

# Apology Behavior In Intercultural Communication: A Socio-Pragmatic Perceptions Of Pakistani Undergraduate Students

Saood Khan<sup>1</sup>, Taimur Aimal Khan<sup>2</sup>, Mehrosh Azeem<sup>3</sup>, Khalid<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Corresponding Author), National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup>University of Swat.

<sup>3</sup>National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad.

<sup>4</sup>University of Swat.

## Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to identify apology behavior and socio-pragmatic norms employed by Pakistani undergraduate students in the English language. To achieve this, apology strategies have been conducted in both the English and Urdu languages to ascertain whether the participants have an awareness of linguistic and pragmatic competence or not. The participants were given the same scenarios in both the languages English and Urdu to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The study adopts a quantitative research framework, utilizing a written discourse completion task (WDCT) as the data collection method. The WDCT was designed for a sample of 100 participants, evenly divided between two groups: 50 students affiliated with the English department at The University of Lahore (UOL), and 50 students from the English department at the National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad (NUML). The WDCT involved eight distinct scenarios, presented in both Urdu and English languages. Participants were instructed to imagine themselves within the provided scenarios and provide appropriate responses. The results of the study unveiled that the participants' competency level displayed a tendency toward a broad application of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs). Furthermore, the findings also indicated that the participants echoed a deficiency in their awareness of additional apology strategies apart from the direct apology strategy. This tendency suggests that Pakistani undergraduate students may possess insufficient linguistic and pragmatic competence, potentially rendering them susceptible to instances of pragmatic failure in intercultural communication contexts. Consequently, English teachers should prioritize pragmatic competence, particularly the speech act of apology strategies, and their contextual variations.

**Keywords:** Apology Behavior, overgeneralization of IFID, Linguistics and Pragmatic Competence, Pragmatic Failure.

## 1. Introduction

Language is a symbolic, acoustic, and semantic system. Language, as a fundamental component of human communication, plays a critical role in expressing and comprehending the world around us. A perfect grasp of the language is important

in shaping a person's personality. Not only can knowing more than one language improve a person's personality, but it also improves cognitive skills and social development. We need a language to communicate our feelings, emotions, and thoughts because language is the

vehicle of thoughts. The Limit of a person's language is the limit of his/her world because we think, perceive, and act via language. Language is a gateway to knowledge and it is language that distinguishes us from animals. Today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is almost obligatory to learn at least two languages. Knowing a language not only allows us to communicate, but also allows us to develop business partnerships, and friendships, and learn about diverse cultures. There are around 6,500 languages spoken throughout the world, with English being the most widely spoken. English is the predominant language of England. Nonetheless, with the policies and endeavors of the British Empire, it has been the predominant or secondary language of many colonial powers such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and so on. Although English is not the primary language in the nations influenced by British colonization, it has become a vital language in many countries since it is used in trade, commerce, and, most crucially education. English is influential in the field of education because in numerous countries textbooks are written in English. It is the language of the internet and computer which plays a huge role in the field of education, advertisements, and business. In many countries where English is not an official language, many syllabi, especially in science and engineering are in the English language, thus they are driven to learn it. Not only that but English has also become a language of marketing; most advertisers use English as a tool to grab the attention of their consumers since English is considered a posh and prestigious language (Khan et al., 2021). The reach of the English language in Pakistan is expanding daily. In 1985, the English language was exclusively taught in private schools and institutions, but today Pakistan is making even greater efforts to promote it further. Although Urdu and English both are the official languages of Pakistan nonetheless it is English that is preferred over Urdu. Consequently, it is the language of the

court, government documents, notice boards, street signs, commercial contracts, and textbooks in schools, colleges, and universities are written in the English language.

The variety of English spoken in Pakistan is quite different from British/American English in almost all features (morphology, syntax, phonology, and lexis). English holds a crucial role whether it is spoken English in Pakistan or British/American English. Various dimensions of the English language have been examined such as composition, sound mechanisms, and social factors.

The main feature of the current study is to discuss the socio-pragmatic aspect of the English language. The socio-pragmatic aspect of language explicates how communication works in numerous social groups and enables foreign/second language learners to interact decorously and achieve the desired communication. Many researchers have concluded that one of the major problems English non-natives face is pragmatic knowledge due to which they fail in intercultural communication. Many research studies suggest that even though learners have mastered the syntax of the target language and structure, even then, on many occasions they start facing many problems regarding societal and cultural constraints that restrict target language usage (Lee, 2008 & Hyme, 1974). When engaging in interactions with English native speakers, language learners often face challenges due to their limited familiarity with the target culture, resulting in difficulties in achieving successful intercultural communication outcomes. Prospectively, it is surprising that it is not the only factor in the process of English language teaching and learning in Pakistan. Even though regional variation in the usage of language has prompted scholars, students, and teachers to challenge instructional strategies and language skills, the grammatical, syntactic, and semantic capability would just not be enough for effective

