

The Realization of Lexical and Syntactic Patterns of Apology among Tat Language Undergraduate Male and Female Students

Farzad Samadiniko^{1*}, Bahador Sadeghi²

-
1. M.A. of TEFL, Department of English, Takestan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Takestan, Iran.
 2. Assistant Professor, Department of English, Takestan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Takestan, Iran.

* Corresponding Author: f.samadiniko@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study aims at investigating the lexical and syntactic formulas, patterns and structures of apology produced by Tat language male and female undergraduate students when their acts results in discomfort and offence of another person in unexpected circumstances. The data were gathered through a questionnaire for the purpose of finding out what sort of structures and formulas Tat¹ language male and female students use in their speech and whether the employed structures differ in both sexes or not. The results of the study showed discrepancy of patterns in the two groups, although some points of commonality were also observed. The results also showed that contextual factors had significant effect on the frequency of the intensifiers used in different situations. The sex of the speaker and hearer were found to affect the frequency of the supportive acts and intensifiers used in different situations. Also it indicated that Tat language apologies were as formulaic in semantic and grammatical structure as English apologies.

Keywords: apology strategies, lexical and syntactic structure, speech act, Tat language

I.INTRODUCTION

The number of studies on politeness and speech acts has increased as researchers realized that establishing harmony in relations is essential in human communication. Consequently, apology studies emerged and the growing literature in the field contributes to the introduction of a theory of apologizing.

Apology is offered when one's act causes harm or discomfort to another person. Although apology is ubiquitous across various cultures, cultures can differ in its usage and functions (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Wolfson, Marmor, & Jones, 1989 cited in Wouk, 2006). When causing discomfort to others, people of different cultures may differ in the extent to which they want to and intend to apologize. It has been discussed that cultural differences in apology rules have the potential to cause foreigners to be seen as

¹Takestan is a small city of Qazvin province that people have a special dialect which is called Tati.

communicatively incompetent for using or not using apology in accordance with the host country culture (e.g., Garcia, 1989 cited in Wouk, 2006; Jung, 1999; Mir, 1992; Yu, 1999 cited in Guan, Park & Lee, 2009; Olshtain, 1989 cited in Kim, 2008; Wolfson et al., 1989 cited in Afghari, 2007). For example, Jung's (1999) study of Korean learners of English language found that because Korean second language learners used their first language rules and pragmatic knowledge when delivering an apology in English, they often experienced difficulty in accomplishing their communication goals when interacting with others in English (cited in Guan, Park & Lee, 2009).

Understanding cross-cultural differences in apology can be a way of improving one's communication competence in interacting with others from different cultures. Therefore, this study is an investigation of the way Tat language undergraduate students use the speech act of apology. It sheds light on the cultural differences that affect language users' attempt to express themselves. This research is further hoped to have applications not only in ESL/EFL pedagogy but also in the study of intercultural communication.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

One of the speech acts that has long attracted the attention of scholars dealing with social and cultural patterns in language is apologizing. Speech act theory defines and classifies prototypical apology based on the felicity conditions for its realization that includes an apologetic performative verb and an expression of regret (Suszczyńska, 1999). Apology is also defined according to the functions it may serve. For instance, it is taken as a remedial work used to remedy a real or virtual offense to maintain or restore social harmony (Goffman, 1971), or as a negative politeness strategy that indicates (speaker)'s "reluctance to impinge on H (hearer)'s negative face" to save the hearer's face needs (Brown and Levinson, 1987:187). Furthermore, it is defined as a "speech act set of maximal potential semantic formulas, any one of which can act as a minimal element to represent apology".

Apologies have been mostly investigated in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics (Deutschmann, 2003) to compare the use of apology speech act between native English speakers and native speakers of other languages like Hebrew (Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain, 1989), Spanish (Garcia, 1989), Danish (Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1987, 1995), German (House, 1988), Austrian (Meier, 1992, 1996), Egyptian (Soliman, 2003), and Persian (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004). Most of these cross-cultural studies have been carried out within CCSARP (Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Pattern) project "to compare across languages the realization patterns of two speech acts – requests and apologies – and to establish the similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realization patterns in these two acts" (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984:196). The results were to be used in communicative language teaching.

