REVEIW ARTICLE

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF APOLOGY SPEECH ACTS BETWEEN MALAYSIAN AND IRAQI UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Ayat Shakir Jawad, Saif Barazan Nteshwn and Hazim Eadan Salim Abu Alhour Al-Finooni

[1,2]Basra University for Oil and Gas, College of oil and Gas Engineering
[3]Basra University for Oil and Gas, College of Industrial management for oil and gas

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The Apology Strategies of Malaysian and Iraqi undergraduate students represent an investigation of cultural norms which affect spoken Apology Speech Acts. The study evaluated apology methods used between Malaysian and Iraqi students while studying the effects of collectivism and hierarchy on these techniques. The research included 120 participants sorted into equal groups of 60 students from Malaysia and Iraq ranging in age from 18 to 23 who studied different academic subjects. Data collection used Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), surveys, semi-structured interviews, followed by combined quantitative and qualitative analysis of these data. The study produced substantial variations between the chosen apology methods of both populations. The majority of Malaysian research participants (58.33%) deployed indirect apologetic approaches that incorporated both social harmony markers and hedging techniques due to their collectivist and harmonious cultural values. The Iraqi student participants showed preference toward directness (63.33%) as well as formal language methods that explicitly expressed responsibility, in accordance with their society's hierarchical structure. The research demonstrated Malaysian students worked to protect their group harmony yet Iraqi students emphasized individual performance combined with proper respect to authority figures. The research results affect both intercultural communication practices as well as second-language acquisition methods. Language education professionals benefit from cultural enlightenment about apology strategies to create training materials and educational curricula. The findings gather from this study help people from different cultures understand each other better while reducing communication errors between people of different backgrounds. The research adds knowledge to cross-cultural pragmatics through its exploration of cultural forces that direct language strategies in apology situations.

INTRODUCTION

Apology speech acts are crucial in human communication, serving as vehicles for expressing regret and seeking forgiveness. These acts are essential for resolving interpersonal conflicts and are deeply embedded in cultural and social contexts. In pragmatics, apologies are recognized as expressive and commissive acts that allow individuals to acknowledge their wrongdoings, express remorse, and seek pardon. They play a vital role in maintaining social relationships, reinforcing politeness norms, and mediating social harmony. Apologies are not merely linguistic constructs but are influenced by contextual cues, power dynamics, and cultural values. Apologies generally involve expressions of remorse, justifications, and promises to make amends. According to Searle (1969), apologies are commissive speech acts, involving a commitment to future corrective actions. Brown and Levinson (1987) classify apologies as face-threatening acts, as they can damage the social image of either the speaker or the listener. Successful apologies balance sincerity with face preservation, often relying on strategies like hedging, indirectness, and politeness markers. The degree of directness in an apology depends on relationship dynamics, power differences, and cultural norms. While directness may be seen as sincere in some cultures, it could be perceived as disrespectful in others, necessitating more subtle approaches.

Cultural expectations also shape apology behaviors. High-context cultures prioritize non-verbal cues and implicit communication, while low-context cultures favor explicit verbal acknowledgment. In collectivist cultures, like many in Asia, maintaining group harmony is central, and apologies tend to be indirect, reinforcing social bonds. In contrast, individualistic cultures emphasize personal accountability, with more direct apologies. In hierarchical societies, such as those in the Middle East and parts of Asia, the social status of the interlocutors influences the formality and structure of apologies, with subordinates offering formal apologies to superiors. Despite the importance of apology acts in

maintaining social harmony, there is a significant gap in research comparing apology strategies across cultures, particularly among young adults in higher education. This study aims to fill this gap by comparing the apology strategies of Malaysian and Iraqi undergraduate students, representing two distinct cultural paradigms—Malaysian collectivism and Iraqi hierarchy. It explores how cultural norms shape apology behaviors and how linguistic forms and cultural frameworks influence communication in cross-cultural contexts.