communication (Saleem, 2014). Pragmatic competence, which refers to the aptitude for effective communication in the context of language usage, has driven the attention of researchers and teachers. The essence of pragmatic competence can be clarified within the framework of language. For instance, in China, India, and Japan saying, I am sorry in certain cases, an apology may be enough. Similarly, in many other societies for instance Jordan an explanation of something might be required for the wrongdoing (Bataineh, 2008). Attaining the knowledge and experience of a language framework might not indicate that communication can be used effectively. To be able to acquire greater conversational or socio-cultural knowledge, the identification of the chosen community and the type of language usage in that group is essential.

The main objective of the current study is to determine the variant apology strategies employed by Pakistani undergraduate students in their interactions. Secondly, to find out whether Pakistani undergraduate students perceive the impact of their apology strategies on the overall effectiveness of their intercultural communication or not. The purpose of the study is to offer a greater chance of educating undergraduate students about the diverse apology strategies and encourage them to develop their pragmatic competence and socio-cultural knowledge for effective communication. Since, English, being an international language as well as the language of science and technology, has its prestige in Pakistan; it is inevitable to overlook the cultural and lingual variances to achieve the desired language standard.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Previously, the emphasis was given to the form of languages such as morphology, syntax, phonetics, and phonology where the EFL learners would have the competency but could not perform in it thus currently the communicative

approach has become more valued for effective and successful communication (Lee, 2008 & Hyme, 1974). Since Pakistani cultural norms are greatly different from English it becomes problematic for Pakistani undergraduate speakers to have the knowledge of different apology strategies and to make the appropriate use of those apology strategies in different contexts. To conduct effective communication or engage at an advanced level of interaction, Pakistani undergraduate students must not only have the semantic knowledge of different apology strategies but they must also comprehend the pragmatic application of these apology strategies. Sometimes the lack of knowledge prompts the students to overgeneralization of direct apology strategy by simply saying sorry, I apologize time and again, while in certain circumstances the learners lack pragmatic competence. As a result, the learners face pragmatic failure in intercultural communication. Therefore, pragmatic competence and intercultural knowledge are of great significance.

### **2. Literature Review**

In Each respective community, people tend to choose their special means of transmitting meaning via words, diagnosing the changes in communication patterns and contextual sense of being able to interpret a language and teach it. One field of linguistics where these differences and variations are discussed is sociolinguistics. For effective and functional communication in a certain linguistic environment, one must have knowledge of the target culture and the pragmatical usage of language, or else the whole interaction cannot be managed effectively. The Pragmatic use of language means the place where a speaker's knowledge of grammar comes into contact with his/her knowledge of the world. But both systems of knowledge are filtered through systems of beliefs about language and beliefs about the world (Thomas, 1983). To interpret the force of an utterance in the way in which the

speaker intended, the hearer must take into account both contextual and linguistic cues. Often, context alone will determine what force is assigned to an utterance. Understanding the pragmatic functions of language and adhering to sociocultural norms constitute a crucial aspect of Second/Foreign Language Learning. In cases where a linguistic token or structure deviates systematically from its typical interpretation by native speakers, this could result in pragmatic breakdown or failure. When teachers and students have a greater comprehension of the pragmatic usage of language, both can benefit from the insight.

However, socio-pragmatic analysis is an approach used in linguistics to evaluate how language is used in social circumstances to express meaning, identity, and power dynamics (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013). Similarly, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) alleged that socio-pragmatic analysis entails examining the social elements that affect language usage, such as socioeconomic class, gender, race, and culture, as well as the communication tactics and discursive practices that speakers use to accomplish their communicative objectives. One of the examples is politeness strategies in language use where the researcher analyzes how the speakers use language to manage social relationships, show respect, and negotiate face-saving strategies in communications (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Another example is the analysis of language variation and change in different social contexts (Labov, 1966). Thereby it is a powerful framework for understanding the complex relationships between language and society, and for illustrating how language is context-dependent Jadoon et al., (2022).

