

REALIZATION OF APOLOGY STRATEGIES BY ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS OF PEKALONGAN UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study is meant to find out the apology strategies, to investigate the development strategies from the lowest to the highest semester students, and to explain how the pragmatic transfer interferes the apology strategies used by English Department students of Pekalongan University. This study used a qualitative descriptive design and written discourse completion tasks were employed to obtain the data. As a subject study, ten students were taken from each semester, so there were forty students overall. In analyzing the data, the students' apologies were analyzed by using Holmes classification. The findings reveal that an explicit expression of apology, in particular, the strategy of expressing regret, is the most frequent apology strategy. Alerter and explanation are also used extensively. There is development of the use of apology strategies from the lowest to the highest semester students. With pragmatic transfer, pragma-linguistic transfer is dominated by linguistic features changing from Indonesian language to English, whereas the socio-pragmatic transfer is more dominated by a socio-culture changing from Indonesian to English, making it unacceptable in English language context.

Key words: realization, apology strategies, pragmatic transfer.

INTRODUCTION

Among the speech acts we employ in daily communication, apology is one of the most frequently used. Apology is a face-threatening act that requires the speaker to admit their responsibility for some behavior (or failure to carry out some behavior) that has proved costly to the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987). It aims at maintaining the harmony relationship between the speaker and the hearer. 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). Apologies are realized in an assortment of patterns and clutch a specific cultural value and this state of variety lies in the fact that the social organization of human societies are in variation (Wouk, 2006). In other word, the speech act of apology in each community is realized in different pattern as it is influenced by culture and social values of the community.

Apology is one of the speech acts which is frequently used in daily conversation. Apologies are expressive illocutionary acts which can be

differentiated from complaints, which are also expressive acts, by being convivial in nature (Trosborg, 1995). According to Brown and Levinson, apologies are politeness strategies. An apology is a 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. An apology is a fundamental speech act which is part of human communication occurs in every culture to maintain good relations between interlocutors (Brown and Levinson, 1987: Olshtain, & Cohen, 1983).

In a brief, when discussing apologies, there are four assumptions which must be made. First, the speaker believes an act has already been performed. Second, the speaker believes that the act offended to the hearer to some degree. Third, the speaker believes that s/he has some responsibility in the act offending the hearer. The last is the speaker regrets for some degree. Fraser does go on to point out, however, that any of these four assumptions might be violated, at which point the apology would be considered flawed, but not without value (Fraser in Today, 2011:6; Alfattah, 2010; Bataineh, 2006; Xiang, 2008.).

This study employed the apology strategies provided by Holmes (1990). Holmes (1990) categorizes the apology strategies in four super strategies with eight sub-categories:

- A. Explicit expression of apology
 - A1 An offer of apology / IFID
e.g. I apologize; Please accept my apologies.
 - A2 An expression of regret
e.g. I am sorry; I am afraid.
 - A3 A request for forgiveness
e.g. Excuse me; Forgive me.
- B. Explanation or account
e.g. I was trapped in the traffic jam.
- C. Acknowledgment of responsibility
 - C1 Accepting the blame
e.g. It is my fault; Silly me
 - C2 Expressing self deficiency
e.g. I was confused; I forgot.
 - C3 Recognizing V as deserving apology
e.g. You are right
 - C4 Expressing lack of intent
e.g. I didn't mean to hurt you.
 - C5 Offering repair
e.g. I'll pay it for you.
- D. Promise of forbearance
e.g. I promise it won't happen again.

There are a lot of English students who do not study English in broad sense. In communicating using the target language, they only focus on grammatical competence, on how to be able to communicate in English grammatically without considering any other aspects such as situation and context, and social and culture background. In this case, the communication in grammatically correct is

not enough, but also should be appropriate and natural according to situation, context, and socio culture.

By discussing apology speech act realization in interlanguage pragmatics, it is able to facilitate the students to learn cross cultural understanding and cultural norms in English context, such as how English native speakers perform apology in various context and situation, so it can help them to be able to communicate in English appropriately and naturally.

This study aims at finding out the apology strategies of English Department students of Pekalongan University as EFL learners, investigating the development strategies from the lowest to the highest semester, and explaining how the pragmatic transfer interferes the apology strategies used by English Department students of Pekalongan University.