Research Objectives

The study investigates the apology strategies of Malaysian and Iraqi undergraduate students, focusing on how cultural frameworks shape their expression of regret. It explores how Malaysian students, influenced by collectivism, use indirect language, politeness markers, and mitigating expressions to preserve social harmony. In contrast, Iraqi students, rooted in a hierarchical culture, adopt direct verbal communication and explicit responsibility acknowledgment when apologizing. The study compares the cultural norms of Malaysia and Iraq, emphasizing collectivism versus individualism, hierarchical structures, and face-saving preferences. It also examines the role of mitigation strategies and politeness conventions in intercultural apology exchanges.

Theoretical Background

This study is grounded in pragmatics, particularly speech act theory and politeness theory. J.L. Austin's (1962) work, *How to Do Things with Words*, conceptualizes language as a tool for performing actions, identifying locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Searle (1969) further classifies apologies as expressive and commissive acts, blending literal expression with illocutionary force. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory supports this framework, categorizing apologies as face-threatening acts (FTAs) and identifying strategies like hedging and indirectness to mitigate the threat posed by admitting wrongdoing.

Cultural Differences in Apology Speech Acts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives: Cross-cultural research highlights how cultural values shape apology behaviors. In Malaysia, where social harmony and collective dignity are emphasized, apologies are typically indirect, using hedging and deferential expressions to avoid confrontation, aligning with Brown and Levinson's negative politeness. In individualistic cultures, like the U.S. and U.K., apologies tend to be direct, focusing on personal responsibility and reputational repair. In hierarchical cultures like Iraq, apology strategies reflect social rank, with lower-status individuals offering formal apologies to those of higher rank. Kádár (2013) notes that in collectivist societies with high power distance, direct apologies are more common than in less hierarchical cultures. Gender also plays a role in apology strategies, with women often using more mitigated and explanatory language. This pattern reflects societal expectations regarding power dynamics and communicative behavior, where women are socialized to use indirect forms of apology that align with norms of politeness and emotional sensitivity.

Studies on Apology in Malaysia and Iraq: Research on apology speech acts in Malaysia and Iraq highlights the significant role that cultural values, social hierarchies, and communication traditions play in shaping the structure and delivery of apologies. Despite some shared regional and religious influences, each country exhibits distinct pragmatic tendencies rooted in its sociocultural orientation. In Malaysia, apology strategies are deeply influenced by collectivist values, which prioritize group harmony, social cohesion, and interpersonal respect. Apologies tend to be indirect, polite, and sensitive to relational dynamics. Nasrudin (2018) observed that Malaysian university students commonly use positive politeness strategies, such as minimizing face-threatening acts and recontextualizing events, especially when addressing group members. The focus is on preserving relationships rather than explicitly acknowledging personal fault.

In contrast, Iraqi society adopts a more formal and hierarchical approach to apologizing, reflecting its socio-political conservatism. Al-Quraishy (2011) noted that Iraqi learners of English often employ vague or indirect expressions to avoid confrontation, consistent with Arabic-speaking cultures where honorifics and formal speech markers are crucial. In Iraq, apologies are shaped by respect for authority and adherence to social norms, especially in interactions involving unequal status. As a result, formal language and deference are essential components of effective apologies. Politically, Iraqi leaders' apology practices reflect broader cultural and structural considerations. Al-Wuhaili (2017) found that political apologies in Iraq are often vague and defensive, aimed more at managing public perception than expressing genuine remorse. This strategic ambiguity serves to protect the leader's image, with authentic apologies being rare in the political realm. Gender differences further complicate apology practices in both countries. A socio-pragmatic analysis by Mazher and Rahim (2012) revealed that Iraqi women tend to use more elaborate and deferential apology forms than men, aligning with cultural expectations of women's non-confrontational behavior. These findings are consistent with Holmes' (1995) observation that women in Arabic-speaking communities generally exhibit more linguistic politeness than men. In Malaysia, Khairi (2015) found that male participants preferred straightforward apologies, focusing on restitution and personal accountability, while female participants favored emotionally expressive strategies aimed at restoring interpersonal harmony. These gendered patterns correspond with Tannen's (1990) theories, suggesting that women focus on fostering emotional connections through language, while men emphasize assertiveness and accountability.