Additionally, socio-pragmatic analysis can be applied to apology strategies to investigate the various acceptable ways such as how it fits in different social and cultural contexts. The use of apologies can vary significantly amongst cultures, and for good communication and

conflict resolution, one must be aware of these variations. Furthermore, it can tell us about the role of face-saving in different cultures. In some cultures, for instance, apologies may be considered as a sign of weakness and individuals may be hesitant to apologize for fear of losing face. Whereas in other cultures, apologies may be seen as a necessary step in maintaining social harmony and restoring relationships. Most importantly, a socio-pragmatic analysis scrutinizes and evaluates the power hierarchy in different cultures. Such as in the Pakistani context people with high born and high power do not apologize a lot as those with low born and low power. Likewise, the usage of apology also depends on social contexts, such as formal and informal settings or in public versus private scenarios

On the other hand, Socio-pragmatic competence pertains to the ability to effectively utilize language in a socially appropriate manner. As pointed out by Miller (1974) most misunderstandings occur due to pragmatic failure as the interlocutors fail to understand each other's point of view. "Most of our misunderstandings of other people are not due to any inability to hear them or to parse their sentences or to understand their words ...A far more important source of difficulty in communication is that we so often fail to understand a speaker's intention" (Miller, 1974). This concept encompasses a wide range of linguistic abilities, including the comprehension of both direct and indirect meanings, as well as the apt selection of appropriate speech styles and manners of expression. It encompasses the nuanced understanding and application of language in diverse social contexts (Taguchi, 2011). A large portion of interlanguage pragmatics has generally been pursued within the context of speech act theory. Speech acts have been strongly explored among these domains. Primarily, described by (Austin,1962) and then the work further pursued by Searle, 1969. Speech Act theory which meant to clarify the language as

a set of acts. In the very theory, Speech acts are classified into five major areas based on how the speaker and listener are influenced through interaction (Cele-Murcia Olshtain, 2007). These types comprise assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. McCarthy (1998) argues that associating speech acts with a list of proponents unclear the fact that the selection of suitable expressions in any situation is influenced by several sociocultural considerations, including an appreciation of the essence of speaker-to-speaker interactions and social distance and power structures. When the learners' L1 and L2 are socio-culturally diverse regardless of the nature of the speech act needed in a given situation, the picture becomes even more complex (Koester, 2002).

### 2.1 Direct Speech Acts

The selection of the assertive sentence form to make a sentence, or the interrogative sentence to inquire for information is termed the direct speech act. The structure of the sentence is often so clear that the listener straightforwardly comprehends the intention of the speaker. The act of direct speech is a particular way of speech in which the relationship between form or structure and its function is clear and straightforward. In English, the speech act of declarative typically falls under the type of assertive sentence intended to convey information. That information might be right or wrong. First of all, for instance, he looks like my brother which might be true or false. Next, the speech act of order and request fall into an imperative type of sentence and function as direct speech acts. Such as ordering someone to be seated now. Thirdly, a type of interrogative that functions as asking a question which includes the speech act of questioning. As I will come to the class every day. May I? In the above-stated cases, the declaration is used to make a claim, the interrogative is used to ask questions, and the imperative is used to send questions and demands. In this sense, the mood of expressions

refers to the purpose and is referred to as direct. According to Niazi (2002) A direct speech act serves only one purpose, whereas an indirect speech act serves several purposes simultaneously.

### 2.2 Indirect Speech Acts

If a well-mannered inquiry in the form of an interrogative sentence is produced, May I have some sugar? in Urdu, کیا مجھے تھوڑی سی چینی مل سکتی ہے؟ This kind of interrogative is called indirect speech. In the very question, the word May is not for asking about the potential of the listener to keep to the sugar, rather it is for showing politeness and a way of making a request. Indirect speech acts are often chosen by the speakers so that they do not violate the face of the hearer, which could be the issue here. Direct discourses can also seem ill-mannered occasionally, as in You just go and take some rest, Sir. In certain cases, the latter would be completely appropriate. For example, so, you are not coming? The utterance concludes with a question mark, but grammatically, it is a declaration and pragmatically it is a locutionary act. Although, the only motivation for indirectness is not politeness. Indirectness is a commonly used technique for conversation. People prefer to use indirect speech acts notably concerning politeness meanwhile they minimize disagreeable messages found in requests and instructions (Leech, 1983).

### 2.3 Speech Act of Apology

Goffman (1971) defines apology or regret as an aspect of a "remedial interchange". The remedial interchange is a series of exchanges in which one tries to modify the consequence of an activity that is possibly unpleasant to one that is acceptable through the use of such functions as justifications, explanations, and regret. Compared with a reason, in which one confesses the wrongfulness of an act but declines someone's complete accountability, or a validation, in which one

confesses the responsibility but declines that the act itself was incorrect, an apology confesses both to the wrongfulness and to someone's responsibility for the act, often with an expression of repentance. According to Intachakra (2004) the act of saying sorry is one of the most regularly used functions. It has the objective of removing anger. In addition, Gooder and Jacobs (2000) highlight that an acceptable apology recognizes the reality of misconduct, allows for the greatest guilt, conveys honest sorrow and repentance, and promises that the violation will not happen again. There have been some fundamental elements that influence the impact of an apology, such as the offender's knowledge about the offended person, the degree of an offense committed, the social status in the remorseful perspective, the social distance factor such as the age of regretful perspective, the social distance factor, such as member's age and gender, and the apologetic perspective itself (Jarbou, 2002; Soliman, 2003).

