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**Journal of University of Garmian**

<https://doi.org/10.24271/garmian.2020.318>



## A Pragmatic Study of Apology Strategies as used by Kurdish EFL Learners

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### Article Info

Received: June, 2020

Revised: June, 2020

Accepted: July, 2020

### Keywords

apology, remedy, social  
harmony,

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### Abstract

An apology is an alternative action to every offense which the speaker is eventually involved. It is also a kind of remedial and repair action used to restore social relation harmony.

This study examines the types of apologies used in different situations. The researcher has designed questionnaire containing ten situations which the students try to react as spontaneously as possible. The data are collected and analyzed by percentage declaring the types of apologies and also stating the types of remedy.

The study tries to address the following research questions.

١-How are apologies realized by English department Students ٤th stage at College of Education / University of Garmian?

٢-Are there any differences between the ways that the students apologize?

٣-What do the findings suggest in terms of expressing apologies by the students?

### ١-Introduction

According to Goffman (١٩٧١:١٤٠) apology strategies are remedial actions done to rebuild social relation harmony, so an apology is something done to make up for a loss or fault when the basic social norms have been violated. Nearly, apology is one of the significant strategies in social act occurred in all existent cultures.

Since its function is to maintain good relation between the addresser and addressee, apology is regarded as the best common action used by people in our daily life.

Robinson (٢٠٠٤:٢٩١) states that apology is of pivotal role in relation management communication consciousness and acceptance of normal responsibility for any

offensive behavior and initiating the process of negotiating forgiveness. Grainger and Harris (۲۰۰۷:۹) pinpoint on the realization that apology is somehow difficult and complex to be recognized because it contains not only any aspects of linguistics and paralinguistics but also inter-social and psychological properties. So, it is also showing the basic level of a politeness in which it involves face management done in public and private situation and interaction. Olshtain (۱۹۸۹:۱۰۶) regards apology as a speech act which is used to make support for the hearer who is actually or potentially mal-affected by a violation made by speaker. It can be said that apologies as all fall under expressive speech act where the speaker expresses her/himself as her/his own state of mind.

Like request, apology is face-threatening act as Brown and Levison (۱۹۸۷:۰۶) mentioned before because apology counteracts the speaker's face wants while request imposes mainly on the hearer. The main difference between apology and request is expressed by Leech (۱۹۹۰:۸۷) in which requests pre-event and apology is post-event. Requests are done to make an inventory to change while apologies signal that the event has already happened. Also, Requests ask for mitigation apologies tend to be aggravated.

۲-Facts and Reasons behind making apologies.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (۱۹۸۴:۱۹۶) propose that there are a number of significant factors underlying a person who apologizes and the reason behind choosing

certain type of apology strategies. So, they are determined by the following.

- A) Familiarity with the victim since intimacy often determines the style of apology.
- B) The intensity and ranking of offence of the act warranting the apology.
- C) The relative authority of the offender over victim.
- D) The ages and genders of the two participants.
- E) The context or the place, because it affects the formality and strategy of the apology.
- F) The cultures of the two participants.
- G) The parameter of distance between the two participants.
- H) The most important one is the degree or the seriousness of the offence that he or she made.

۳- Strategies of apology.

Concerning the apology strategies, a great number of researchers tried hard to identify and show the linguistic properties for apology strategies such as Olshtain & Cohen (۱۹۸۳), Blum- Kulka & Olshtain(۱۹۸۴) , Holmes(۱۹۹۰) and Blum- Kulka , House &Casper(۲۰۱۷) and Fraser(۱۹۸۱).

It is important to mention that the strategies begin from the highest obvious (I'm sorry) to lowest obvious (this is my real mistake). The following is the list of apologies proposed by Fraser (۱۹۸۱:۲۰۹).

١- Stating the apology.

٢- Announcing one's moral duty to apologize.

٣- Asking for acceptance.

٤- Offering to apologize.

٥- Admitting the responsibility.

٦- Asking forgiveness.

٧- Showing remorse.

٨- Promising forbearance.

٩- Offering compensation.

