulation of the results made it possible for the researcher to determine the strategies used and whether Blum Kulka et. al.'s results apply to the respondents of the present study.

In order to identify the apology strategies used, the researcher used tables to clarify the method used to show the overt expression of apology and to show the other apology strategies employed in each situation and their percentages. The overt expression of apology came in various manifestations; these were one expression, two expressions, one expression with one or more adverbials and two expressions with one or more adverbials. These manifestations were not used in the same density among all situations. They vary from one situation to another, since the respondents did not overtly apologize in a considerable percentage of the situations. The researcher attempted to list all the apology strategies used by the respondents.

Not only did the researcher tally the percentage of the apology strategies used, but he also calculated and compared the percentages of those used by the subjects in order to discover any potential differences which might be attributed to social or cultural norms. Since the researcher found that the respondents had used different types of statement of remorse. Various manifestations of the expression of remorse were examined. It was worth mentioning here that the respondents had used a combination of apology strategies, which may have been part of their attempt to aptly express their remorse. However, in his tabulation of these combinations, the researcher dealt with each category by itself and only mentioned the most common combinations in the discussion.

5.1 Discussion of the Results



The results reveal that the most explicit realization of an apology is the explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID). Charts (1-4) Show that “an expression of an apology (IFID) is the first formulae in the list of apologies strategies. It is the most direct realization of an apology. For this category, an apology is done via an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) (Searle, 1969: 69).

As tables (1-4) demonstrate, the informants used IFIDs in all situations at high frequency ranging from 20% to 97%. In response to distant relation IFIDs were supplied at high frequency. The respondents used different manifestations of the expression of remorse. They expressed remorse using either one or more expressions of apology combined with one or more intensifiers. The most common expressions of apology are (IFIDs) e.g. (I am sorry), (pardon), (pardon me) IFID + taking on responsibility. (I am so sorry. It's my fault). IFID + promise of forbearance e.g. “(I am sorry for being late. I promise it will be the last time to be late). IFID + interest of the hearer e.g. (I am so sorry, are you OK?) Or IFID + intensifier & acknowledging responsibility + offer of repair e.g.(I am terribly sorry. It is my fault. Can I help you?)

Some of the respondents think that one apology expression is enough, while others seemed to think that one apology expression is not enough and hence they used three apology expressions with more than one adverbial e.g. I am so sorry, it is my fault, Are you ok?

Tables (1-4) demonstrate that the subjects possess the basic IFID formulae accompanying with one or two other strategies with intensifiers. Consider the following examples:

Excuse me teacher. I don't mean it and this is the last time to be late (IFID + lack of intention + acknowledging responsibility).

I'm so sorry, its my fault. Is there anything to do please (IFID + lack of intention + promise of forbearance).

The interaction demonstrates that in most cases, there are more than one expression of apology. In the subjects' performance, there are IFID formulae expressing regret, lack of intention, offer of repair or promise of forbearance, all pointing to common human experience.



The IFIDs are the strategies which are the most conventionalized and routinized, being as it were in the center of the speech act of apologizing in this study (Owen, 1983:172) (cited in Suszczynska, 1999: 1058) and representing verbal routine or syntactic – semantic formula which are regularly used to fulfill a specific communicative function.

The subjects chose to apologize by the use of an IFID plus taking on responsibility and offering repair for the damage they have caused.

It seems that the informants have the perception that using IFID is compulsory in each apology. (I am sorry) is the most common IFID.

As shown in tables (1-4) the respondents used different types of expression of remorse. They expressed their remorse using either one or more expression of apology combined with one or two intensifiers. Some of the respondents did not think they need to overtly express apology which resulted in the absence of any statement of remorse of apology. In the data, 22 respondents didn't give any expression of apology. Using one expression of apology such as 'sorry' 'excuse me' 'pardon' and I apologize Forgive me appeared in the data in a rate of (6.1%). Using two expressions of apology with or without intensifier is the most common strategy used by the subjects. In situation three the use of two expressions of apology represented by the use of EFID plus promise of forbearance.

At a global level, the responses of Yemeni EFL learners in all situations display regular use of IFIDs, taking on responsibility offer of repair, and concern for the hearer. Tables (1-4) show that the explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) is always accompanied by one or two other strategies with adverbials or intensifiers.