According to Owen (1983) the expressions used in the apology can be direct or indirect but some of the apology strategies are more traditional, thus they are used more frequently than others. For instance, 'I am sorry' in the English language can be translated into Urdu as *میں معافی چاہتا ہوں* or *مجھے معاف کرنا*. In some cultures when an offense is made and as an apology strategy a joke is used to cope with the situation (Edelman, 1985). Other than that traditional apology strategies nonverbal signals, such as a heartfelt tone of voice or a hug, can be used to replace the verbal apology. When people believe a message cannot be effectively expressed through verbal cues alone, they prefer to use nonverbal behaviors, such as gestures, to complement it (Merlinger & Levelt, 2004). However, nonverbal signals of apology can also be less effective at carrying the meaning than a verbal apology. In some situations, the usage of the nonverbal apology strategy can be misinterpreted, as the nonverbal apology strategy is an indirect way of apology that can be

understood only by those who understand and have knowledge of the target language and its culture. For instance, if the offender makes a smile after committing an offense it can be misunderstood that the offender lessens the social damage by expressing friendliness. Therefore, it is also possible that the offender is unaware of the offense and finds the incident funny.

### 2.3.1 Direct Apology Strategies

The term apology often contains obvious illocutionary force indicating devices (IFID), those are the expressions or predictive phrases that present the sense of apology or repentance Cohen & Olshtain (1986). These predictive terminologies comprise performative verbs such as sorry, apologize, or excuse translated in the Urdu language as *معذرت*, *معذرت خواہ*, or *معاف کیجیے گا*. Although the very form of apology contains overt expressions of repentance and apologies, these are determined in the category of direct apologies. When it comes to the English language, the research data showed that direct apologies were the main apologies for the widely used apologizing strategies around the board.

### 2.3.2 Indirect Apology Strategies

An apology does not necessarily require an IFID or a performative verb. The essence of speech acts may be conveyed by several verbs or statements (Searle, 1975). In the case of apologies, indirect apologies can take several forms. Cohen & Olshtain (1986) presented indirect apologies in subsequent ways. As long as an interpretation and acceptance of transparency, a proposal of recompense is a vow of forgiveness. Offering an excuse for an action may be tacit for apologizing indirectly. In the case of a formula, the defendant of the action makes excuses for his/her action. For instance, a student might provide an excuse by saying sorry for being late for the class by saying that there was too much traffic out there which made him/her late for the class on the way to school. According to the

circumstantial factors, this specific apology technique may or may not be appropriate; culture, the severity of the action, age, gender, the exact situation, and numerous other factors.

Speaking of indirect apology strategies an individual can adopt various subgroups to express a sense of concern or even disclaim charge. The different indirect apology strategies can be possibly classified into subcategories. such as Accepting responsibility for one's action e.g., I know it is my bad in Urdu مجھ سے غلطی ہو گئی stating self-deficiency, e.g. I was confused and could not realize مجھے پتا ہی نہیں چلا میں پریشان تھا acknowledging that the position deserves an apology, e.g., you are right! آپ ٹھیک کہہ رہے ہیں demonstrating lack of intention, I didn't intend to do it میرا بالکل یہ مطلب نہیں تھا in other situations, the speaker may agree to repair the damage that his/her actions have caused. In a given context, repair may mean fixing or replacing damaged goods by the respondent, or restring offense. For instance, when the defendant breaks down the other laptop the proposed confession may be, When I go out, I will get you a new one جب میں باہر جاؤں گا تو آپ کو ایک نیا لاپٹاپ لا دوں گا according to the listener's response this kind of action may or may not necessitate action. Another kind of indirect strategy, which involves a commitment of forbearance is future intervention or making it assure that the incident will not be repeated (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993). The very type of indirect apology strategy is reliant on the situation and has a major role as an apology approach.

### 3. Methodology

In this chapter, a detailed explanation of the methodology will be provided. This will involve discussing the participants, instrumentation, data procedures, and the process of data collection and interpretation. Throughout each section, the rationale behind the decisions made during the research process will be thoroughly explained, along with the participants involved, the

approach taken, and the specific methods employed.

#### 3.1 Participants

The target population of the current study includes Pakistani undergraduate students who speak Urdu as their first or second language. The study includes 100 participants, 50 of whom are Pakistani undergraduate students from the University of Lahore (UoL) and the other 50 undergraduate students from the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad. Both the groups are from the English department, at the University of Lahore and the National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad correspondingly. Both the groups contained an equal number of males and females. The participants have been selected from two different universities to ensure the validity and reliability of the answers. Additionally, it was preferable to have undergraduate students as participants in the current study because, in the instance of Pakistan, it would be difficult to recruit proficient English speakers, mostly undergraduate students, outside of the university environment. It is also proposed that the university framework describes a good sociocultural sampling and analysis because of the dynamic social experience.

