Apology strategies used by Sudanese EFL learners

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ABSTRACT:
Many studies have focused on linguistic politeness mainly apology Most of them were conducted on ESL learners and few of them on EFL learners mainly in the Middle East and the Sudan.

This study is an attempt to bridge the gap on this area of study and to outline the most commonly used apology strategies by Sudanese EFL learners.

Multiple Choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) is used as a tool for collecting data, where the test taker is required to choose the correct response (the key) from several given options. The stem and distractors include fifteen different scenarios and six alternatives. Sixty informants have been randomly selected from 2015-016 ,4th and 3rd year English language students at Education College at Sudan university of Science and Technology .To be more representative, the data was analyzed using the SPSS software. After analyzing the data the researcher has found out that most of the Sudanese EFL learners use apology strategies. Most of the Sudanese EFL learners prefer to use offer of repair as an apology strategy. More studies could be done to find out why do Sudanese EFL learners prefer to use (an offer of repair) as an apology strategy.

Key words: Linguistic Politeness, Apology, Apology strategies.

المستخلص:

هنالك دراسات عدة ركزت على دراسه التهذيب اللغوى. أغلبيتها فى اللغه الانجليزيه كلغه ثانيه وقليل منها فى اللغه الانجليزيه كلغه اجنبيه وتحديدا فى الشرق الاوسط و فى السودان. لذلك هذه الدراسه هى محاوله لسد النقص فى هذا المجال ولتوضيح أكثر الطرق المستخدمه للاعتذار فى أوساط طلاب اللغه الانجليزيه كلغه اجنبيه فى السودان. استخدم الدارس طريقة الاختبار متعدد الاجابات كوسيله لجمع المعلومات . يحتوى الاختبار على سيناريوهات بحيث يطلب من الطالب اختيار الاستجابه المناسبه لكل سيناريو. يحتوى الاختبار على خمسة عشر سيناريو مختلف وستة خيارات. قام الباحث باختيار 60 طالبا عشوائيا من طلاب السنه الرابعه والثالثه للعام الدراسى 2015– 2016 بكلية التربيه بجامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج الحزم الاحصائيه (وقد وجد الباحث أن أغلبية طلاب اللغه الانجليزيه كلغه اجنبيه بجامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا – كلية التربيه, يستخدمون أساليب الاعتذار المختلفه. و معظم الطلاب يستخدمون طريقة (عرض التعويض) للاعتذار. وينصح الباحث باجراء دراسات أكثر لمعرفة لماذا يفضل الطلاب السودانيين استخدام أسلوب (عرض تعويض) كطريقه للاعتذار.

كلمات مفتاحيه: *التهذيب اللغوى,الاعتذار ,اساليب الاعتذار.*

INTRODUCTION:

Few studies were done in the area of speech acts and mainly apology in The Sudan. As a Sudanese teacher of English the researcher feels the need for such study in order to bridge the gap as well as reflect real classroom language there. As a native speaker of Arabic (Sudanese dialect) the researcher realizes the influence of L1 on English language teaching and learning which is

considered as a foreign language in the Sudan. That is why the researcher decided to do this study. This paper is part of a thesis on "A Corpus-based study on Linguistic Politeness (Apology) in Sudanese EFL Spoken Discourse at Sudan University of Science and Technology, Education College, English language Department, 4ᵗʰ and 3ʳᵈ year. *A thesis Submitted For the fulfillment of PH.D in Applied Linguistics.*)

1- Pragmatics:

Pragmatics as an area of research is bound up with its link to meaning in context. According to Crystal it is the study of language from the point view of users specifically of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.

This definition accommodates not only speech acts but also the social context of discourse in its many different manifestations e.g. power and politeness, use of metaphor and irony and so on |It also focuses on the user and the intended meaning but all with in a social context. To use Leech's term, it focuses on how writers and speakers, as social actors, both get things done with language and | (attend to their interpersonal relationships with other participants. *(Anne O'Keeffe, et.al.2011, page 18)*

2- Apology Speech Acts

Speech Act Theory aims to explain language exchange in terms of the effects on listeners and speakers. Austin (1962) first suggested speech act theory by claiming that constatives and performatives are the two main acts of speech. Constatives are statements that

can be judged in terms of truth. Constatives in that sense are statements that do not cause actions.