Research Methodology: This study aims to explore the apology strategies employed by Malaysian and Iraqi undergraduate students, taking into account their cultural backgrounds. The study involved 120 undergraduate participants—60 from University Sains Malaysia (USM) and 60 from the University of Baghdad—ensuring a reliable sample representing the cultural and linguistic influences on apology patterns. The Malaysian participants, aged 18 to 23 (average age: 20), represented various disciplines, including social sciences, business, engineering, and health sciences. The group had a balanced gender distribution, with 30 male and 30 female students. Similarly, the Iraqi participants, also aged 18 to 23 (average age: 20.5), came from diverse fields such as engineering, social sciences, education, and medicine. The gender distribution was also balanced, with 30 male and 30 female students. Participants were selected using a non-random convenience sampling method, ensuring they were fluent in their respective native languages (Malay or Arabic) and had at least three years of English study, which ensured

they had sufficient proficiency to complete the Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) accurately. Data collection was conducted using Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), supplemented by surveys and interviews. The DCTs included 10 hypothetical scenarios requiring an apology, such as apologizing for being late, misunderstandings, damaging property, missing class due to illness, and making a workplace error. The scenarios were culturally relevant, varied in formality, and considered social status and power dynamics. Participants completed the tasks in both English and their native languages, with the researcher analyzing their responses to identify distinct apology strategies.

Interviews: A sub-sample of 30 students (15 male and 15 female from each country) participated in semi-structured interviews to explore their reasons for choosing specific apology strategies. Interview questions focused on factors influencing their apology choices, their feelings about apologizing in various social contexts, the influence of cultural values and social position on their apology methods, and differences in apologizing in their native language versus English. Interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes, conducted in private settings to ensure confidentiality. Audio recordings were made with participant consent and later transcribed for qualitative analysis.

Surveys: All participants completed a survey to gather their views on apology customs and politeness norms. The Likert-type survey included items such as: "Maintaining good relationships requires offering apologies," "I prefer to handle apologies directly after making a mistake," and "I let my cultural background influence how I approach apologies." This survey provided additional insights into participants' perceptions of apology practices and helped contextualize the data from the DCTs and interviews.

Naturalistic Observation: Although the primary data collection method was DCTs, naturalistic observation was used during the final phase of data collection. Researchers observed student interactions in informal settings, such as university cafeterias and study groups, to capture authentic apology behaviors. This observation allowed researchers to document how participants used their learned apology strategies in real-life situations, providing valuable context for interpreting the data from the DCTs and interviews.

Data Analysis: The research data from DCTs combined with surveys and interviews received dual quantitative and qualitative analysis to create a complete understanding of apology methods used by Malaysian and Iraqi students.

Quantitative Analysis of DCTs: The participants' different apology strategies were counted using quantitative analysis methods in the DCT responses. To evaluate the apologizing behaviors Holmes (1990) established five categories which served as the fundamental concept for developing the coding system.

- Expression of regret: e.g., "I'm sorry."
- These examples demonstrate how respondents use explanations to establish grounds for their apology. I could not come because I suffered from illness.
- Acknowledging responsibility: e.g., "It was my fault."
- Offering compensation: e.g., "I'll replace your book."
- Minimizing the offense: e.g., "It wasn't a big deal."

Researchers used these categories to code every participant's statement. Statistical analysis determined each strategy use frequency between the two participant groups (Malaysian and Iraqi participants). Data analysis through chi-square method evaluated the existence of statistical significance regarding apology strategy use between Malaysian and Iraqi respondents.

Qualitative Analysis of Interviews: Research analysts applied thematic analysis to qualitatively assess the gathered interview information. Thematic analysis allows researchers to detect meaningful patterns which exist within the data collection sample. The study analysis revealed three main categories from the interview data.

Apology strategies respond to social status differences that exist between people.

- Gender differences in the use of apologies.
- Cultural influences on the choice of apology strategy.