Olshtain and Cohen (١٩٨٣:٣٥) divide apologies as follows: -

١- Words and verbs which contain or express apology such as be sorry, forgive, apologize, pardon, or excuse.

٢- An explanation of the situation.

٣- An acknowledgement of the responsibility.

٤- An offer to repair.

٥- A promise of forbearance.

Trosborg (١٩٨٧: ١٤٧) focuses on the following strategies:-

١- Reduction of the level of the action by making someone else responsible.

٢- An acknowledgement of responsibility.

٣- Explicit or implicit explanation.

٤- Promising forbearance.

٥- Expressing concern.

٤- Adopted model.

To analyze and classify different types of apology strategies used by undergraduate students, the Olshtain and Cohen's model is developed. So, the model can be expressed as the following: -

١- IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device may mean

- a) An expression of regret. (I am sorry)
- b) An offer of apology. (I apologize)
- c) A request for forgiveness. (excuse me, forgive me)

٢- Proposition of apology.

A) explanation or account of what causes the offence refers to the wrongdoer or the participant telling about what has happened. It is of two types

١) Explicit. (the train was late)

٢) Implicit. (the rain is always heavy)

B) The expression of the speaker's responsibility for the offence means: -

a) accepting the responsibility. (I am never on time)

b) self-blame. (It was my fault)

c) denying the responsibility which indicate that there is no need to apologize. (it was not my fault)

C) An offer to repair.

It is case that the participant tries hard to repair the damage he/she has affected on the other. It can be expressed by providing certain offer such as (I'll pay for the damage)

D) Promise of forbearance.

This means refraining from the enforcement of something such as (this will not happen again).

In addition to the above apology strategies, people may tend to use some intensification to focus or emphasize the level of seriousness such as (I am very or so sorry) or (I am terribly terribly sorry).

A number of people, sometimes, use or add great number of emotive or vocative expressions which give the focus or emphasize to the situation such as (Oh, my god) or (Oh dear)

٥-Data analysis and Discussion

This part of the study provides wide information in research design. It shows the number of the participants involved. ٤٥ students took part in the study, the questionnaires are sent to them by mails, then the provide us written responses in the same situations relating the questions. The participants are ٤٥ fourth year university students of English department college of Education, University of Garmian.

The data analysis was based on Olshtain and Cohen's apology strategies. The questionnaire contains ١٠ question situations each written in a way that the students answer them as if they were in the given situation.

**Situation (١)**

In this situation, the interlocutor and the speaker are the father who forgot to buy his son a new bike. Here, the most

occurring formulas were expression of apology are regret (٢٣) time and apology offer (٢٢). only (٢٢) use of the repair appeared and concerning responsibility accepting and self-blame are found with frequencies (١٠) and (١٧) as in table (١).

Table (١)

N o	Apology strategies	Num ber	Percent age	
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	٢٣	٥١%	
	b- An offer of apology.	٢٢	٤٩%	
	c- A request for forgiveness			
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanati on	١- Explicit.		
		٢- Implicit		
	b- Responsi bility	١- accepting the responsib ility.	١٠	٢٢%
		٢- self-blame	٧	١٦%
		٣- Denying		
	c- repair.	٢٠	٤٨%	
d- Promise of forbearance				
٣	Intensific ation	٣	٠.٧%	

**Situation (٢)**

In this situation the respondent breaks in a conversation without waiting for his turn to speak. Apologizing of regret (١٧) and offer (١٢) dominated the responses of IFID. As for proposition of apology, explicit (١٠) and implicit (٨) are also found. Table (٢) illustrate this fact.

Table (٢)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percent age	
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	١٧	٣٧%	
	b- An offer of apology.	١٢	٢٦%	
	c- A request for forgiveness	٧	١٥%	
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanati on	١- Explicit.	١٠	٢٢%
		٢- Implicit	٨	١٧%
	b- Responsi bility	١- accepting the responsib ility.		
		٢- self-blame		
		٣- Denying		
	c- repair.			
d- Promise of forbearance	٥	١١%		
٣	Intensific ation	٥	١١%	

**Situation (٣)**

The speaker, here, is the waiter in a restaurant who brought a wrong order to a customer. The commonly used expressions of apology are of regret (٣٢) as for responsibility, self -blame with occurrence (٣١). The following types are also found: - offer, implicit, repair, promise of forbearance, and intensification as in table (٣).