On the other hand, performatives are statements that can be evaluated in terms of felicity, or in terms of their actions. These two types of acts of speech are the basis of the language classification that led to a deeper analysis of the language. Searle (1969) had a systematic approach and classified speech acts under five main categories:

Assertive, directives, commisive, expressives, and declarations. The explanation below was adopted from Verschueren (1999).

2-1 Speech Act Definition

1- Assertive:

Expressing a belief, committing the speaker to truth of what is asserted .E.g. Statements:

We watched a movie yesterday.

2- Directive**:** Expressing a wish, making an attempt to get to hearer to do something.

E.g. requests: Bring me some hot water.

3- Commisives: Expressing an intention, commitment for the speaker to engage in a future action.

E.g. Promises, offers: I promise, I will complete the work by tomorrow.

4- Expressive: Expressing a variety of psychological states.

E.g. Apologies: I am sorry for my disrespectful behavior.

5- Declarations Bring about a change via words. E.g. baptizing, declaring war, abdicating: Hereby I pronounce you husband and wife.

Under the category of expressive, apology speech acts hold an important place in human communication as a face saving act of speech. Thus it is crucial for people to understand what an

apology is and how it functions. An act of apology can be considered a remedial act of speech, which means that the speaker is trying to save his or her face because of an action. Cohen & Olshtain (1983) explains apologies as a speech act occurring between two participants in which one of the participants expects or perceives oneself deserving a compensation or explanation because of an offense committed by the other. In that situation, one participant has a choice to apologize or deny the responsibility or the severity of the action. Thus, an apology in that sense plays a role as a politeness strategy. Apology speech strategies are classified by the seminal work of Cohen & Olshtain (1983), which has been mainly used by other researchers as formulaic expressions which are also can be referred as direct apologies, or indirect apologies which include an explanation or account, acknowledgement of responsibility, offer of repair, promise of forbearance. The apologies might be modified by using a combination of apology strategies together or with intensifiers such as adverbs to intensify the apology, or they might be modified to decrease the responsibility of the offender. "Mehmet Aydin, 2013, page 9"

2-2 Apology:

Apology studies have attracted many EFL researchers. They analyzed apology as a speech act in the context of EFL or ESL with the focus on EFL speakers' production and perception of apology. Many studies have focused on apology from a linguistic point of view describing the ways native speakers use this speech act. The main aim of the present study is to investigate apology strategies used by the Sudanese EFL learners in spoken discourse. Using a corpus data gathered from language in use.

An apology is used to repair a broken behavioral norm. The person apologize when someone feels offended by his/her utterance. Apology aims at strengthen and enhancing personal and interpersonal relationships. According to Olshtain (1983) when an action or utterance result in the fact that one or more persons perceive themselves as offended, the culpable party(s) needs to apologize. Apologizing is polite speech act used to restore social relations following an offence. Searle (1976) further emphasizes that both parties must recognize the offense and the need for repair. *"GUSZTAV DEMETER ,2011 "*Holmes (1995) asserts apology as a speech act directed to the addressee's face needs and intended to resolve an offence for which the speaker takes responsibility, and to restore balance between speaker and addressee.

Leech (1983:104) cited in Trosborg (1995:373) defined the act of apologizing is a convivial speech act, the goal of which coincides with the social goal of maintaining harmony between speaker and hearer.

In addition, Marquez-reiter (2004) declares an apology as a compensatory action for an offense committed by the speaker which has affected the hearer.

An apology serves compensatory action to an offence which the guilty person admits guilt to what he has done and asks for the speaker's forgiveness. As stated by Searle (1979) cited in Olshtain (1983), a person who apologizes for doing something wrong expresses regret for doing that. The apology act will occur only if the speaker believes that the wrong act has been performed prior to the time of speaking and that the act

resulted in an infraction which affected another person who deserves an apology. (Juhana, 2011, page 3)

An apology according to Holmes (1995) is a speech act that is intended to remedy the offense for which the apologizer takes responsibility and, as a result, to rebalance social relations between interlocutors. Another explanation of the nature of apology is given by Fraser (1981) who argues that apologizing is at least taking responsibility for the violation and expressing regret for the offense committed.

