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## Investigating apology strategy among Kurdish bilinguals: A case study in Ilam

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### Abstract

The present study aimed at exploring and describing apology strategies among Kurdish bilinguals in Ilam, Iran. It attempts to systematize the various strategies used for the purpose of apologizing from the pragmatic point of view. The current study involves 80 subjects of Kurdish bilinguals in Ilam, consisting of 40 male and 40 female subjects. The subjects were chosen randomly to participate in this study. The data of this study was collected through a controlled elicitation method based on a questionnaire which is a modified version of ‘Discourse Compilation Test’. Descriptive and inferential statistical such as T-Test have been used to show the meaningfulness of the relationship between education of respondents and their apology strategies. The prime finding of this study revealed that there is a meaningful relationship between education and apology strategies used by Ilami people. The results indicated that respondents have frequent tendency toward using “explanation”, “taking responsibility” and “offer of repair” strategies. So, they do not have much inclination toward intensification and concern for the hearer. EFL learners and teachers can be benefited from the findings of this pragmatic study.

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### 1. Introduction

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

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fundamental speech act which is a part of human communication occurs in every culture to maintain good relations between interlocutors.

Olshtain (1985) defines an apology as "a speech act which is intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially affected by violation". When one offers an apology, one shows willingness to humiliate oneself to an extent that makes an apology a face-saving act for the hearer and a face-threatening act for the speaker. Apologies fall under expressive speech acts in which speakers attempt to indicate their attitude. In order for an apology to have an effect, it should reflect true feelings. One cannot effectively apologize to another and truly reach him/her unless one portrays honest feelings of sorrow and regret for whatever one has done (Goode and Jacobs, 2000).

Goode and Jacobs (2000) pointed out that the proper apology acknowledges the fact of wrong doing, accepts ultimate responsibility, expresses sincere sorrow and regret, and promises not to repeat the offense... some of the features of the proper apology are the admission of trespass, the implied acknowledgment of responsibility, and expression of regret, and a promise of a future in which injury will not recur. An important aspect in resolving a conflict is the fact that it takes two parties to start an interpersonal conflict and two parties to resolve it (Takaku et al, 2001). If the wrong doer decides to apologize and the offended person does not allow him/her to defend his/her position, the apology will be useless. If the offended waits for an apology and the wrong doer does not think. Takaku et al (2001) believe that an apology must have so-called three R's: regret, responsibility, and remedy, all of which a wrong doer must show for the offended to take his/her apology as sincere.

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

The apology strategies which are conducted by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Trosberg, 1988 can be categorized as follows:

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

**An explanation or account:** Is an expression that gives an account of the cause of the offense. In other words, the speaker explains why violation or damage happened. Both explicit and implicit explanations have been considered.

**An acknowledgement of responsibility:** This term refers to expression in which the apologizer admits to having responsibility for the offense. The respondent explicitly takes responsibility for the offense, such as accepting the blame, regretting, committing, the apology, indicating lack of intent and for admitting the offense. Taking on responsibility is the most explicit, most direct and strongest apology strategy.

**An offer of repair:** S may attempt to repair or pay for damage caused by the offense. An offer of repair is usually expressed explicitly. While expressing an offer of repair is usually associated with the future time, expressing that show the repair has already been done.

**Promise for forbearance:** In certain situations, the speaker may promise not to repeat the offense in the future. While in most studies of apologies, promise of forbearance is a separate category. In Bergman and Kasper (1993) it is classified alongside 'concern for the hearer' as verbal redress. Promise of forbearance is a clear confession being responsible for the offense and performing it damages S's positive face wants, while concern for the hearer does not necessarily imply any sense of responsibility and carries no risk of damage to S's face.

**Intensification:** Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) treated intensifications as an element within an apology strategy and not a separate strategy. However, the force of apology depends not only on the choice of an apology strategy but also on the number and type of strategies used in an apology that consist of an IFID only (I am sorry) does not have the apologetic power of another that contains an IFID and an intensification maker (I'm deeply sorry). Alongside the use of adverbials (e.g. very) with the IFID and the repetition of the IFID, Blum- Kulka and Olshtain (1984)

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