Table (1) Distribution of Apology strategies (Situation One)

	Strategy type	Frequency	Mean
Valid	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility	190	60.5
	Use of IFID	59	18.8
	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ intensification	17	5.4
	Use of IFID+ offer of repair	12	3.8
	Use of IFID+ intensification	11	3.5
	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ offer of repair	9	2.9
	Taking on responsibilit	3	1.0
	Use of IFID+taking on resp+account	3	1.0



No answer	2	.6
Opting out	2	.6
Use of IFID+ account	2	.6
Offer of repair	1	.3
Expl/account	1	.3
Use of IFID+intensification +offer of repair	1	.3
Use of IFID+offer of repair+account	1	.3
Total	314	100

As illustrated in data, the remedial actions start with an IFID followed by taking on responsibility, concern for the hearer, offer of repair. The subjects use an expression of regret but mostly preceded by intensified adverbials (I am so / terribly really sorry). The utterances often start with intensifications. The distribution of intensifications among Yemeni EFL learners is 21.5%. It is interesting to notice that wherever the expression of regret is used it is always intensified.

An acknowledgement of responsibility is the most common strategy that followed the IFID in the data. It is offered as an apology when the speaker recognizes his/ her responsibility for the offense. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) claim the universality of this formula, too. The finding of present study greatly support their claim. This category in the present study included five sub-formulas as follows:-

Explicit blame. E.g. it's my fault.

Lack of intent. E.g. I didn't mean it.

Expression of self deficiency. E.g. I didn't see you.

Concern for the hearer. E.g. Are you ok?

Statement of the offense. E.g. Oh, I split the tea.

Taking on responsibility is the most explicit most direct and strongest apology strategy. Tables (1-4) show that the subjects provided this response in a high frequency in all situations.

Table (2) Distribution of Apology strategies (Situation two).

	Strategy type	Frequency	Mean
Valid	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility	96	30.6
	Use of IFID	49	15.6
	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ intensification	33	10.5
	Use of IFID+ intensification	31	9.9



Use of IFID+ account	28	8.9
Use of IFID+taking on resp+account	10	3.2
Use of IFID+intens+account	9	2.9
Use of IFID+ offer of repair	7	2.2
No answer	6	1.9
Use of IFID+concern for the hearer	6	1.9
Use of IFID+intens+concern for the hearer	5	1.6
Use of IFID+taking on respon+intens+account	5	1.6
Use of IFID+taking on resp+concern for H	4	1.3
Taking on responsibility	3	1.0
Use of IFID+taking on resp+concern for H	3	1.0
Use of IFID+account+concern for the hearer	3	1.0
Expl/account	2	.6
Use of IFID+denial of responsibility	2	.6
Use of IFID+intensification +offer of repair	2	.6
Use of IFID+offer of repair+concern for H	2	.6
Offer of repair	1	.3
Opting out	1	.3
Use of IFID+taking on resp+promise of forbearance	1	.3
Use of IFID+offer of repair+account	1	.3
Use of IFID+taking on responsibility+intensification+offer o	1	.3
Use of IFID+taking on respon+offer of repair+concern for H	1	.3
Use of IFID+offer of repair+concern for H	1	.3
Use of IFID+intens+account+concern for H	1	.3
Total	314	100.0

In situation two (Stepping on someone's toe), although the offence is more serious and threatening), the use of IFID with other strategies did not increase in the data. The frequency of IFID with other strategies nearly remain in the same percentage. The interpretation of this is that in the Arabic culture stepping on someone's toe is not as offensive as it is in English and hence the subjects didn't use as much density of IFIDs because they are influenced by their culture.

Table (3) Distribution of Apology strategies (Situation three).

Strategy type	Frequency	Mean
Valid Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility	62	19.7
Use of IFID+ promise of forbearance	51	16.2
Use of IFID+ account	43	13.7
Use of IFID+taking on resp+account	30	9.6
Use of IFID+taking on resp+promise of forbearance	21	6.7
Opting out	18	5.7
Use of IFID	17	5.4
Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ intensification	11	3.5