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) perceive apology as a social event when they point out that it is performed when social norms are violated. Bergman and Kasper (1993) emphasize this view as they see that the purpose of apology is to restore social relational agreement after the offense is committed.

Such forms are more conventional – used more often than for the loss. Moreover sometime he/she shows his/her determination to be careful in future. Though all such apology strategies affect the speaker's positive face want but some are considered more dangerous than the others. IFIDs and EXPL moves are labeled as less dangerous while the other three moves (RESP, REPR, FORB) are taken as more dangerous for speaker's positive face want. Moreover IFIDs are the formulaic form of apology and rest of four are non-formulaic forms of apology.

2-3 Measuring apology strategies:

There are different measures to measure these apology strategies. These measures mostly depend upon the speaker, the addressee or both. They are:

1- The social distance,

2- sex,

3- power,

4- social status,

5- age

6- Situation. *"Aamir Majeed and Dr. Fauzia Janjua, , 2014,page7"*

2-4 Categorizing Apologetic Strategies

An apology should have the three R's: Regret,Responsibility and Remedy.According to Engel(2001) with out one of those ,the apology will not be sincere,and thus,it will have no result. The wrongdoer should porytay the three aspects in order for the victim to take his apology into consideration.

The speech act of apology consists of the following components ,listed in a descending order of importance from the most to the least expected:

1- An expression of apology ,in which the wrongdoer vocalize his feelings of regret.

2- An expression of the situation ,in which the wrongdoer tries to reconstruct the incident for the victim to make him see he deserves forgiveness.

3- Acknowledgement of responsibilty ,whereby the wrongdoer claims his responsibilty for what has happened as a part of his apology.

4- An offer of repair in which the wrongdoer tries to present a way to undo the harm , and

5- A promise of nonrecurrence ,whereby the wronddoer promises not to repeat the offense and thus insure gaining the victim's sympathy for his awkward position.

Despite the fact that Brown and Attrado(2000) stress the need for the five component to take place in order for an act to be considered an apology,this is not always the case since the word "sorry" could suffice as an apology if a

person is apologizing to a close friend. In such a case, the wrongdoer has only used the first component from the above list and done with out the other four.

Two of the constituent components of righting wrongs are confession and comensation. The important issue is how a perpetrator shows he is sorry, or as Rajan (2000) puts it ,"The question is not , are we sorry ? The question is, what lessons have we learned? The question is , what are we going to do now that we are sorry?".

Fraser (1980) declared that apologies are rule-governed. The offender manages to correct his complainable behavior by uttering "I'm really sorry" for example. The offended person may either admit the apology or repudiate it. The denial or acceptance of excuse may involve a set of strategies. If you apologize, you are respected and answered; if you are apologized, the rule states that you respond politely. In that case, you will be reverenced. The ability to interpret, give and respond to apologizing appropriately is a social skill which can add greatly to the language learners opportunities to enter into friendly relationship with native speakers and incidentally gain needed practice in using the target language.*"Eslami-Rasekh & Mehdi Mardani, , 2010, Page 96".*

2-5 Types of apology strategies:

Aijmer (1996) investigated the use of apologies in the London-Lund Corpus. He divided apology strategies into two types:

1- The retrospective apology is used to apologize for offenses that already occurred; whereas,

2- Anticipatory apologies are used to anticipate an offense, such as in "I'm sorry, but I'm unable to keep this appointment.

However, there are a number of apology strategies that were common in most of these studies. Table 1 shows the most commonly used strategies sampled in previous studies and provides examples for each of them.

2-6 Apology Strategies

The model of apology strategies most frequently used in pragmatic research is based on Olshtain and Cohen (1983). This model suggests six super strategies with some division into substrategies:

(1) Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs):

a) Expression of regret, example: I'm sorry.

b) Offer of apology, example: I apologize.

c) Request for forgiveness, example: excuse melpardon me/forgive me.