Rizk (2003) defines pragmatic transfer as “the influence of learners’ pragmatic knowledge of language and culture other than the target language on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information”. Pragmatic transfer can be either positive, which considers evidence of sociocultural and pragmatic universality among languages, or negative, which shows inappropriate transfer of L1 linguistic norms into L2. Pragmatic error or failure occurs where speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from the L1 to L2. Even the most basic item in a language such as the use of, for example, “good

morning” can lead to cross cultural misunderstanding due to pragmatic differences between two languages (Thomas, 1983) in (Thijittang, 2010). Negative pragmatic transfer, as Rizk (2003) explains, takes the form of translating some “formulaic expressions / phrases” functioning to express different speech acts in (L1) to express the equivalent speech act in (L2) (p.405).

Kasper (1992) classified two types of pragmatic transfer: pragma-linguistic and socio-pragmatic. Within in pragmalinguistic transfer he deals with illocutionary force and politeness value. The latter includes both discernment politeness, i.e. politeness markers used irrespective of current communicative goal and strategic politeness, i.e. strategies oriented to meet participants’ face needs. On the other hand, as far as socio-pragmatic transfer is concerned, he includes context internal factors, i.e. which refer to participants’ role relationship irrespective of a given linguistic action and context internal factors which are intrinsic to a particular speech event (Afgani, 2007; Nureddeen, 2008).

METHODS

This research employed qualitative descriptive design. Qualitative research is a research procedure which produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral words of people and behavior which can be observed. Furthermore, descriptive approach means a research which uses technique of searching, collecting,

classifying, analyzing the data and finally drawing conclusion.

The subjects of this study were the students of English Department of Pekalongan University. The students were taken from all semesters: 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th semesters. As samples, the writer chose ten students from each semester, so the writer got forty students from all semesters. In this case, the writer chose ten students who got good scores in their

class. Choosing the students from all semesters is done in order to know the development of the apology strategies in each semester, from the lowest to the highest semester.

In this study, DCT (Discourse Completion Task) was employed as the research instrument for production of data (Blum Kulka, & Olshtain, 1984). Below is the table presenting the blue print of DCT.

Table 1 the blue print of DCT

Situation	Social Status	Social Distance	Severe of Offense
1. The secretary forgot to remind the boss of the urgent meeting.	-	+	+
2. The speaker didn't return the book to his friend on time.	0	+	-
3. The speaker broke a friend's laptop.	0	+	+
4. The teacher made a mistake in scoring the students' final exam.	+	0	+
5. The waiter undeliberately stepped on the customer's foot.	-	-	-
6. The student was late to submit the assignment to the lecturer.	-	0	+
7. The lecturer was late in scoring the students' final exam.	+	0	+
8. The speaker was late to see his friend in ten minutes	0	+	+
9. Tourist guide was late to pick up the tourists.	-	-	+
10. The head master forgot to inform one of the teacher to join the meeting.	+	+	+

Social status (+ = high; - = low; 0 = equal)

Social distance (+ = close; - = far; 0 = neutral)

Severe of offense (+ = severe; - = not severe)

In analyzing the data, the students' apologies were identified first, then they were classified based on Holmes classification. After that, they were tabulated based on the classification, and were interpreted. Finally, the conclusion was drawn based on the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Realization of Apology Strategies

It is found that the respondents use many strategies in their apology, such as an expression of regret, a request for forgiveness, explanation, offering repair, and other strategies. Below is the table displaying apology strategies used by the respondents in all situations.

Table 2 The distribution of students' apology strategies

Apology Strategy	%
A1. An offer of apology /IFID	2
A2. An expression of regret	27.7
A3. A request for forgiveness	4.7
B. Explanation or account	12.2
C1. Accepting the blame	3.3
C2. Expressing self-deficiency	8.2
C3. Recognizing H as deserving apology	-
C4. Expressing lack of intent	3.9
C5. Offering repair / redress	8
D. Promise of forbearance	5.7
E. Alerter	14.5
F. Intensifiers of the apology	9.8
Total	100

The table above shows the total percentage of apology strategies in all situations. The results reveals that an explicit expression of apology, in particular, the strategy of expressing regret, is the most frequent apology strategy used (27.7%). Alerter and explanation strategies

are the other strategies which are used extensively (from 12 to 14%). No other strategies are found for more than ten percent of the data.

In order to know further about the apology strategies in each situation, below

is the table presenting the percentage of apology strategies in each situation.

