

# **APOLOGY SPEECH ACT STRATEGIES USED BY STUDENTS IN FACULTY OF LETTERS, DR. SOETOMO UNIVERSITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to present the phenomenon of apology strategy application by the highly proficient students of the English Department of the Faculty of Letters at Dr. Soetomo University. The purposes of the research are to identify the apology strategies applied by highly proficient students and to find out the types of apology speech acts done by those students. The theory used is the speech-act theory proposed by J.L. Austin. This research used a mixed-methods research design. Twenty students out of fifty-five were taken as the research sample. The data are collected by using questionnaires consisting of ten open-ended questions in the form of the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) proposed by Cohen. The research findings show that “an expression of apology (APOL)” formula was used by all the subjects in all situations, with variation in the number and type of strategies. RESP was the next most likely strategy to occur after APOLs in the sequence of apology. 55% of the research subjects chose to use REPR combined with other apology strategies. 65% of the research subjects used EXPL combined with other apology strategies. The strategy of multiple apologies became the most frequently used strategy. Most of the research subjects tended to use the indirect apology strategy. This tendency could be identified from the high frequency of multiple apology usage among the research subjects in the different situations given.

Keywords: Speech act, apology speech act, interlanguage pragmatics, second language learners.

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

English has gained widespread recognition as a dominant international language, holding significance within and beyond the domain of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). International entities, including the United Nations and ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), utilize

English for official or operational communication. The language has become prevalent in international academic and professional gatherings. Moreover, the advent of the internet and online communication has substantially expanded opportunities for English usage in global interactions. Matsuda (2012:1) highlights these points, emphasizing English's role as the primary means for facilitating international communication across various domains.

Based on Matsuda's perspective, the thesis writer assumes that possessing proficiency in English is crucial for anyone aiming to participate in the global arena. English proficiency serves as a gateway, granting individuals access to the global world. Without a command of the language, individuals may encounter challenges in competing with others at the global level. Friedman, as cited in McKay (2012:32), further emphasizes the significant role of English as an international language. He argues that in a global context, competent human resources can only reap economic rewards if they are proficient in English. India serves as an illustrative example, despite having limited natural resources, its economy has thrived due to the education of its elites in science, engineering, and medicine, leading to an abundance of English-speaking engineers in the country. This underlines the vital connection between English proficiency and economic success in a globalized world.

Based on the global era and the role of English in various fields, attention to the teaching and mastering of English cannot be ignored. English has become one of the mandatory subjects to teach at most levels of education in many countries around the world, including Indonesia. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language.

Saville and Troike (2006: 4) define a foreign language as "one not widely used in the learners immediate social context but which might be used for future travel or other cross-cultural communication situations or studied as a curricular requirement or elective in school". According to Stern (1983:16), foreign language learning is conducted for different purposes. It can be to travel abroad, to communicate with native speakers, to read foreign literature, or to read foreign scientific and technical work. He further states that formal instruction is needed in foreign language learning due to the lack of exposure in the learners environment.

In the context of the global era and the pivotal role of English in various fields, the significance of teaching and mastering English cannot be overstated. English has become a compulsory subject in education systems of many countries, including Indonesia, at various levels of learning. In Indonesia, English is categorized as a foreign language. Saville and Troike (2006:4) define a foreign language as one not extensively used in the learners' immediate social setting, but holds relevance for potential future travel, cross-cultural communication, or is studied as part of the curriculum or as an elective in school. Stern (1983:16) adds that foreign language learning serves diverse purposes, such as facilitating travel abroad, communicating with native speakers, reading foreign literature, or comprehending scientific and technical work in foreign languages. Formal instruction in foreign language learning becomes essential due to the limited exposure to the language within the learners' environment.

English has been a compulsory subject at all levels of education in Indonesia. Among many levels of education, higher education graduates are potential human resources who need to master English if they want to compete in

the global world because English is one of the main requirements for those who want to communicate globally.

Speech Act of Apologies is called for when there is some behaviour that violates social norms. When an action or utterance has resulted in the fact that one or more persons perceive themselves as offended, the culpable person(s) needs to apologize. We are dealing here, therefore, with two parties: an apologizer and an apology.

There are two ways that a speaker can express an apology, namely a direct apology and an indirect apology (Trosborg, 1995: 376). A direct apology is an explicit apology using one of the verbs signalling an apology. The verbs of direct apology are "apologize", "be sorry", "forgive", "excuse," fault," and "pardon." For example: "I'm sorry for leaving you" or "Pardon me for this incident".

Indirect apology means an implicit apology, or the absence of verbs signalling apology is replaced by words and sentences to represent apology, such as taking on responsibility or offering a repair. The examples are "The traffic was so bad," "I'll pay for the laundry," or "It won't happen again."

Performing an apology requires the speaker to employ some strategies. These strategies help the speaker make the apology effective and maintain a good relationship. These apology strategies can be expressed in simple or complex forms. Simple form means the speaker uses one strategy of apology. Meanwhile, complex form means the speaker uses more than one strategy of apology. The choice of a simple or complex form of apology depends on the severity of the mistake and offense.

The study aims to achieve two main objectives: firstly, to identify and elucidate the apology strategies utilized by highly proficient students majoring in the English Department at Dr. Soetomo University's Faculty of Letters; and secondly, to identify the specific type of apology speech act employed by these highly proficient students in their communicative interactions.