Data analysts coded every interview while searching for recurrent patterns which they organized and evaluated. The analysis involved comparing these identified themes between the two cultural groups to reveal any distinct apology patterns.

Survey Data Analysis: Descriptive statistical analysis evaluated survey responses to discover what the participants thought about apology along with their perceptions of politeness. Research participants answered a set of questions on the Likert scale and resulting mean scores were contrasted between the Malaysian group and the Iraqi group. The researchers performed independent samples t-tests to evaluate possible differences between the groups regarding their behaviors toward apologizing.

Naturalistic Observation: Analysts examined the naturalistic observations through a descriptive analysis. The researchers logged down which strategies appeared in the apologies together with the settings in which they occurred between students or students and professors and noted specific cultural influences when possible. Researchers examined if apology methods observed in actual situations corresponded to the data from both DCTs and interviews.

RESULTS

The study presents findings from Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), along with interviews and surveys from Malaysian and Iraqi undergraduate students. The results are divided into two sections: one examining Malaysian student apology strategies and the other exploring Iraqi student approaches, followed by a comparative analysis.

Findings for Malaysian Students: Malaysian students employed various apology strategies shaped by their collectivist culture, which emphasizes social harmony. The majority favored indirect language, incorporating hedging and politeness markers to maintain face during interactions.

Common Apology Strategies: Indirectness played a significant role in Malaysian apologies, as the culture values minimizing confrontations. Students often used phrases like "I am really sorry if this causes any inconvenience" and "I hope

you can understand the situation" to soften their apologies and protect relationships.

Many participants employed hedging techniques such as "I am afraid…" or "I might have…" to reduce the directness of their apologies, particularly in minor, unintentional offenses. This approach allowed them to express regret while avoiding full responsibility for the incident.

Politeness markers like "please," "thank you," and "sorry for the inconvenience" were frequently used, mitigating the negative impact of the apology by showing respect for the listener's position.

In cases of significant inconvenience, such as damaging property, students often offered compensation or restitution and expressed sincere regret, demonstrating a sense of responsibility.

For instance, one apology for missing class due to illness included: "I was unwell, but I hope you will understand my situation. Would it be possible to review the missing notes?"

The table below summarizes the frequency of different apology strategies used by the Malaysian students in the DCTs:

Table 1

Apology Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Indirectness	35	58.33
Hedging	12	20.00
Politeness Markers	8	13.33
Offering Compensation	5	8.34
Total	60	100%

Findings for Iraqi Students: The apology methods of Iraqi students followed structured and proper routines because Iraqi traditions endorse social power dynamics and authority system. Students showed a deep feeling of accountability by preferring specific expressions when apologizing with others.

Common Apology Strategies: Iraqi students typically apologized directly, without using hedging or delaying statements. They frequently employed formal expressions such as "I am really sorry for my mistake" and "It was my fault, I deeply apologize," reflecting the cultural emphasis on personal responsibility and direct acknowledgment.

In formal settings, especially with teachers and superiors, Iraqi students used explicit language like "I sincerely apologize for my actions, and this error will not repeat itself." These apologies were direct and conveyed a strong sense of accountability. Students often took full responsibility for the situation with statements like "It was completely my fault" or "I take full responsibility for this."

When addressing individuals in higher authority, Iraqi students used formal, respectful language to acknowledge the recipient's position of power.

Example Apology:

Scenario: Apologizing for a misunderstanding in a conversation

The misunderstanding messes up everything. The mistake belongs to me and I fully take charge of it. I ask you to forgive the inconvenience I have caused. The Iraqi students employed different types of apologies in the DCTs as shown in the following table.

Table 2

Apology Strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Directness	38	63.33
Formality	10	16.67
Acknowledging Responsibility	9	15.00
Offering Compensation	3	5.00
Total	60	100%

Comparative Analysis: The evaluation of apology techniques between members of the Malaysian student body and Iraqi students shows how their approaches differ fundamentally through cultural variables. The particular cultural and social standards of both countries lead to different approaches when issuing apologies.