Table 3 The distribution of students' apology strategies in 10 Situations

Apology Strategy	% S1	% S2	% S3	% S4	% S5	% S6	% S7	% S8	% S9	% S10
A1. An offer of apology /IFID	2.5	2.3	0.8	3.5	2.3	5.6	-	-	3.5	3.1
A2. An expression of regret	26.4	26.9	26.3	29.2	26.7	23.1	28.1	31.4	29.8	28.3
A3. A request for forgiveness	3.1	3.1	7.5	5.3	5.3	1.4	1.5	4.8	7	7.1
B. Explanation or account	6.3	3.8	-	-	13.7	26.6	23	24.8	19.3	3.9
C1. Accepting the blame	3.1	0.8	6	15.9	0.8	-	1.5	-	0.9	3.1
C2. Expressing self-deficiency	18.2	23.1	1.5	1.8		-	11.8	-	2.6	22.8
C3. Recognizing H as deserving apology	-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-	-
C4. Expressing lack of intent	0.6	-	11.3	3.5	16	-	2.2	2.8	1.7	-
C5. Offering repair / redress	2.5	-	24.1	23.9	3.1	1.4	11.8	3.8	2.6	7.1
D.Promise of forbearance	6.9	16.2	-	-	-	14.7	6.7	3.8	6.1	2.4
G. Alerter	15.7	13.8	8.3	9.7	22.9	19.6	8.9	18.1	15.8	12.6
H. Intensifiers of the apology	14.5	10	14.3	7.1	9.2	7.7	4.4	10.5	10.5	9.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The table above shows the percentages of apology strategies in each situation. The most frequently occurring apology strategy is an expression of regret, such as "I am sorry". It is around 20 – 30% in each situation. The highest used of such expression is found in situation 8 (being late in an appointment to see a friend), it takes 31.4%. It can be inferred that this kind of strategy is mostly employed when the speaker and the hearer have the same

social status and close social distance (the speaker and the hearer are close friends). The examples are as follows.

"I am really **sorry** for being late, guys. I was trapped in the traffic jam for a long time."

"I am **sorry**. You had to wait for me for a long time. I will not do it again."

As for the offer of apology strategy, in situation 6 (being late to submit the assignment to the lecturer), the

respondents used the highest proportion of this strategy (5.6%). It can be assumed that such strategy is mostly employed by the speaker who has lower social status than the hearer. In this situation, the speaker is the student and the hearer is the lecturer. The following examples are the use of offer of apology strategy.

“I beg your pardon, Sir. I am late to submit your assignment. Yesterday, I had to accompany my mother in the hospital.”

“I apologize because I don’t submit my assignment on time. Give me chance again, please.”

Meanwhile, a request for forgiveness strategy, such as “forgive me” was most used in situation 3 (breaking friend’s laptop) which takes 7.5%. Here are the following examples.

“Please forgive me. It’s my mistake. I really didn’t mean to do. I’ll help you to pay for the fixing.”

“Forgive me. I promise I will repair your laptop in laptop service.”

Explanation or account strategy was used most in situation 6 (being late to submit the assignment to the lecturer) (26.6%). It may indicate that the speakers of lower social status (the students) prefer to use explanation strategy as their apology. The followings are the examples.

“I am sorry, Miss. **Yesterday I must go to the hospital to accompany my mother,** so I can’t submit the assignment. May I submit it now, please?”

Within acknowledge of responsibility strategy, offering repair sub strategy was most used by the respondents. The most prefer of its use is in situation 3 (24.1%) (breaking friend’s laptop). It might be inferred that the speaker prefer to choose an offering repair sub strategy as their apology when they damage the hearer’s possession. Besides, when the speakers made a mistake and other people found it, they also prefer to employ such sub strategy such as in situation 4 (23.9). Below are the examples.

“I am really sorry for breaking your laptop. I didn’t mean to drop it. **I will repair it before I return it.**”

“Oh, I am sorry. Please forgive me. **Let me correct your grade.**”

With regard to the other sub strategies (accepting the blame, expressing self deficiency, and expressing lack of intent), their use varies. The most frequent use of accepting the blame sub strategies is found in situation 4 (15.9%) when the speaker made a mistake and another found it. The following is the example:

“I am so sorry. **It was my fault.** Let me check your final exam and I will correct your final exam.”

Expressing self deficiency is most preferred with 23.1% in situation 2 (being

late to return a friend's book). This sub strategy has a direct link to the speaker's loss of face which results from presenting the speech act of apology (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Brown and Levinson, 1978) in (Thijittang, 2010). The speaker admits his own inadequacy (e.g. mismanagement of time) and failure of sensory perception (e.g. forgetfulness).

Expressing a lack of intent sub strategy was most used in situation 3 (11.3%) (breaking friend's laptop). By employing this sub strategy, the speaker stress that the offense is unintentional and it might decreases the severe of the offense. Meanwhile, recognizing H as deserving apology sub strategy is not found at all in all strategy. The followings are the examples of the use of expressing lack of intent sub strategy.

"I am so sorry. **I don't mean to break your laptop.** I promise I will repair your laptop."

"I am sorry, Sir. **I didn't mean it** because I am in hurry."