Moreover, undergraduate students are the future generation who will decide the social, and cultural environment. Furthermore, by confining the context to university students' reliability has been easily retained. Each group in this research study has been chosen for various reasons. To set criteria for comparing variances in apologies between English and Urdu two groups of Pakistani undergraduate students have been enrolled. The responses of the participants have been collected in both Urdu and English to explore the apology strategies used by participants in these different languages. Later, the responses provided in both languages were compared to find out which socio-pragmatic

norms Pakistani undergraduate Students adopt when they are apologizing to someone in English.

### 3.2 Instrumentation

To obtain the data from the participants, the written discourse completion task (WDCT) with diverse scenarios has been developed. DCT is a research tool established essentially by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) for the comparative study of speech act realization between native and non-native speakers. So, it is essentially employed for cross-cultural pragmatic analysis. This approach is adaptable to socio-cultural factors and a very efficient method for rapidly collecting large amounts of data (Golato, 2005). The written discourse completion task (DCT) questionnaire is used for the collection of data. The questionnaire comprises various situations presented to the respondents, considering their social standing, social distance, age, and occupation. The participants have been told about the intent of the study and asked to answer the given questions concerning the provided circumstance. The researcher has assured the willingness of the participants. Before conducting the questionnaire and observations, the researcher obtained permission from related authorities of the relevant universities as well as the participants.

### 3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Responses have been gathered from the students of the Department of English, University of Lahore (UoL), and the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Islamabad from undergraduate students. WDCT has been used to collect the data. S/WDCT is widely used in data collection in pragmatics, notably in speech acts. It entails the circumstances in which the participant must respond by envisioning himself/herself in the scenario. DCT can be written or oral. The one that is employed in this study is the written discourse completion task (WDCT).

## 3.4 Theoretical Framework

The data analysis of the present study is focused on Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) identification of apology strategies. The actual data has been examined and classified using semantic formulas used in each response. The following are the classifications:

### 3.4.1. Five Apology Strategies

- a) Direct Apology: sorry, excuse, forgive, etc.
- b) Explanation: general (These days, I am facing a hard time), and specific (I was unable to do it)
- c) Responsibility: implicit (I assumed it was the right thing to do) lack of intent (You misunderstood me), self-deficiency: (I was so confused), and self-blame (I know I did it wrong).
- d) Repair: Vague (How can I fix it?), and specified (I will get you another book).
- e) promise forbearance: for instance, (It is not going to happen again).

### 3.4.2. Mixture or Absence of Apology Strategies

- a) Variety of strategies
- b) The lack of strategies

### 3.4.3. Modification of Apology Strategies

- a) Apology Intensity: "Really," "very," "terribly," etc.
- b) Responsibility minimization: "I have been prohibited about that".
- c) Refusal of responsibility: Fault rejection (That is not my fault), and blaming the listener (That's your fault).
- d) Emotion: interjection (Ouch, Ops), invocation (gosh!), or swear words (shit).
- e) Offense minimization: (Nothing's wrong).

- f) Comments: about yourself, others, and the condition.

The apology has been encoded for each group and context. The proportion of strategy incidence has been calculated using the number of participants who used the strategy. Some content adaptation, such as strategy changes, non-apologies, or rare instances of apology, has been further investigated and proven in order to better understand the nature of apologetic strategies.

#### 4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The study presents the results derived from the collected data. The results are viewed in the context of each case. The responses of the Pakistani undergraduate students have been collected in both Urdu and English language to compare and identify the apology strategies they select in diverse scenarios. The key strategies used by either group are specified in Table 1 and detailed descriptions are provided. Firstly, the key strategies used in the written discourse completion task (DCT) are discussed. The average percentage of the apology strategies used by the respondents is given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: The frequency of apology strategies used by the respondents**

Apology Strategies	No. Students 100		No. Students 100	
	Apology Strategies in English		Apology Strategies in Urdu	
	No. 100	100%	No.100	100%
<b>Direct Apology</b>	49	49%	43	43.8%
<b>Explanation</b>	12	12.6%	19	19.9%
<b>Repairing</b>	19	19%	15	15%
<b>Responsibility</b>	8	8.3%	10	10.8%
<b>Forbearance</b>	20	20.1%	13	13%
<b>Mixed Apologies</b>	23	23.1%	27	27%

The findings depicted in Table 1 reveal a disparity in the utilization of direct apology strategies among participants, with a noticeable 6% increase observed in the English language. Specifically, the frequency of direct apology strategy employment is 49% in English, compared to 43% in Urdu, indicating a contradictory pattern. The unreasonable use of IFIDs shows the lack of knowledge about the additional apology strategies in English. This is evident in the relatively lower adoption of the direct apology strategy in the Urdu language, as it is either their L1 or L2 which suggests that they

possessed knowledge about different apology strategies and their appropriate usage. In specific cases, the integration of IFIDs with the combination of other apology strategies was required such as justification, repair, or responsibility as an apology strategy however, the participants overgeneralized the direct apology strategy which can lead them to pragmatic failure in intercultural communication. While a minority of respondents demonstrated adeptness in employing this approach within the context of the English language, the majority exhibited a lack of proficiency in its application.