Indirectness vs. Directness: The bulk of Malaysian students employed indirect apology approaches because their social customs emphasize group unity and social peace through non-confrontational communication methods. Language became roundabout and contained cautionary statements together with being formal in speech. Among both cultures there are contrasting approaches to make apologies since Iraqis tend towards direct acknowledgment while Malaysians base their apologies on indirect statements. The culture in Iraq demands people to accept full responsibility for all their actions because of their direct communication style.

Formality and Social Hierarchy: The students from Iraq demonstrated more frequently the practice of formal speech patterns particularly during apologies to individuals holding superior positions. Social ranks in Iraqi culture exist clearly which explains this observation. Although Malaysian students maintain harmony above rigid social rankings their cultural norms prevent them from displaying workplace formalities at the same level.

Politeness and Compensation: The students from Malaysia often employed both "please" and "sorry" as manners when communicating with others. Malaysian students preferred to provide compensation due to its deployment for minimizing the damaged relationships created by their mistakes. When Iraqi students needed to apologize they directly acknowledged responsibility without showing the same level of concern for politeness markers or offering compensation to the recipient. The manner of handling this situation indicates Malaysian students value straightforward communication when addressing problems.

DISCUSSION

The findings from the research provide valuable insights into how Malaysian and Iraqi undergraduate students apply cultural elements when delivering apology speech acts. The use of language in apology speech acts is strongly influenced by cultural norms, particularly those associated with collectivism

and hierarchy. Both Malaysian and Iraqi students construct their apology strategies in response to these cultural norms, adjusting their approach depending on the social context and the interpersonal relationships involved.

In the Malaysian context, apology strategies are heavily shaped by the collectivist cultural framework, which emphasizes group harmony and social cohesion. Malaysian students tend to employ circumlocution or indirect speech when apologizing, as seen in their frequent use of hedging tactics. For instance, expressions such as "I am sorry if this caused any inconvenience" or "I hope you understand" are commonly used to soften the impact of the apology and avoid direct confrontation. This reflects a deep cultural preference for maintaining interpersonal harmony and avoiding conflict, a cornerstone of collectivist societies. The use of indirect apology tactics is in line with the collectivist rule that prioritizes face-saving processes, ensuring that the apology is not seen as a threat to the listener's face or social standing. Furthermore, politeness markers such as "please" and "thank you" are routinely included in apologies, demonstrating a strong emphasis on respectful and courteous communication. In this cultural context, apologizing is not solely about taking personal responsibility but is more about expressing empathy and preserving social bonds, often without fully acknowledging fault. This approach helps maintain group unity and respect for others, key values in collectivist cultures.

On the other hand, Iraqi students, coming from a hierarchical cultural background, demonstrate a contrasting approach to apology speech acts. In a society with high power distance, where social ranks and authority are of central importance, Iraqi students tend to adopt a more direct and explicit communication style when apologizing. The emphasis in Iraqi culture on maintaining clear distinctions between social levels leads to the use of direct apology strategies. Phrases such as "It was my fault" or "I apologize sincerely" are commonly used to convey a straightforward acknowledgment of responsibility. This directness is not seen as a threat to social harmony in the same way it might be in collectivist cultures; instead, it reflects the societal value placed on demonstrating respect for those in authority and taking personal responsibility. In hierarchical cultures, apologizing serves as a way to acknowledge the power dynamics at play and reinforce respect for those in positions of authority. By stating "It was my fault" and using formal language, Iraqi students show both their willingness to take responsibility and their understanding of the social order, ensuring their apology aligns with the expectations of respect and hierarchy.