As for the use of a promise of forbearance sub strategy, the most frequently occurring strategy is in situation 2 (16.2%) (being late to return a friend's book) and in situation 6 (14.7%) (being late to submit the assignment to the lecturer). It might be assume that the use of such strategy is most used when the speaker is late in doing his / her obligation / duty.

In the case of the use of alerter strategy, the most frequently occurring of such strategy are in situation 5 with 22.9%

(the speaker stepped on one of the customer's foot) and in situation 6 with 19.6% (the speaker was late to submit the assignment to the lecturer). There are many forms of alerter found in the data: honorific, general noun, endearment, first name, and solidarity markers.

The honorific form is usually used when the speaker has lower social status and far or neutral social distance, such as the use of "Sir", "Boss", and "Miss". Below are the examples.

"I am sorry, **Sir.** I can't submit my assignment today because I have to accompany my mother in the hospital. I promise to submit it tomorrow."

"I am sorry, **Boss.** I forgot to remind you of the urgent meeting yesterday because I have a lot of things to do yesterday. It would never happen again."

"I am sorry, **Miss.** I was late to pick you up. I don't do it again."

However, general noun form is usually employed when the social distance between the speaker and the hearer is far or neutral, such as "Student", and "Class". The followings are the examples:

I am sorry, **My students.** I had mistakes in scoring your final exam.

Sorry, **Class.** I am very busy today so I can't grade your final exam. I can do it tomorrow.

Meanwhile, endearments, first name, and solidarity markers are often used when the speaker and the hearer have equal

social status and close social distance. They know each other well and intimately. The function of those markers is to show that they have close relationship and strengthen their relationship. Below are the examples of the use endearments.

"I am sorry, **Dear**. I was trapped in the traffic jam. I am really sorry for that. Lets order the food."

"**Honey**, I am so sorry for being late. I was trapped in the traffic jam. Please forgive me."

The followings are the examples of the use of "first name" as alerter strategy:

"I am sorry, **Rin**. Your laptop was dropped so it was broken. I will repair your laptop and then I will return it."

"Sorry, **Sisca**. I was trapped in the traffic jam, so I was late."

"**Tito**, I am sorry about your laptop. It was broken. I am sorry for that."

In addition, below are the examples of the use of solidarity markers as alerter strategy.

"I am sorry, **Friend**. Your laptop is broken. I promise that I will repair it later."

"**Friend**, I am sorry I come late because I was trapped in the traffic jam."

"I am sorry, **Friend**. I forgot to bring your book. I will return it to you next."

"I am really sorry for being late, **Guys**. I was trapped in the traffic jam for a long time."

"I am so sorry, **Dude**. I left it home. I will take it to your place tonight if you don't mind waiting, or do you want me to take it now?"

With regard to the use of intensifiers of apology, the speakers used the highest proportion of this strategy in situation 1 (14.5%) (The speaker forgot to remind the boss of the urgent meeting) and situation 3 (14.3%) (The speaker broke a friend's laptop). The intensifiers used are "really", "so", and "do".

"I am **really** sorry, because I am busy so I could not grade your final exam, and may be next week."

"I **do** apologize, Sir. I didn't see your foot there. I hope it does not bother you longer."

"Sir, I beg your apologize. I am **so** sorry I can't submit my assignment because I should accompany my mother in the hospital. Please give me a chance once more time to finish my assignment."

The Development of Realization of Apology Strategies

The students in each semester used different strategies in apologizing. In this case, the writer examined whether there are development of apology strategies from the students of 2nd semester until 8th semester. The table below presents the distribution of apology strategies in each situation in each semester:

Table 4 The distribution of apology strategies in each situation in each semester

Situation	2 nd semester	4 th semester	6 th semester	8 th semester
1	A2, A3, B, C1, C2, C5, E, F	A1, A2, A3, B, C1, C2, D, E, F	A2, B, C1, C2, C4, D, E, F	A1, A2, A3, B, C2, C5, D, E, F
2	A2, C2, D, E	A2, A3, B, C2, D, E, F	A2, B, C2, D, E, F	A1, A2, A3, B, C1, C2, D, E, F
3	A2, A3, C1, C5, E, F	A2, A3, C1, C4, C5, E, F	A1, A2, A3, C1, C4, C5, E, F	A2, A3, C1, C2, C4, C5, F
4	A2, C1, C5, E, F	A2, A3, C1, C2, C4, C5, E, F	A1, A2, C1, C5, E, F	A1, A2, A3, C1, C2, C5, E, F
5	A1, A2, C4, E, F	A2, B, C5, E, F	A1, A2, A3, B, C1, C4, E, F	A1, A2, A3, B, C4, E
6	A1, A2, A3, B, C5, D, E, F	A2, B, C5, D, E, F	A2, A3, B, C2, D, E, F	A1, A2, B, D, E, F
7	A2, A3, B, C2, C5, D, E, F	A2, B, C1, C2, D, E	A2, B, C1, C2, C5, E, F	A2, A3, B, C4, C5, E, F
8	A2, B, E	A2, A3, B, C5, E, F	A2, B, C4, D, E, F	A2, A3, B, C4, C5, E, F
9	A2, B, C5, D, E, F	A2, A3, B, C1, D, E, F	A2, B, C2, C4, D, F	A1, A2, A3, B, C5, D, E
10	A2, B, C2, C5, E, F	A2, B, C1, C2, C5, D, E, F	A2, A3, C1, C2, C5, D, E, F	A1, A2, A3, B, C1, C2, C5, F