Based on the above table, the most commonly used strategy is multiple apologies. That strategy was used by 12 research subjects. It covered 60% of the sample. The second preferred strategy was another strategy. This means that the subjects used other strategies that do not belong to the apology strategies proposed by Cohen and Olstain. There were six subjects who chose to use other strategies. APOL and RESP were less popular among the research subjects. There were two subjects who chose each of those strategies.

## 2. Situation 2

Table 4. 2 Frequency of apology strategy by situation

NO	SITUATION	APOLOGY STRATEGY	SUBJECTS	
			N	%
2	Forgetting a meeting with your professor	Expression of apology (APOL)	1	5
		Acknowledgement of responsibility (RESP)		
		Offer of repair (REPR)		
		Promise of forbearance (FORB)		
		Multiple apologies <b>APOL+RESP+FORB</b> <b>APOL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>APOL+EXPL+REPR</b> <b>APOL+REPS+FORB</b> <b>APOL+REPS+FORB</b> <b>APOL+REPS+REPR</b> <b>APOL+REPS+REPR</b> <b>APOL+REPS+REPR</b> <b>APOL+REPS</b> <b>APOL+REPS+ EXPL</b> <b>APOL+REPS+REPR</b> <b>APOL+EXPL</b> <b>APOL+REPS</b> <b>APOL+EXPL</b> <b>APOL+RESP+ EXPL</b> <b>APOL+RESP+REQUEST</b> <b>APOL+RESP+REQUEST</b> <b>APOL+EXPL</b> <b>APOL+RESP+FORBE+FORB</b>	19	95
		Other		
	Total		20	100

As can be seen in Table 4.2, most of the subjects chose to use multiple strategies in response to Situation 2. The strategy was chosen by 19 subjects. It means 95% of the subjects chose to use multiple strategies. There was only one subject using the APOL strategy.

### 3.Situation 3

Table 4. 3 Frequency of apology strategy by situation

NO	SITUATION	APOLOGY STRATEGY	SUBJECTS	
			N	%
3	Being late to come to a study group	Expression of apology (APOL)		
		Acknowledgement of responsibility (RESP)		
		Offer of repair (REPR)		
		Promise of forbearance (FORB)		
		Multiple-apologies <b>RESP+REPR+ REQUEST</b> <b>APOL+EXPL</b> <b>APOL+RESP+QUESTIONING</b> <b>APOL+EXPL+RESP</b> <b>APOL+RESP</b> <b>APOL+RESP</b> <b>APOL+RESP+EXPL+REQUEST</b> <b>APOL+REQUEST</b> <b>APOL+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>APOL+RESP</b> <b>APOL+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>APOL+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b> <b>IFID+RESP</b>  <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP</b> <b>IFID+REQUEST</b> <b>IFID+RESP</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b>	20	100
		Other		100
			20	

In response to situation 3, 100% of the subjects preferred to use multiple strategies. This strategy was used by all research subjects.

#### 4. Situation 4

Table 4. 4 Frequency of apology strategy by situation

NO	SITUATION	APOLOGY STRATEGY	SUBJECTS	
			N	%
1	Forgetting to take your best friend shopping	Expression of apology (APOL)	3	15
		Acknowledgement of responsibility (RESP)		
		Offer of repair (REPR)		
		Promise of forbearance (FORB)		
		Multiple-apologies <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP+QUESTION</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+RESP+REPR</b> <b>IFID+EXPL+HEALTH</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b> <b>IFID+EXPL</b>	17	85
		Other		
			20	100

Table 4.4 shows that 88% of the subjects used multiple apologies as a response to situation 4. It means that 17 subjects used multiple apologies. The second most frequently used strategy was expression of apology (APOL). There were three subjects who chose to use APOL as their apology strategy.



## CONCLUSION

Based on the data, the most frequent apology strategy used by the research subject is multiple strategies. It means that most of the research subjects have already demonstrated good pragmatic competence. The use of multiple strategies also indicates that most of the research subjects used the indirect apology strategy.

As with almost every study in the field of language and pragmatics, the current study suffers from limitations. First of all, while practical, the choice of data collection method as DCT has shortcomings, such as the fact that, since it is a written response, the responses might somehow be different from natural responses. Also, situations require research subjects to put themselves in scenarios that they might not be familiar with. The other limitation of the study is the participant demography. The researchers has to acknowledge the biggest limitation of this study: a rather small population of participants, through which it is hardly possible to make any comparative studies.

Despite the limitations of the study, it can be stated that the results might benefit society to a great extent in understanding apology speeches. The study remains limited to certain aspects of apologies and cross-cultural pragmatics. Further research studying the phenomenon at a deeper level can be very beneficial for a better understanding. Also, variables such as social class, gender, and diversity can be other potential research areas for further studies. Also, each apology strategy can be studied individually, and learners' performances can be investigated over a longer period of time.

The last finding was about the different patterns shown by participants to assess the high intensity of regret. Most participants initiated their social awareness, care, and responsibility by offering a solution or a repair. They did not express their high intensity of regret just by saying "So sorry", "I do apologize", "I am terribly sorry", and so on. They claimed that to offer a repair, a solution, and help was to include a high intensity of regret.

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