Additionally, the formal discourse used by Iraqi students in apologies to authority figures further highlights the role of social hierarchy in shaping apology strategies. In hierarchical cultures, individuals are expected to adhere to prescribed social roles, and apologizing in a formal and direct manner serves as a way to demonstrate respect for those higher in the social or professional hierarchy. This approach also underscores the importance of recognition of power structures and the need to follow established norms when addressing superiors. In conclusion, the research reveals how cultural values, such as collectivism and hierarchy, significantly

influence the way students from Malaysia and Iraq construct and deliver apologies. Malaysian students, in alignment with collectivist cultural norms, prioritize group harmony and use indirect, polite strategies to avoid confrontation and preserve relationships. In contrast, Iraqi students, influenced by a hierarchical social structure, favor direct, explicit apologies that emphasize personal responsibility and respect for authority. These culturally embedded communication practices highlight the importance of understanding the role of cultural norms in shaping speech acts, particularly in intercultural contexts where differing apology strategies may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

Cross-Cultural Insights: The contrasting approaches to apology strategies in Malaysian and Iraqi students can be explained through their respective cultural norms. The following table summarizes these key insights based on cultural frameworks:

Implications for Intercultural Communication: The analysis in this study identifies important implications which benefit intercultural communication specifically when people acquire second languages and interact with others from various cultural backgrounds.

Second-Language Acquisition (SLA): The analysis of cultural norms guiding apology strategies enables educators to create suitable language teaching programs that teach students for authentic communication. Learning a second language remains challenging for students because they struggle to understand pragmatics in particular regarding emotional delivery as well as social situations involving apologies.

Table 3

Cultural Factor	Malaysian Students	Iraqi Students
Cultural Orientation	Collectivist	Hierarchical
Focus of Apology	Social harmony, group cohesion	Personal responsibility, clear acknowledgment of fault
Degree of Indirectness	High (hedging, politeness markers, softening of language)	Low (directness, clear acknowledgment of fault)
Formality in Apologies	Less formal, casual language	More formal, especially with authority figures
Use of Hedging	Frequent (e.g., "I hope you understand")	Rare, less likely to hedge or mitigate responsibility
Acknowledgment of Responsibility	Implicit, often softened	Explicit and direct, "It was my fault"
Gender Differences	Gender-neutral, similar use of apology strategies	Gender-specific, with men being more direct and women more formal
Politeness Strategies	Frequent use of politeness markers (e.g., "please")	Less frequent use of politeness markers

Role-playing activities should be incorporated into classroom activities to help students practice apologies in diverse cultural settings, enhancing their understanding of formal and direct behaviors. Second-language learners benefit from cross-cultural pragmatic education, which teaches them to adjust their apology strategies based on the social rules of their conversation partners. Understanding different cultures improves communication skills, allowing students to handle challenging social situations more effectively. Intercultural Understanding: This study highlights the importance for professionals and scholars to understand how cultural backgrounds impact apology delivery. Misunderstandings can arise when cultural interpretations of apologies differ, such as when an Iraqi student's direct apology may seem insincere to a Malaysian student, or when a Malaysian student's indirect

apology may raise doubts about sincerity for an Iraqi student. The study emphasizes the value of multicultural training, especially in multinational organizations, where understanding cultural differences in apology communication fosters better relationships. Politeness in Professional and Academic Environments: In multicultural work or academic environments, awareness of diverse apology strategies leads to more effective interactions. Iraqi students are expected to offer formal apologies, while Malaysian students tend to use more conciliatory, less explicit approaches. Teachers and employers should foster environments that sensitize students to the need for culturally appropriate apology delivery and encourage respect for multicultural diversity to avoid miscommunication. Conclusion: This research examined how cultural values and social norms influence Malaysian and Iraqi students' apology strategies. Findings from Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), interviews, and surveys revealed distinct apology patterns shaped by cultural systems—collectivism in Malaysia and hierarchy in Iraq. Malaysian students, influenced by collectivism, prioritized social harmony, using indirect, deferential language in apologies. In contrast, Iraqi students from a high power-distance society preferred direct, formal apologies, particularly in hierarchical contexts where responsibility is openly acknowledged. These cultural differences highlight the importance of understanding how culture shapes pragmatic behavior, particularly in second-language learning. The study contributes to cross-cultural pragmatic research, improving communication and fostering empathy across cultural boundaries.

REFERENCES

Tan, K., & Farashaiyan, A. (2015). The Evaluation of Iranian EFL Learners' Interlanguage Pragmatic Knowledge through the Production of Speech Acts. Asian Social Science, 11(23), 83-95.