IFID+intensificatio+promise of forbearance	9	2.9
Use of IFID+intens+account	8	2.5
Use of IFID+account+promise of forbearance	8	2.5
Expl/account	7	2.2
Promise of forbearance	5	1.6
Use of IFID+taking on respons+account+promise of forbearance	5	1.6
Use of IFID+ intensification	3	1.0
Use of IFID+intens+account+promise of forbearance	3	1.0
No answer	2	.6
Expl/accont+concer for the hearer	2	.6
Use of IFID+acc/exp+denial of responsibility	2	.6
Use of IFID+taking on respons+intens+account	2	.6
Taking on responsibilit	1	.3
Use of IFID+denial of responsibility	1	.3
Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ intensification+ prom	1	.3
Use of IFID+intens+account+denial of responsibility	1	.3
Denial of responsibility+use of IFID+ offer of repair	1	.3
Total	314	100.0

As shown in table (3) in situation three (arriving late at the college) the interlocutors hardly knowing each other the social distance between the interlocutors is high and therefore, the use of IFID with other strategies increased because the apologizer is in a low status (Student- teacher) and the social distance (D) and the power the hearer has over the speaker (P) are high. Therefore, it is expected that the apologizer attempts to use a high degree of politeness to soften the face threatening act (FTA), but in the data, however, the use of intensifications is still less frequent in situation three although the offence is more serious than it is in the previous ones. The explanation of this is that Arabic native speakers believe that the use of the expression of apology without intensification is enough to reduce the face threatening act.

Table (4) Distribution of Apology strategies (Situation four)

Strategy type	Frequency	Mean
Valid Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility	74	23.6
Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ intensification	45	14.4
Use of IFID+ intensification	35	11.2
Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ offer of repair	35	11.2
Use of IFID	31	9.9
Use of IFID+ offer of repair	24	7.7



Use of IFID+intensification +offer of repair	22	7.0
Use of IFID+taking on responsibility+intensification+offer o	17	5.4
No answer	11	3.5
Use of IFID+concern for the hearer	4	1.3
Use of IFID+ account	3	1.0
Intensification	2	.6
Use of IFID+taking on resp+concern for H	2	.6
Taking on responsibilit	1	.3
Offer of repair	1	.3
Opting out	1	.3
Use of IFID+intens+offer of repair+conern for H	1	.3
Use of IFID+taking on resp+account	1	.3
Use of IFID+taking on resp+conern for H	1	.3
Use of IFID+offer of repair+account	1	.3
Use of IFID+taking on respons+offer of repair+concern for H	1	.3
Total	314	100.0

In situation four (spilling tea on someone's clothes), the offence here seems to be the most serious one and therefore the use of IFID should be increased greatly but unexpectedly the occurrence of IFID with other strategies did not increase in the data (See table 4) the possible explanations would be that the offense itself perceived as less serious in Arabic culture. Arabic speakers of English consider the non intensified apologies seem to be effective apologetic device.

5.2 Modifications of the IFIDs

Generally, the remedial action starts with an IFID preceded by intensified adverbials. This intensification is one type of modification an IFID undergoes in order to upgrade the apology. It is observed that respondents used modifications to IFIDs in all situations of the present study. In the present data, 21.9% of the respondents used intensifications (see table 5). The occurrence of intensifications in the data is less if it is compared to the the native speakers of English.

The second type of modifications is the repetitive use of intensifiers. This is another techniques used by Yemeni EFL learners in order to intensify the force of apology. Intensification by repetition is illustrated the subjects. Consider the following examples.

I am so so sorry



I am very very sorry

I am really really sorry

6. Conclusion

Table (5) Summary of Apology strategies (all Situations)