Within CCSARP project American English, Australian English, British English, Canadian French, German, Hebrew, and Russian were examined, based on the elicited data obtained through role-play, from four hundred university students for each language, and coded according to CCSARP coding manual (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). The results of

this project demonstrated “surprising similarities in IFID [Illocutionary Force Indicating Device] and expression of responsibility preferences” (Olshtain, 1989:171). Inter-language apology studies, however, generally investigate the production and perception of apologies by non-native language learners. They have so far compared the use of apologies in English with other languages including German (Meier, 1997; Vollmer and Olshtain, 1989), Polish and Hungarian (Suszczyńska, 1999), Spanish (Uruguay, Marquez Reiter, 2000). In addition, several monocultural apology studies have been carried out that include American English (Edmondson, 1981; Fraser, 1981; Wolfson et al., 1989; Tannen, 1994; Mattson Bean and Johnstone, 1994), New Zealand English (Holmes, 1989, 1990), British English (Owen, 1983; Aijmer, 1995, 1996; Deutschmann, 2003), German (Vollmer and Olshtain, 1989), Japanese (Ide, 1998), Akan (O’beng, 1999), Lombok, Indonesia (Wouk, 2006), Jordanian (Fahmi Bataineh and Fahmi Bataineh, 2006), and Persian (Tajvidi, 2000; Pejman Fard, 2004; Afghari, 2007). The studies mentioned above have mostly investigated western languages. They have defined apology against the background of the western socio-cultural system, which may not be the same in other cultural contexts (Coulmas, 1981; Liebersohn et al., 2004). Furthermore, ethnographic observation has been less applied for data collection while in a majority of research, DCT or role-play has been used. Therefore, this study intends to explore and categorize the range of strategies used to apologize in Persian (a non-western language). It is also an attempt to see if Persian apologies are as formulaic as English apologies have shown to be (Holmes, 1990; Wolfson and Judd, 1983). To do so, it seeks to find answers to the following questions, based on a corpus of natural data collected through an ethnographic method of observation.

1. What lexical and syntactic structures of apology do Tat language male undergraduate students use in their speech?
2. What lexical and syntactic structures of apology do Tat language female undergraduate students use in their speech?
3. Are there differences in Tat language respondents’ use of apology patterns which may be attributed to gender?

III.METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The population of the study consists of 100 Tat language undergraduate students at Takestan University. The respondents ranged between 17 and 24 years of age. Gender is examined as a variable. The data will be tallied to identify any potential differences which could be attributed to the variable of gender, especially in light of claims (cf., for example, Lukasik, 2000) that it affects seeking and granting forgiveness (cited in Bataineh, 2006). The sample consists of two randomly chosen groups of 100 male and 100 female Tat language students.

B. Instrument

The data in this study is collected through a controlled elicitation method called open questionnaire which is a modified version of “Discourse Completion Test” (used in CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka, 1982 cited in Al-Zumor, 2011). The discourse completion test (DCT) is perhaps the most common method of doing research in second-language pragmatics especially when investigating speech acts such as apologies, refusals, invitations, etc. (Mackey and Gass, 2005). This simple pencil and paper task requires no more than a description of the situation followed by a blank space where the response could be required.

C. Procedure

Data will be collected from class at the above mentioned University in the autumn of 2014. The researcher and the class instructor are required to be present during the administration of the DCT. Following Beebe and Waring (2004), the instructions will be explained by the researcher before the students begin. Neither the researcher nor the instructor intervenes once the students start (cited in Jebahi, 2011). The respondents are required to have 30 min to finish the task as Takimoto (2006) found that respondents needed to spend an average of 2–3 min on each DCT situation. Both the oral instructions given to subjects and the written questionnaire will be in Persian (cited in Afghari, 2007).

D. Data analysis

The data for my analysis come from a discourse completion test (DCT); my subjects are 100 university students. The DCT consists of ten or more situations requiring apology, it is relative independence of such factors as status or profession (Blum-Kulka, 1982 cited in Al-Zumor, 2011). In my analysis, I will discuss the realizations of the most central patterns of apology in terms of lexical and syntactic structures used by Tat language undergraduate students, sex as a variable.

IV. PURPOSE & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study attempts to provide insights into Tat language undergraduate students’ use of the speech act of apology. This study is significant because, to the best of the author’s knowledge, it is the first attempt to shed light on apology lexical and syntactical structures used in Tat language. This study is concerned with the potential differences in the expression of apology by Tat language undergraduate male and female students. It is potentially significant because it explores an area of intercultural pragmatics that has not, to the best of the authors’ knowledge, been sufficiently explored. Moreover, it bridges an existing gap in research and, thus, enriches the field of intercultural pragmatics.