The observed behavior diverged significantly from the patterns observed in Urdu, as a greater number of students demonstrated the use of IFIDs accompanied by explanation, justification, or responsibility acknowledgment to convey a genuine sense of remorse.

The second variation among the apology strategies is an explanation that reflects a notable disparity in its utilization. Specifically, the English language exhibits a usage rate of only 12.6%, whereas the Urdu language shows a significantly higher usage rate of 19.9%, indicating an inconsistency. The difference between the two languages amounts to 7.3%, suggesting that some participants were not aware of the explanation strategy as an apology strategy. Since, in certain situations, the offender may need to provide clarifications regarding the circumstances leading to the offense, allowing the recipient to better comprehend the underlying reasons. The respondents of the study demonstrated familiarity with this rationale in the context of the Urdu language, where they were acquainted with additional apology strategies. However, due to their lack of knowledge of the English language, they resorted to using it less frequently.

Furthermore, another apology strategy included in the analysis is the act of repairing, which is employed by offenders seeking to reconcile and mend the discord between themselves and the recipient. By examining Table 1, significant discrepancies can be observed in the respective percentages between English and Urdu. English displays a notable percentage of 19%, while Urdu demonstrates a slightly lower percentage of 15%, which remains noteworthy. This variation suggests a lack of comprehension of the strategy in English, as they utilized it without a clear understanding of its purpose. On the other hand, respondents in the Urdu language employed this strategy due to its necessity in resolving conflicts. Hence, such

variations arise between the two languages under consideration.

In addition, a responsibility apology strategy is employed when the offender acknowledges their wrongdoing and assumes accountability. Interestingly, this particular strategy demonstrates a relatively minor discrepancy in usage, with 8.3% observed in English and 10% in Urdu. Although the variation is not substantial, it still indicates that some participants lacked awareness of this strategy and consequently did not utilize it. This discrepancy suggests a potential gap in understanding among certain participants regarding the importance and application of taking responsibility as an effective apology strategy.

Moreover, the penultimate apology strategy under consideration is known as forbearance. This particular strategy exhibits a significant and noteworthy variation, with a difference of 6.9% observed between English and Urdu. Specifically, the usage rate of forbearance as an apology strategy is found to be 20.1% in English, whereas, in Urdu, it stands at a comparatively lower rate of 13%. The substantial contrast in the adoption of forbearance suggests a lack of understanding of this strategy therefore the respondents of the study choose to patiently endure the consequences of their actions without immediately offering apologies. Conversely, the utilization of forbearance as an apology strategy shows a relatively diminished inclination in Urdu. This implies that they had a better understanding of the circumstances where a direct apology and a prompt approach were required, and therefore, they chose to adopt those strategies.

The ultimate apology strategy in our analysis involves the integration of multiple apology strategies. In scenarios where a single apology strategy might not yield satisfactory results, a combination of apology strategies is deemed more effective. This entails employing a direct apology strategy alongside either an explanation

or repair strategy, depending on the specific circumstances and contextual factors surrounding the apology. As depicted in Table 1, there is a notable disparity in the utilization of a combination of apology strategies. The data reveals that the usage of this approach in English amounts to 23%, whereas in the Urdu language, it stands at a higher rate of 27%. This discrepancy highlights a significant difference in the tendency to employ a combination of apology strategies between English and Urdu language. The observed discrepancy in language usage suggests that certain participants either lacked awareness regarding the appropriate implementation of mixed apology strategies or were unfamiliar with the contexts in which such strategies should be applied. Consequently, they failed to employ the necessary combination of apology strategies, resulting in an ineffective utilization of said strategies. Conversely, in the case of the Urdu language, the higher usage of mixed apology strategies suggests their awareness of the appropriate contexts in which such a combination of strategies is employed.