Wang, A. (2011). Talking about politeness strategies in speech act. Journal of Qinghai Nationalities University.

Mazepova, O. (2021). Iranian communicative culture through the prism of the theory of speech acts. Bulletin of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. Oriental Languages and Literatures.

Kurdghelashvili, T. (2015). Speech acts and politeness strategies in an EFL classroom in Georgia. World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology, International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering, 9, 306-309.

张伟威. (2014). Cross-cultural pragmatic analysis on speech act. Journal of Pragmatics.

Gowasa, N. S., Radiana, S. P., & Afifah, N. (2019). A study on the use of speech acts: A review of selected papers. Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies.

Xue-yan, X. (2008). A pragmatic study of college teachers' speech act of criticism in the Chinese context. Journal of Chengdu University.

Dew, J. (2016). State of the art article: Speech acts and language teaching. Language Teaching Journal.

Sbisà, M. (2002). Speech acts in context. Language & Communication, 22, 421-436. f

Mohammed, M. J. (2023). A speech act approach to translation of English politeness formulas into Arabic. مجلة آداب الفراهيدي.

Mangwegape, B. (2020). The speech act of apology in Setswana educational contexts. International Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 15, 158-175.

Heilan, T. A. (2024). Speech act theory (A textual study in the light of the Noble Qur'an). ARID International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities.

Katz, M. (2015). Politeness theory and the classification of speech acts. Journal of Pragmatics, 25, 45-55.

Zhen, L. (2006). Criticism on speech act theory. Tianjin Foreign Studies University Journal.

Válková, S. (2014). A cross-cultural approach to speech-act-sets: The case of apologies. Topics in Linguistics, 13, 11-20.

Al-Hindawi, F., Al-Masu'di, H. H., & Mirza, R. F. (2014). The speech act theory in English and Arabic. Open Journal of Modern Linguistics, 4, 27-37.

Yaqubi, M., Rahman, W. R. E. A., & Hadavandkhani, A. (2019). Context in distinguishing between overt and actual functions of polite speech acts. Journal for the Study of English Linguistics, 7(1), 1-17.

Austin, J. L. (1962). How to do things with words. Harvard University Press.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). Politeness: Some universals in language usage. Cambridge University Press.

Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language. Cambridge University Press.

Appendex		
Scenario No.	**Description of the Situation**	**Required Action (Instruction)**
1	**Apologizing for Being Late to a Meeting**: You arrive late to an important meeting with your supervisor.	Apologize for being late, explaining the situation and expressing regret.
2	**Apologizing for a Misunderstanding in a Conversation**: During a conversation with a friend, you mistakenly think they were criticizing you, which leads to confusion.	Apologize for misunderstanding what they said and clarify the situation.
3	**Apologizing for Accidentally Breaking Someone's Possession**: While borrowing your friend's laptop, you accidentally spill coffee on it, damaging it.	Apologize for damaging the laptop and offer to compensate or make things right.
4	**Apologizing for Missing a Class Due to Illness**: You missed a lecture due to an illness and you need to apologize to your professor.	Apologize for missing the class, explain the reason (illness), and ask for any missed materials.
5	**Apologizing for Making a Mistake at Work**: At work, you made an error in your report that affected the team's progress. You need to apologize to your team leader.	Apologize for the mistake, take responsibility, and assure that it won't happen again.
6	**Apologizing for a Minor Social Faux Pas**: At a social gathering, you accidentally interrupt someone while they are speaking, causing them to stop.	Apologize for interrupting, express regret, and reassure that it wasn't intentional.
7	**Apologizing for Being Rude to a Colleague**: In a conversation with a colleague, you accidentally say something that might come across as rude or offensive.	Apologize for the rude comment and explain that it was not meant to offend.
8	**Apologizing for Forgetting Someone's Birthday**: You forgot your friend's birthday, and they are visibly upset about it.	Apologize for forgetting the occasion, express regret, and offer to make it up to them in some way.
9	**Apologizing for Overlooking a Task at Work**: You failed to complete an important task at work on time, and your supervisor asks about it.	Apologize for the oversight, offer an explanation (if any), and provide a solution for resolving the issue.
10	**Apologizing for Not Attending a Family Event**: You were invited to a family event but didn't attend because of a prior commitment.	Apologize for not attending, explain the reason, and express your desire to attend the next event.