Table (٣)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percent age	
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	٣٢	٧١%	
	b- An offer of apology.	١٠	٢٢%	
	c- A request for forgiveness	٣	٦%	
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanati on	١- Explicit.	٩	٢٠%
		٢- Implicit		
	b- Responsi bility	١- accepting the responsib ility.		
		٢- self-blame	٣١	٦٨%
		٣- Denying		
	c- repair.	٢٢	٤٨%	
d- Promise of forbearance	١٤	٣١%		
٣	Intensific ation	٦	١٣%	

ation			
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**Situation (٤)**

In this situation the participants are asked to describe what they would tell their partner if they wanted \$٥٠٠ from him as debt. (٢٦) participants express apology of regret. The other expressions of apology are offer, explicit, and implicit and justification which are mentioned in table (٤).

Table (٤)

No	Apology strategies		Number	Percentage
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret		٢٦	٥٧%
	b- An offer of apology.		١٩	٤٢%
	c- A request for forgiveness			
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanation	١- Explicit.	١٥	٣٣%
		٢- Implicit	٦	١٣%
	b- Responsibility	١- accepting the responsibility.		
		٢- self-blame		
		٣- Denying		
	c- repair.			
d- Promise of forbearance				
٣	Intensification		٨	

**Situation (٥)**

Situation (٥) is about coming late to an important lecture by the professor. The participants are asked to explain how would they apologize. They mostly use the following expression: - regret (٣٥) and they also adopt explanation of explicit (٢٢) and implicit (٢٣), apology with repair (١٥) and forbearance (٦) with the justification (٨) are also adopted. Table (٥) declares the mentioned frequencies.

Table (٥)

No	Apology strategies		Number	Percentage
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret		٣٥	
	b- An offer of apology.		٧	
	c- A request for forgiveness			
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanation	١- Explicit.	٢٢	
		٢- Implicit	٢٣	
	b- Responsibility	١- accepting the responsibility.		
		٢- self-blame		
		٣- Denying		
c- repair.		١٥		
d- Promise of forbearance		٦		
٣	Intensification		٨	

**Situation (٦)**

In this situation, the participants didn't attend their friend's birthday party. And

they were asked to apologize in this situation. Of (٤٥) respondents, (٢٧) of them use offer of apology. Explanation of explicit (١٢) and justification (٢) are found respectively.

Table (٦)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percentage	
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	١٨	٤٠٪	
	b- An offer of apology.	٢٧	٦٠٪	
٢	c- A request for forgiveness			
	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanati on	١- Explicit.	١٢	٢٦٪
		٢- Implicit		
	b- Responsi bility	١- accepting the responsibility.		
		٢- self-blame		
		٣- Denying		
	c- repair.			
	d- Promise of forbearance			
	٣	Intensific ation	٢	٨٪

**Situation (٧)**

Situation ٧ is about the participants forgetting to write assignment to their teacher. They use the following apology strategies: - an expression of apology (٢٥), apology explanation explicit (٢٢), offer (١٧), both forgiveness and implicit with (٣) times, and forbearance (١٥) and repair (٦) and finally justification repeated (٢) times as in table (٧).

Table (٧)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percentage	
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	٢٥	٥٥٪	
	b- An offer of apology.	١٧	٣٧٪	
	c- A request for forgiveness	٣	٦٪	
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanati on	١- Explicit.	٢٢	٤٨٪
		٢- Implicit	٣	٦٪
	b- Responsi bility	١- accepting the responsibility.		
		٢- self-blame		
		٣- Denying		
	c- repair.	٦	١٣٪	
	d- Promise of forbearance	١٥	٣٣٪	
	٣	Intensific ation	٢	٤٪