(2) Explanation or account. Any external mitigating circumstances, "objective reasons" for the violation, example: The traffic was terrible.

(3) Taking on responsibility:

a) Explicit self-blame, example: It's my fault.

b) Lack of intent, example: didn't mean it.

c) Expression of self-deficiency, example: I was confused/1 didn't see you.

d) Expression of embarrassment, example: I feel awful about it.

e) Self-dispraise, example: I'm such a dimwit.

f) Justifying the hearer, example: You've right to be angry.

g) Refusal to acknowledge guilt or denial, example: It wasn't my fault. Blame the hearer, example: it's your own fault.

(4) Concern for the hearer, example: I hope I didn't upset you.

(5) Offer of repair, example: I'll pay for the damage.

(6) Promise of forbearance, example: It won't happen again.

Other models, largely based on the above have been constructed by Fraser (1981: 263) with nine strategies, and Aijmer (1996: 83) with thirteen strategies. Olshtain and Cohen's model, however, has been successfully tested (Ohlstain 1989, Suszczyfiska 1999), and according to the results obtained, speakers of various languages resort to a limited number of strategies when apologizing, all of which can be categorized into the above six superstrategies.

Moreover, apologies can be made up of combinations of strategies by means of adding an extra conversational move. In Present-day English (LLC), Aijmer (1996: 94-5) found five strategies where sorry was used (Aijmer's strategies do not correspond exactly to Olshtain and

Cohen's and her fifth strategy is what she calls 'reinforcing' or 'gushing,' eg Oh God). "MATTIAS JACOBSSON,ND,page 195"

The taxonomy that has probably been used by most studies on apologies was the one proposed by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum- Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

This taxonomy includes the following strategies:

1- Using an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) such as "I'm sorry;"

2- Taking on responsibility (e.g. "You know me, I'm never on time"),

3- Giving explanation or account of what happened (e.g. "The bus was late"),

4- Offering to repair the offending act (e.g. "I'll pay for the damage"),

5- Promising forbearance (e.g. "This won't happen again").

Table 1: **Basic Apology Strategies Used in Studies on Apologies**

Strategy	Examples
Avoiding or postponing an apology	'I want to be always the same! As you know me.
Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)	'I'm sorry!'; 'I apologize!'
Intensified IFID	'I'm so sorry!'; 'I am very, very sorry!'; 'Sorry, sorry, sorry!'
Providing a justification	'I forgot at what time the wedding was and… I was fishing.
Acknowledgment of responsibility	'I know I am late
Offer of repair	'I promise I'll buy another set of plates.'
Blaming someone else or denying of responsibility	'The traffic was terrible.
Promise of non-recurrence	''I promise you this will never happen again.'

The last issue that needs to be discussed insofar as the findings of studies on apologies are concerned is the similarities and differences of findings reported in different languages. Most studies on languages other than English have shown that the choices of apology strategies are culture specific. Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) have shown that critical cultural variables determine the speakers' choice of apologies, such as the fact that Japanese speakers used more direct apologies, while American speakers tend to be less direct. For example, according to Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990) Japanese speakers used explicit apologies such as "I am very sorry;" whereas, the American speakers preferred not to use explicit apologies but rather provide an explanation.

Moreover, studies on Japanese have also reported apology strategies specific to this culture, such as a "feel-good" apology, reported by Kotani (1999), acting helpless, leaving or resigning, and even committing suicide, reported by Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990), strategies we have already discussed in 2.1.2. Japanese is not the only language for which language or culture specific apology strategies have been reported. Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) reported that in the case of German, the category IFID has a weak and strong form. For example, IFIDs that are truly sincere, are considered strong IFIDs, and are expressed with intensifiers or verbs expressing regret. Weak IFIDs are considered the ones merely expressing sympathy on the part of the speaker. Márquez-Reiter (2000), reported that intensified illocutionary indicating devices exist in most apologies in English, but that they are considered inappropriate in the case of Uruguayans.