The analysis of Table 1 reveals that IFIDs (Illocutionary force indicating devices) emerge as the predominant apology strategy in both English and Urdu languages. In English, IFIDs are utilized at a frequency of 49%, while in Urdu, their usage is slightly lower at 43.8% when conveying apologies. These findings suggest a preference for explicit utilization of the apology strategy in English, potentially indicating a limited awareness of alternative apology strategies among the participants. In contrast, participants in the Urdu language exhibited a conscious understanding of various apology strategies and their contextual appropriateness, leading to a significant absence of overt employment of direct apology strategies. Among the various expressions used for direct apologies in English, the expression I am sorry emerged as the preferred choice. Additionally, the participants occasionally would utilize

intensifiers such as I am so sorry and I am very sorry in the English language. These expressions were found to be commonly relied upon by a significant majority of respondents when conveying apologies in English. Yet this reliance on intensifiers can be attributed to their limited familiarity with alternative apology strategies, leading to the simultaneous use of intensifiers alongside IFIDs. In contrast, Urdu respondents exhibited a nuanced understanding of the pragmatic usage of their language. They employed the expression معاف کیجئے گا (maaf kijiye ga) in appropriate contexts, reflecting their awareness of the specific apology strategy in Urdu. Furthermore, in the Urdu language, the respondents would integrate IFIDs with other apology strategies, such as explanation or repair, demonstrating their understanding of additional apology strategies and their appropriate usage within specific contexts which was not the case in English. In the context of English, participants tended to employ intensifiers with the belief that such linguistic elements might contribute to conflict resolution. However, it is noteworthy that intensifiers cannot serve as substitutes for apology strategies involving Explanation, Repair, or Forbearance.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of the current research study indicated that Pakistani undergraduate students favored the IFIDs (Illocutionary force indicating devices) in English far more than in Urdu, primarily due to their limited knowledge of various apology strategies. The explicit use of a direct apology strategy can lead the ESL/EFL to pragmatic failure in intercultural communication. Pragmatic failure can occur when learners rely on only one apology without employing or incorporating other apology strategies, leading to potentially serious consequences, such as being perceived as rude and facing criticism as a result. The optimal approach to address this problem involves acquainting students with diverse

apology strategies and presenting them with varied scenarios to elucidate the mechanisms underlying pragmatic decision-making. By offering such comprehensive instruction, students can enhance their understanding of effective pragmatic communication and develop the ability to select appropriate apology strategies tailored to specific situational contexts.

Additionally, the nature of the relationship between the offender and the offended significantly influenced the manner in which the offender chose to apologize. In certain instances, the perpetrator with high social status refrained from offering apologies in order to maintain a positive public image. This emphasizes the significance of comprehending the sociocultural norms and customs associated with a language, in conjunction with its linguistic components, for successful and accurate communication. Apart from this, there was the frequent use of intensifiers even for a slighter mistake which may have been overheard in the daily routine conversation. Furthermore, the second most frequently employed apology strategy in the English language was forbearance. The utilization of forbearance as an apology strategy may be attributed to respondents' inclination to ensure that the offense would not recur in the future which was not appropriate in every case.

By exclusively employing IFIDs (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices), explicit intensifiers, or forbearance as apology strategies while omitting other supplementary approaches, individuals risk facing misunderstandings or encountering ambiguity during their interpersonal interactions. The comprehensive examination of the present study indicates an evident pragmatic failure in the participants' responses to intercultural communication which highlighted a significant deficiency in their pragmatic competence. Raising learners' awareness to expect intercultural variations in the linguistic manifestations of politeness, truthfulness, and other aspects constitutes a significant shift in

language instruction from mere training to a genuinely educational approach. By facilitating students' comprehension of how pragmatic principles function in diverse cultural contexts and motivating them to identify distinct pragmatic and discursal norms that might underlie national and ethnic stereotypes, teachers contribute to the reduction of simplistic and uncharitable interpretations of individuals whose linguistic behavior differs superficially from their own. Acknowledging the socio-pragmatic or pragma-linguistic distinction means allowing foreign students the freedom to deviate from linguistic norms just as native speakers do. It also involves recognizing that proficiency in English does not inherently require adherence to the norms of the culturally dominant group. As language teachers, our primary focus is to ensure that learners comprehend and are conscious of their linguistic choices and actions, rather than imposing rigid cultural expectations on them.

## References

1. Austin, J. L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. London: Oxford University Press.  
<http://www.dwrl.utexas.edu/~davis/crs/rhe321/Austin-How-To-Do-Things.pdf>.
2. Bataineh, R. F., & Bataineh, R. F. (2008). A cross-cultural comparison of apologies by native speakers of American English and Jordanian Arabic. *Journal of pragmatics*, 40(4), 792-821.
3. Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics*, 5(3), 196-213.
4. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). United Kingdom, UK: Cambridge University Press.
5. Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2005). *Identity and interaction: A sociocultural linguistic*