The table above shows that the distribution of apology strategies among the students of 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th semesters is different. There is a development of apology strategies from the lowest to the highest semester students, but the development does not occur in every situation. The higher semester students employed more complex apology strategies than the lower students.

Pragmatic Transfer in Apology Strategies Used by the Students

As Kasper states in pragmatic transfer, she identifies two kinds of pragmatic transfer, pragmatolinguistic and socio-pragmatic transfer. Pragmatolinguistic transfer can

happen when the utterances produced by the second language (L2) speakers is systematically different from the ones that produced by the first language (L1) speakers. Or, if the strategies of producing the utterances from the L1 speakers are not applied insufficiently to the produced utterances from L2 speakers. While the socio-pragmatic transfer occurred by the effects of social conditions in language using. It contains many variables such as gender, social and relationship distance.

The following utterances that produced by the respondents can be some examples on how the pragmatic transfer interferes the strategy in expressing apology.

“Fika, if you are angry with me, it’s okay. I have traffic jam in the Ponolawen cross road. Thanks.”

“Ya Allah. I am so sorry for what I do. I hope your forgiveness to me. It’s so accidentally. I will effort to change your laptop.”

The apology expressions above are the examples of pragma-linguistic transfer. In the first example, the utterance is not appropriate as the apology expression. In this case, instead of asking apology to the hearer, the speaker had supposed that the hearer was angry with him first. It might make misunderstanding between them, and cause the hearer angry with the speaker. Meanwhile, in the second example, the speaker used inappropriate English apology expression. “*I hope your forgiveness to me*” is not used by English native speaker when they apologize to another people. It is appropriate if it is produced in *Bahasa Indonesia*.

Below are the examples showing that socio-pragmatic transfer occurred:

“**Ya Allah**. I am so sorry for what I do. I hope your forgiveness to me. It’s so accidentally. I will effort to change your laptop.”

“**Astaghfirullahal’adzim**... I forgot to say to you. I’m so sorry about it. I hope you can forgive my mistake.”

Those two utterances above especially the bold one shows the religiosity of the respondents. As we know that Indonesian people tend to be religious, and it often

appears in their utterances. The above utterances “*Ya Allah*” and “*Astaghfirullahal’adzim*” are identical with Islam and often produced by Moslem people in their daily conversation. The utterance “*Ya Allah*” is almost the same with “*Oh my God*”, while “*Astaghfirullahal’adzim*” is usually said when some one forget about something. However, the semantic meaning of “*astaghfirullahal’adzim*” is actually “asking for apology to God”, but many Indonesian people have used it in their daily conversation among people.

CONCLUSION

An explicit expression of apology, in particular, the strategy of expressing regret, is the most frequent apology strategy used. Alerter and explanation strategies are the other strategies which are used extensively. No other strategies are found for more than ten percent of the data. There is a development of the use of apology strategies among the students of English Department of 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 8th semesters. The higher semester students use more various explicit expressions and acknowledgement of responsibilities strategies than the lower semester students. Socio-pragmatic transfer is more dominant than pragma-linguistic transfer. Pragma-linguistic transfer is characterized by linguistic features changing from Indonesian language as L2 to English as L1. It is grammatically and semantically accepted but it has different meaning pragmatically, whereas, socio-pragmatic

transfer is characterized by socio-cultural changing from Indonesian to English, so culturally it is not accepted in the target language.

It is worth noted that the EFL/ESL students should be given many opportunities in expressing apology in many various situations, contexts, topics, and degrees of social offenses so that they are able to use apology expressions appropriately and naturally. In this case, the teachers can expose the students' apology expressions by focusing on oral and written production. Ideally, the teachers should be able to employ interesting, and potential activities in the classroom to explore students' interaction using many various speech act realization patterns including apology.

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