In Sudanese Arabic, speakers have been found to avoid strategies such as taking on responsibility, intensifying IFIDs, or promising forbearance for fear of losing face, preferring the more neutral category of IFID (Nureddeen, 2008). Suszczynska (1999) also found that there are differences across the three languages she investigated, namely English, Hungarian, and Polish. For example, English speakers preferred to use IFIDs containing "I'm sorry" and "excuse me," while with the Hungarian apologies there was a high percentage of assuming responsibility, which was the most often used strategy after the IFID. As far as Polish apologies are concerned, 85% of the respondents used the Polish expression equivalent to "I'm sorry," which was always intensified. Language specific findings have also been reported in Persian. The IFIDs were almost always used combined with a request for forgiveness (Shariati & Chamani, 2010). The existence of such differences in the use of apologies across languages suggests that there is a need to investigate how apologies are used in different languages, especially in those languages that have not been studied yet. "GUSZTAV DEMETER ,2011, ,page28"

Most studies have focused on the realization patterns of apologies. The ability to apologize in an appropriate way, however, has not been fully investigated. Apologetic behavior is of obvious significance in social life since avoiding impingement on other individuals' freedom of action is almost impossible, hence the possibility of committing wrong actions towards others and therefore the necessity of mastering polite apologetic behavior. Therefore, EFL learners are required to

acquire this aspect of the social life with considerable effort to achieve successful communication. "Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'da *,Mohammad Mohammad,, 2014,page 9"

After reviewing apology research, the researcher can give the following summary for apology strategies:

1- Holmes (1990), delimited subcategories for the explicit expression of apology strategy, namely offer apology/IFID (e.g. "I apologize"):

a- Express regret (e.g. "I'm afraid"),

b- Request forgiveness (e.g. "forgive me").

2-Taking on responsibility (e.g. "You know me, I'm never on time"),:

a- Accept blame (e.g. "It was my fault"),

b-Express self-deficiency (e.g. "I was confused"),

c- Recognize the hearer as entitled to an apology (e.g. "You're right"),

d- Express lack of intent (e.g. "I didn't mean to"), and

e- Offer repair/redress (e.g. "We'll replace it for you")

3-Giving explanation or account of what happened (e.g. "The bus was late")

4-Offering to repair the offending act (e.g. "I'll pay for the damage"),

5-Promising forbearance (e.g. "This won't happen again").

*Olshtain and Cohen (1983) suggeste*d:

6- A denial of the need to apologize (e.g. "There was no need for you to get insulted") and

7- A denial of responsibility (e.g. "It wasn't my fault").

Bergman and Kasper (1993) added:

8- An intensified IFID containing an intensifier for the speech act verb (e.g. "I'm terribly sorry"),

9- Minimizing the effects and severity of the action (e.g. "I'm only 10 minutes late"), and

10- Verbal redress (e.g. "It won't happen again").

Radical strategies were suggested by Trosborg (1995):

11- Blaming someone else,

12- Attacking the complainer, and even

13- Not accepting that an apology is necessary.

Studies on languages other than English have added:

14- A "feel-good" apology (Kotani, 1999),

15- Acting helpless, leaving or resigning, and even

16- Committing suicide (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990)

Ruzait & Čubajevait (2007):

17- Tentative apologies: This seems to be a characteristic of business communication

e.g: "I should perhaps apologize on behalf of the hotel for the temperature in the room this morning" "the researcher "

3-The objective of the study: This study has two objectives:

The first objective of this study is to find out whether Sudanese EFL learners use different apology strategies or not .

The second is to point out the most commonly apology strategies used by Sudanese EFL learners' in spoken discourse.

4-The main hypothesis:

The researcher has two hypothesis:

The first is that the Sudanese EFL learners use different apology strategies in different situations the second is that The Sudanese EFL learners commonly use Avoiding or postponing as an strategy.

5-Materials and Methods:

The main question to be answered in this paper is What are the apology strategies commonly used by Sudanese EFL learners' in spoken discourse?

The researcher hypothesize that Sudanese EFL learners commonly use Avoiding or postponing an apology as an apology strategy.