**Situation (٨)**

In this situation the participants are asked to explain how would they behave and apologize and what would they say if they accidentally bumped into a sick man in the street and caused him hurt. Table (٨) makes it clear that the highest occurrence is self-blame (٧٠) and the second dominated type is both regret and apology with (١٥). The other strategies are forgiveness (١٢), explicit, implicit (١٢), forbearance (٨) and justification (٥)

Table (٨)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percentage	
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	١٥	٣٣%	
	b- An offer of apology.	١٥	٣٣%	
	c- A request for forgiveness	١٢	٢٦%	
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanation	١- Explicit.	١٢	٢٦%
		٢- Implicit	٦	١٣%
	b- Responsibility	١- accepting the responsibility.		
		٢- self-blame	٢٠	٤٤%
		٣- Denying		
	c- repair.			
d- Promise of forbearance	٨	١٧%		
٣	Intensific	٥	١١%	

ation			
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**Situation (٩)**

(٩) is about borrowing a friend's laptop and was broken carelessly. Here, the typical expressions of apology used were expressions of repair (٢٨) and self-blame (١٨) and the other most frequent ones were regret (١٧) and offer (١٦). These types are also mentioned in table (٩) :- forgiveness (١٢) implicit (١٢), explicit (١٤), forbearance (٣) and justification (٤). It is important to say that denying type is mentioned for the first time with occurrence (٢)

Table (٩)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percentage	
١	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	١٧	٣٧%	
	b- An offer of apology.	١٦	٣٥%	
	c- A request for forgiveness	١٢	٢٦%	
٢	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanation	١- Explicit.	١٤	٣١%
		٢- Implicit	١٢	٢٦%
	b- Responsibility	١- accepting the responsibility.		
		٢- self-blame	١٨	٤٠%
		٣- Denying	٢	٤%
	c- repair.	٢٨	٦٢%	



	d- Promise of forbearance	3	6%
3	Intensification	4	8%

**Situation (10)**

In this situation, the speaker couldn't take his aunt to hospital as he promised he for some unknown reasons. Here, explanation of explicit and expression of regret are highly repeated (30) and (29) times respectively. Also, nearly all other types of apology strategies are found.

Table (10)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percentage	
1	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	29	64%	
	b- An offer of apology.	10	22%	
	c- A request for forgiveness	6	13%	
2	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanati on	1- Explicit.	30	66%
		2- Implicit	2	4%
	b- Responsi bility	1- accepting the responsibility.		
		2- self-blame	0	11%
		3- Denying		

	c- repair.	10	22%
	d- Promise of forbearance	4	8%
3	Intensification	8	17%

The overall distributions and frequencies of all apology types and all questionnaire questions are shown in table (11).

Table (11)

No	Apology strategies	Number	Percentage	
1	IFID, Illocutionary Force Indicating Device			
	a- An expression of regret	237	20%	
	b- An offer of apology.	100	16%	
	c- A request for forgiveness	43	4.0%	
2	Proposition of apology			
	a- Explanati on	1- Explicit.	146	10%
		2- Implicit	60	6.3%
	b- Responsi bility	1- accepting the responsibility.	10	1%
		2- self-blame	82	8.6%
		3- Denying	2	0.2%
	c- repair.	110	12%	
	d- Promise of forbearance	00	0.8%	
	3	Intensification	01	0.3%
Total		906	100%	

As it is shown in table (١١) regret takes highest percentage of students' involvement which is ٢٥% because expressing regret is a key component in the management of complaints and in bringing the complaint to satisfactory resolution. An early expression of regret or apology can minimize the possibility of a verbal complaint becoming a formal written complaint or the further escalation of a formal written complaint to independent review. An apology or expression of regret is essential in helping the complainant to cope with the effects of an event. It also assists people in their recovery from event/incident in which they have been involved.

As for offer an apology, the percentage is ١٦% due to that apologies re-establish dignity for those you hurt and letting the injured party know that you know it was your fault, not theirs, helps them feel better, and it helps them save face.

To talk about request for forgiveness with the percentage (٤.٥%), one should remember that Apology and forgiveness are two sides of the same emotional coin. They reflect the constructive ways the oppressors and the oppressed in an intractable conflict can come to grips with the pain and suffering the conflict produced.