	Strategy type	Frequency	Mean
Valid	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility	437	32.7
	Use of IFID	161	12.1
	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ intensification	115	8.6
	Use of IFID+ intensification	82	6.1
	Use of IFID+ account	76	5.7
	Use of IFID+ promise of forbearance	52	3.9
	Use of IFID+ offer of repair	46	3.4
	Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ offer of repair	46	3.4
	Use of IFID+taking on resp+account	46	3.4
	Use of IFID+intensification +offer of repair	36	2.7
	Use of IFID+taking on resp+promise of forbearance	24	1.8
	No answer	22	1.6
	Opting out	22	1.6
	Use of IFID+taking on responsibility+intensification+offer o	19	1.4
	Use of IFID+intens+account	18	1.3
	IFID+intesificatio+promise of forbearance	13	1.0
	Use of IFID+concern for the hearer	12	.9
	Use of IFID+intens+concern for the hearer	12	.9
	Expl/account	10	.7
	Use of IFID+account+promise of forbearance	9	.7
	Taking on responsibilit	8	.6
	Use of IFID+taking on respons+intens+account	8	.6
	Use of IFID+taking on resp+conern for H	7	.5
	Use of IFID+taking on resp+concern for H	7	.5
	Promise of forbearance	5	.4
	Use of IFID+taking on respons+account+promise of forbearance	5	.4
	Offer of repair	4	.3
	Use of IFID+denial of responsibility	3	.2
	Use of IFID+intens+account+promise of forbearance	3	.2
	Intensification	2	.1
	Expl/accont+concer for the hearer	2	.1
	Use of IFID+offer of rep+conern for H	2	.1
	Use of IFID+acc/exp+denial of responsibility	2	.1
Use of IFID+ taking on responsibility+ intensification+ prom	2	.1	
Use of IFID+intens+account+denial of responsibility	1	.1	
Denial of responsibility+use of IFID+ offer of repair	1	.1	
Total	1256	100.0	



This study has aimed to demonstrate that a more detailed analysis of cross-cultural data will produce a clearer picture in apologetic responses and help understand the universality of pragmatics and the nature of different communication styles.

The results suggest an orientation toward negative politeness as indicated by the respondents' attempts not to damage their own positive face. Whether this orientation genuinely characterizes these communities can only be determined by further research since the dominance in various ways in communication. However, in this study, the informants attempt to preserve their positive face by avoiding the frequent use of some apology strategies such as concern for the hearer and promise of forbearance which are most damaging to S's face. Instead they sometimes relied on less dangerous strategies i.e., IFID and explanation. IFID can be interpreted as ritualistic while explanations carry on direct signal of apology and may therefore be used by the respondents as an excuse and explanation.

IFIDs mainly 'expressions of regret are found in every response in the data. It seems that the subjects believe that apologies should consist of this expression as a compulsory component accompanied by any one of the other strategies.

Tables (1-5) illustrate the total frequencies and average percentages for the overall use of each strategy. The magnitude use of strategies varies across situations. The two strategies used most frequently by the subjects to realize apology are the use of IFID plus taking on responsibility with intensification and the use of intensified IFID or the use of IFID separately are the most frequent strategies. The intensifications with other strategies are more frequent in the data. The informants' performance in this study provides evidence of the claims of universality of the speech acts of apology and the set of apology strategies used in other apology studies; however, there is equal evidence that the use of politeness strategies is universal as claimed by Brown and Livenson (1987). For the majority of informants in these studies, the essential components of apology were explicit apology expression (IFIDs), responsibility statements, promise of forbearance, offer of repair and concern for the hearer. The Informants used more intensifications and more IFID + taking on responsibility.



Tables (1-5) show the distribution of IFIDs in the data. The overall picture indicates that the subjects tend to choose IFIDs in all situations but in a considerable variation. The findings of the present study seem to reinforce the notion that at a global level of analysis we can identify universal manifestations of strategy selection.

In summary the purpose of this study was to obtain a detailed description of how apologies are realized by Yemeni EFL learners. The intent was to describe the nature of politeness in their realization of apology strategies. It was thought that on the basis of this description curriculum materials could be designed for rectifying the problems of gaps.

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Appendix DCT Questionnaire

Dear Respondent

The study is data-based and therefore, your kind help is required. You are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire which contains situations in which you might find yourself. This discourse completion tasks (DCT) will help in analyzing Yemeni speakers' English which is expected to yield fruitful results.

Your responses will be dealt with in purely academic manner and will never be used for any other purposes than for this research.

I would appreciate it if you could complete this questionnaire as soon as possible. Thank you for your help and co-operation.

Mohammed Al-Fattah

(Research student)

Department of linguistics

University of Mysore

Mysore-India

First, please fill in the following form about yourself:

Age:

Male / female (circle):

Nationality:

Have you ever visited any English speaking country?.....

Have you ever visited any country where English is used as a second language?.....



1. You want to request your teacher to give you your mid-term result. How would you ask him/her to do so?

.....
.....

2. You want your friend to post a letter for you because you are sick. How would you ask him/her to do so?

.....
.....

3. You want to go out for a trip and you need your classmate's camera. What would you say to ask him/her to do so?

.....

4. You are in the bus and it's too hot. You want someone close to the window to open it. What would you say?

.....