Question Purpose/Focus

	Question	Purpose/Focus
1	What factors influenced your decision to apologize in this manner?	To understand the key factors (e.g., severity of the situation, relationship with the other person, cultural norms) that shaped their apology strategy.
2	How do you feel about apologizing in different social contexts?	To explore the participants' feelings and attitudes about apologizing in various social settings (e.g., formal vs. informal situations).
3	Do you think cultural norms or social status affect the way you apologize?	To assess the role of culture and social status in shaping apology strategies (e.g., collectivist vs. individualist influences).
4	How would you compare apologizing in your native language versus in English?	To explore whether there are differences in the way participants apologize in their native language (Malay or Arabic) and in English, and how language influences their approach.
5	Do you think apologizing is important for maintaining relationships? Why or why not?	To assess the importance of apologies in maintaining social relationships from the participants' perspectives
6	In your culture, is it considered more important to apologize quickly or to offer a well-thought-out apology?	To explore cultural expectations about the speed and thoughtfulness of apologies in the participants' respective cultures.
7	Can you describe a time when you had to apologize in a situation similar to the ones discussed in the DCT? How did you handle it?	To prompt participants to reflect on real-life experiences and compare them with the situations in the DCT.
8	How do you feel if someone apologizes to you? Do you think the apology is always necessary?	To gain insight into how participants perceive apologies from others and whether they believe apologies are always needed in certain situations.
9	In a situation where you don't feel you are at fault, do you still apologize? Why or why not?	To explore whether participants apologize to maintain harmony, even when they do not feel responsible for the offense.
10	Would you apologize differently if the person you are apologizing to is of higher social status (e.g., a professor or employer)? How?	To investigate how power dynamics and social status affect the apology strategies used by the participants.
11	Do you think that a direct apology is more sincere than an indirect one? Why or why not?	To assess participants' attitudes toward direct versus indirect apology strategies, and whether they believe one is more genuine than the other.
12	Would you change your apology strategy if the person you are apologizing to was a close friend versus an acquaintance? Why?	To understand how relationship closeness influences the way an apology is performed.
13	What do you think would happen if an apology was not given in a situation where it was expected?	To explore the potential consequences or social fallout of failing to apologize in a situation that calls for it.
14	If someone apologized to you in a way you didn't find sincere, how would you react?	To understand the participants' expectations for sincerity in apologies and how they would respond if they felt an apology was insincere.
15	How do you think your gender influences the way you apologize? Do you feel there are different expectations for males and females when it comes to apologizing?	To explore the role of gender in shaping apology strategies, and to examine if there are different cultural or social expectations for men and women.

Interview Question No Question

Survey Item No.	Survey Item	Scale	Purpose/Focus
1	I believe that apologizing is important in maintaining good relationships.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
2	I would prefer to apologize directly when I make a mistake.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
3	Cultural norms affect the way I apologize to others.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
4	Apologizing in my culture is seen as a way to restore harmony in relationships.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
5	I believe that apologizing is a sign of weakness.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
6	I apologize more frequently when the offense is significant.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
7	I feel that apologizing is necessary even when I am not entirely at fault.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
8	I would feel uncomfortable apologizing if it were not expected in the situation.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
9	Gender influences the way I apologize.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
10	Apologizing in English feels different compared to apologizing in my native language.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
11	I believe that apologizing is more difficult in formal settings (e.g., with superiors or strangers).	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
12	I use indirect language (e.g., excuses, hedging) when apologizing to someone in a higher social position.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
13	I think an apology is more effective if it includes an explanation or justification for the offense.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
14	Apologies are important in preventing or reducing conflicts in social interactions.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
15	I feel uncomfortable if someone apologizes to me in an insincere or overly formal way.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree

****