To answer the question mentioned above and approve the hypothesis a multiple choice discourse completion test (MDCT) is designed and distributed to 60 candidates who are Sudanese EFL students at Sudan University of Science and Technology, College of education 30 students from 3rd and 30 from 4th year. Advantages of this method: are well-known.

1- ease of use, and as Beebe and Cummings (1985) conclude,

2- The researcher's ability to collect a very large corpus of data, on a wide range of difficult-to-observe speech behaviors, in a short period of time.
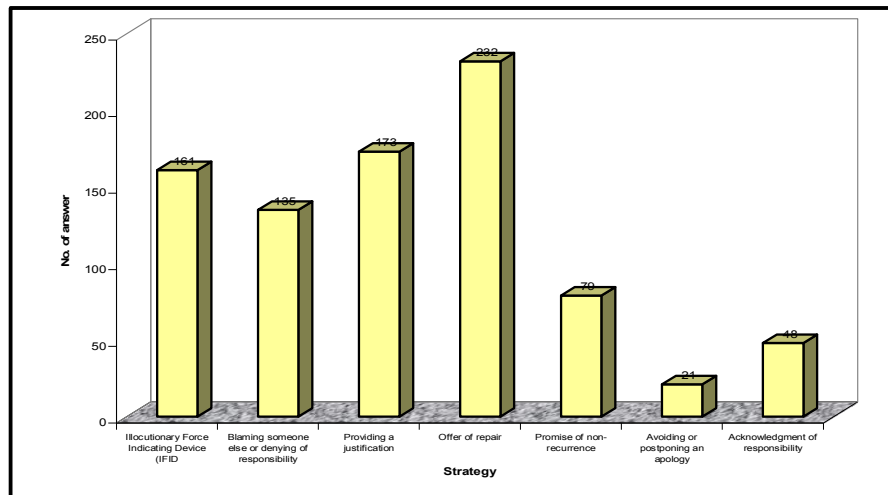
3- More importantly, they note, data elicited with this instrument are consistent with naturally occurring data, at least in the main pattern and formulas. ''Varghese et.al, Spr 1996, v12 n1p39-58''.

The test was analyzed using SPSS computer program.

5-1 The tool of the study:

The researcher designed a multiple choice completion test. It contains two sections. The first is personal information including age and gender and the second section is fifteen scenarios which reflect real life situations inside and outside the Sudanese EFL classroom.

5-2 The result of the study:

Total frequency distribution for the respondents' answers of the multiple choice discourse completion test(MDCT)in table No 1:

Answer	Number	Percent
Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID	161	19.0
Blaming someone else or denying of responsibility	135	15.9
Providing a justification	173	20.4
Offer of repair	232	27.3
Promise of non-recurrence	79	9.3
Avoiding or postponing an apology	21	2.5
Acknowledgment of responsibility	48	5.7
Total	849	100.0

As shown in table above, when counting the candidates answers for the 15 scenarios given, most of the candidates' answers (232) (27.3%) use offer of repair as an apology strategy.

6- **Results**:

This paper aims at finding out the most commonly used apology strategy used by the Sudanese EFL learners. After analyzing the data, the researcher has reached to the following findings:

1- The Sudanese EFL learners use different apology strategies in their spoken discourse.

2- The Sudanese EFL learners use "an offer of repair" as an apology strategy.

This answers the main question of the study whether the Sudanese EFL learners use direct Apology strategies or not and the other question of what is/are the apology strategy/ies commonly used by Sudanese EFL learners' in spoken discourse?

7- **Recommendations**

Further studies could be done on the area of pragmatics, mainly apology strategies to find out why do most of the Sudanese EFL learners use offer of repair as an apology strategy.

The Sudanese EFL learners should be exposed to everyday English in order to learn the language properly. The Study of Pragmatics should be included in the Sudanese EFL curriculum.

Conclusion

The main goal of this paper is to find out whether the Sudanese EFL learners use different apology strategies or not and to point out the most commonly used apology strategy used by the Sudanese EFL learners.

The researcher can conclude that The Sudanese EFL learners use different apology strategies and that most of them commonly use "an offer of repair" as an apology strategy.

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