Concerning explanations of apology, both explicit (١٥%) and implicit (٦.٣%) takes ١٥% and ٦.٣% respectively because Providing an explanation, in some cases, it's helpful to explain an offense, especially to convey that it was not

intentional and that it will not happen again. But explanations that sound like excuses or blame the victim tend to be counterproductive.

Returning to the responsibility of apologies, both accepting and denying which take less percentage with (١%) and (٠.٢%) because actually it is difficult for people to shoulder the responsibility by saying "I was wrong" or "I take full responsibility." The Denial of responsibility like "This simply wasn't my fault", sometimes, shows your ego gets the best of you and you simply don't apologize at all. Perhaps you're so frustrated or angry that instead of apologizing, you defend, deny, or self-protect. The third type of responsibility is self-blame covers (٨.٦%) because it is also found that self-blame often leads people to make amends or reparations. Significantly, when self-blame is linked to making amends, it became correlated with favorable adjustment outcomes.

An offer of repair, in which ١٢% of participants use it, has a straightforward connection to the remedial function of an apology. It is an offer to try to make the situation right, to repair things so that it is as if the transgression had not occurred. Furthermore, such an offer can have a symbolic function, serving as a form of self-punishment of the "guilty self."

٥.٨% of the participated students apply a promise of forbearance because it increases the effectiveness of an apology by assuring hearers that the

speaker will not repeat his or her transgression. If the function of an apology is to remedy the social breach and bring the transgressor "back into the fold," then it is important for social interactants to feel that the transgressor is aware of the violated rule and will strive to follow the rule henceforth.

In some cases, intensifiers, which gets ٥.٣%, by the person who apologizes can intensify the apology by Intensifiers are modifiers to add more emotion to the word they are modifying. They give emphasis and extra strength to your apology. Intensifiers are effective at getting your point across in a clear way.

## ٦. Conclusion

The study has reached the following points.

١-Kurdish EFL learners nearly use all types of apology strategies with different variations.

٢-In the study, Kurdish EFL learners showed deficiency in the proposition of apology specially responsibility of denying which repeated two times.

٣-Generally, the students use apologies to assume responsibility for the wrongdoing.

٤-Based on the findings, IFIDs are used as routinized and conventionalized form of apology.

٥- Most of the participants use the phrases "I am sorry", "I apologize" , or "I beg your pardon" to show their regrets.

٦-Variation in the application of using apology strategies seem to relate both to the nature of the offense and to the nature of the relationship between the addresser and addressee.

٧-The most frequently apology strategies used among the selected Kurdish students were expression of regret, Also, there are differences between the ways of apology strategies made by them.

٨-Somehow, in our culture, expression of apology becomes necessary and must-like.

٩-The study has also concluded that English department students use different types of apology strategies.

١٠-It can be also showed that different apology strategies are used in different situations which means context affects using apology strategies.

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### Appendix

#### Questionnaire For a research study

#### Instruction:

Please read the following imagine yourself in the following situations and give a full response by using your usual speech.

Personal Information (tick)  
Gender male  
female

1 -You forgot your little son to buy him a new bike.

Answer-----  
-----

2 -You break in (interrupt) without waiting for the end of the speech turn.

Answer-----  
-----

3 -You are a waiter to o-star restaurant, you bring totally wrong order to a customer.

Answer-----  
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٤-You wanted to ask your friend for \$٠٠٠ you are critically in need of that money.

Answer-----  
-----

٥ -You come late for important lecture by your professor.

Answer-----  
-----

٦-your best friend invited you to his birthday party, you didn't go there.

Answer-----  
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٧-You have been given assignment as obligatory homework. You forgot to write it.

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Answer-----  
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٨-Yesterday, you were in a rush and you pumped into a sick man. You hurt him

Answer-----  
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٩-You borrowed your friend's laptop. You carelessly broke it.

Answer-----  
-----

١٠-You promised your aunt to take him to hospital. For some reason you couldn't do that

Answer-----  
-----