- approach. *Discourse studies*, 7(4-5), 585-614.
6. Celce-Murcia, M. and E. Olshtain. 2007. *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching: A Guide for Language Teachers*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
  7. Chamani, F., & Zareipur, P. (2010). A cross-cultural Study of Apologies in British English and Persian. *Concentric: Studies in linguistics*, 36(1), 133-153.
  8. Cohen, A. D., & Olshtain, E. (1993). The production of speech acts by EFL learners. *Tesol Quarterly*, 27(1), 33-56.
  9. Cohen, A. D., Olshtain, E., & Rosenstein, D. S. (1986). Advanced EFL apologies: what remains to be learned?
  10. Dalmau, M. S. I., & Gotor, H. C. I. (2007). From “Sorry very much” to “I’m ever so sorry”:acquisitional patterns in L2 apologies by Catalan learners of English.
  11. Deutschmann, M. (2006). Social variation in the use of apology formulae in the British National Corpus. In *The changing face of corpus linguistics*. Brill.
  12. Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (2013). *Language and Gender*. United Kingdom, UK: Cambridge University Press.
  13. Edelman, M. J. (1985). *The symbolic uses of politics*. Urbana & Chicago, USA: University of Illinois Press.
  14. Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in Public*. New Jersey, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
  15. Golato, A. (2005). Studying Compliment Responses: A Comparison of DCTs and Recordings of Naturally Occurring Talk. *Applied Linguistics*. 24(1), 90-121.
  16. Gooder, H., & Jacobs, J. M. (2000). 'On the Border of the Unsayable': The Apology in Post Colonizing Australia. *Interventions*, 2(2), 229-247.
  17. Haidar, S., & Fang, F. (2019). Access to English in Pakistan: A Source of Prestige or a Hindrance to Success. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 39(4), 485-500.
  18. Holmes, J. (1990). Apologies in New Zealand English. *Language in Society*, 19(2), 155-199.
  19. Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative Competence. *Sociolinguistics*. Pride, JB & J Holmes (Eds.), 269-293.
  20. Intachakra, S. (2004). Contrastive pragmatics and language teaching: Apologies and Thanks In English and Thai\* T, 35(1), 37-62.
  21. Jarbou, S. O. (2002). *Speech act stylistics: A Cross-linguistic, Cross-Cultural Study of Directive Speech Acts in Selected Shakespearean Plays and their Arabic Translations*. United States, USA: Indiana University of Pennsylvania.
  22. Jadoon, A.I., Khan, F., Bukhari, N.T.S., Gilani,S.Z., Ishfaq, U., Ullah, M. (2022). Effect of Teacher-Student Relationship on Pro-Social Behavior and Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students. *Indian Journal of Economics and Business*, 21(1), 331-337.
  23. Kasanga, L. A., & Lwanga-Lumu, J. C. (2007). Cross-cultural linguistic realization of politeness: A study of apologies in English and Setswana.
  24. Khan et al., (2020). Personalized Advertising and Cultural Branding: A Pragmatic Analysis of Language Strategies Used in Brand Advertisements.
  25. Labov, W. (1966). *The social stratification of English in New York City, NY*: Center for Applied Linguistics.
  26. Lee, J. S., & Shin, S. J. (2008). Korean Heritage Language Education in the United States: The Current State, Opportunities, and Possibilities. *Heritage Language Journal*, 6(2), 1-20.
  27. Leech G.N. (1983) *Pragmatics, discourse analysis, stylistics and “the celebrated letter”*, *Prose Studies*. DOI: [10.1080/01440358308586191](https://doi.org/10.1080/01440358308586191)

28. McCarthy, M. (1998). *Spoken language and applied linguistics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
29. Melinger, A., & Levelt, W. J. (2004). Gesture and the communicative intention of the speaker. *Gesture*, 4(2), 119-141.
30. Niazi, N. (2002). A study of speech acts with special reference to Ernest Hemingway's novels.
31. Olshtain, E. & Cohen, A. (1991) Teaching speech act behavior to nonnative speakers. In M. Celce-Murcia (ed.) *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* [2nd edition]. New York (NY): Newbury House/Harper Collins. 154– 65.
32. Olshtain, E. C., & Cohen, A. AD (1983). "Apology: A Speech Act Set." *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*, Newbury House. Rowley, Mass, 18-35.
33. Owen, M. (1983) Apologies and remedial exchanges. A study of language use in social interaction. Berlin: Mouton.
34. Saleem, T., Azam, S., & Saleem, A. (2014). The use of apology strategies in English by Pakistani EFL university students in Pakistan. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(34), 142-148.
35. Searle, J. R. (1975). A taxonomy of illocutionary acts. *Minnesota studies in the philosophy of language*, 334.
36. Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech Acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
37. Soliman, A. (2003). Apology in American English and Egyptian Arabic. Paper Presented at the paper was Submitted to the Proceedings of TESOL 3rd Annual Graduate Student Forum, Baltimore, MA, USA.
38. Taguchi, N. (2011). Teaching pragmatics: Trends and issues. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 31, 289-310.
39. Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied linguistics*, 4(2), 91-112.