V. RESULTS

The analysis is based on the assumption that the response given closely approximates what the informant would say in a similar situation. The collected data in this study were coded on the basis of the coding scheme developed by CCSARP with some modification. Based on the CCSARP coding scheme, the unit of analysis is the utterance or sequences of utterances produced by the respondents to complete the test items in the DCT. It shows that apologizers generally use a limited number of verbal strategies. The model followed in this study is presented below: (The literal Tat language translation of the words and sentences are also provided.)

1. Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs)

– An expression of regret, e.g. I'm sorry.

Mazeraatem moghom, Vaghean motaasefimeh,

– A request for forgiveness and accepting the apology, e.g., please forgive me/please accept my apology.

Bebakhshi, Vaghean bebakhshi,

2. Explanation or account: any external mitigating circumstances, “objective” reasons for the violation, e.g.

i. Explicit: the Traffic was terrible.

Moshkeli pishomi.

ii. Implicit: traffic is always so heavy in the morning.

Terafike va hich rahi neyeh

3. Taking on responsibility

a. Explicit self-blame, e.g., It is my fault/my mistake.

Cheme taghsire

b. Lack of intent, e.g., I didn't mean it.

Manzorem em neveh

c. Expression of self-deficiency.

d. I was confused/I didn't see you/forgot.

Hawasem neveh, tamarkozem nedasht

e. Expression of embarrassment, e.g., I feel awful about it.

Sharmandaymeh

f. Self-dispraise, e.g., I'm such a dimwit!

Khoda bokosheh chemeh,

g. Justify hearer, e.g., you're right to be angry.

Haghighatan narahatve

h. Refusal to acknowledge guilt.

Taghsiri nedashtem

– Denial of responsibility, e.g., It wasn't my fault.

Chemeh taghsir neve

– Blame the hearer, e.g., it's your own fault.

Eshteh taghsirve

– Pretend to be offended, e.g. I'm the one to be offended.

Azimeh ke bayad sarzaneshabem .**Concern for the hearer, e.g., I hope I didn't upset you/ Are you all right?**

5. Offer of repair, e.g. I'll pay for the damage.

Jobranmiyarem

6. Promise of Forbearance, e.g., it won't happen again.

Dieh tekraramenebeh

These strategies have been presented in the study according to their high frequency of occurrence in the data.

Overall analysis of the data collected through the DCT questionnaire in this study showed that Tat language apologies were as formulaic in semantic structure as are English apologies.

In other words, in Tat language, just like other languages studied in the CCSARP project, people using one of the performative verbs such as (Ozrem Mogho) "I apologize" apologize either directly or indirectly by admitting the responsibility for the offence, offering repair for the damage caused or finally promising the forbearance of the offense to ever happen again. The most frequent apology formula used in Tat language, as in the other languages studied, was an IFID or the most direct apology formula.

Of the different performative verbs or IFID expressions revealing the direct act of apology, the most frequent one used by both male and female participants was found to be the formulaic expression *Bebakhshid* (literally translated as forgive me). As shown in Table 1, out of 500 number of apology formulas offered as head acts by female participants only 85 or 17% included the formula taking responsibility, compared to 435 or 87% use of IFIDs. As illustrated in Table 2, the frequency (87%) of the expression *sharmandaymeh* (I'm embarrassed) offered as a head act suggests that in Tat language this expression can function as a direct formulaic expression of apology rather than an indirect apology formula. The low frequency of the first IFID formulas, that is *Khejalatim*, may be attributed to the fact that this IFID formula is highly direct way of apology used by female students. As presented in table 1

the formula concern for the hearer is the least apology formula used by female students that may be due to Tat language cultural circumstances.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was the investigation of realization of syntactic and lexical patterns of apology among Tat language undergraduate students in Takestan. For this end, three questions were set forth by the researcher: the first and the second ones were to investigate lexical and syntactic structures of apology which Tat language male and female undergraduate students used in the speech. And the third one was to study whether there are differences in Tat language respondents' use of apology patterns which may be attributed to gender. According to the obtained data and studying the results, anyone reading the paper might reach different views and conclusions from those of the researcher's; however, the following points are required to be mentioned.

The study results showed that 57% of the apology terms (IFID) were dedicated to male students, while 87 percent of apology terms were used by female participants. Therefore, it can be concluded that illocutionary force indicating devices employed by females students were more than those of male students.

Concerning the explanation or account, male students used more terms than female students, 30% and 14% respectively. Female students were taking on more responsibility than male students, the results showed 17% percent for females and 6 percent for males. Regarding the terms related to concern of the hearer, the difference between the two groups were not as that much, 5 percent of males used such terms in comparison to females which were only 3.6 percent. The results also indicate that males used more terms related to the offer of repair than females, that is, 12 percent for males and 70 percent for females. The study also reveals that forbearance terms used by female and male participants were of the same rate, 5% for both. However, the least frequent apology terms used by female participants were "concern" apology term which was nearly 3.6% compared to that of males which is 5%.

Regarding IFID head act sub-formals frequency, there is not as that much difference between male and females students. The most frequent term used by both groups was "Bebakhsha"(forgive me) that was 57% for females and 54% for males. Male undergraduate students never use the formula "Khejalatim" (I'm embarrassed) 0% compared to low level females' percentage 3%.

Comparing the frequency of intensifiers used by male and female students, the internal intensifier PLES has the frequency of 0% in both groups which might be due to structure of Tat language. Female students use emotional intensifiers more than male students, that is, 87% and 15%, respectively. This might be due to the fact that women are more emotional than men. Internal intensifiers of swear and ADV were more frequent among male students. Male students made use of some terms, strategies and formulas that never employed by females, however, the reverse is also true. The most obvious difference between male and female students was that of the utterance of emotional intensifiers that were

produced in great extent by females compared to male students. The striking point regarding the results of study was that both male and females never used internal intensifiers of PLES in their utterances. This might results from the structure of Tat language or might be due to other factors which are required to be the subject of further investigation.

What can be concluded as the final word is that in Tat language the lexical and syntactic structure of apology patterns used by males and females students differ to some extent, although they may have some similarities and common points. The differences might be due to the fact that men and women are different in their nature and their creation, and it might be true about other languages.

REFERENCES

- Afghari, Akbar, 2007. A socio-pragmatic study of apology speech act realization patterns in Persian. *Speech Communication* 49, 177–185.
- Aijmer, Karin, 1995. Do women apologize more than men? In: Melchers, G., Warren, B. (Eds.), *Studies in Anglistics*. Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm, pp. 55–69.
- Aijmer, Karin, 1996. *Conversational Routines in English: Convention and Creativity*. Longman, London.
- Al-Zumor, A. W. Q. G. (2011). Apologies in Arabic and English: An inter-language and cross-cultural study. *Journal of King Saud University-Languages and Translation*, 23, 19-28
- Barnlund, D., C., & Yoshioka, M. (1990). Apologies: Japanese and American styles. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, 193–206.
- Bataineh R., F. (2006). Apology strategies of Jordanian EFL University Students. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38, 1901-1927.
- Beebe, L., & Waring, H., (2004). The linguistic encoding of pragmatic tone: adverbials as words that work. In: Boxer, Diana, Cohen, Andrew (Eds.), *Studying Speaking to Inform Second Language Learning. Multilingual Matters*, Tonawanda, NY, pp. 228–249.
- Blum-Kulka, S., (1982). Learning how to say what you mean in a second language: A study of the speech act performance of learners of Hebrew as a second language. *Applied Linguistics*. 3, 29–59.
- Blum-Kulka, S. & Olshtain, E., (1984). Requests and apologies: a cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics*, 5 (3), 196–213.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Cohen, A., D. & Olshtain, E., (1981). Developing a measure of socio-cultural competence: the case of apology. *Language Learning*, 31, 113–134.
- Coulmas, Florian, 1981. Poison to your soul: thanks and apologies contrastively viewed. In: Coulmas, F. (Ed.), *Conversational Routines*. Mouton de Gruyter, The Hague, pp. 69–91.
- Deutschmann, Mats, 2003. *Apologizing in British English*. Tryckt av Print, Umea University.
- Edmondson, Willis J., 1981. On saying you're sorry. In: Coulmas, F. (Ed.), *Conversational Routines*. Mouton de Gruyter, The Hague, pp. 273–288.
- Eslami-Rasekh, Z. (2004). Face-keeping strategies in reaction to complaints: English and Persian, *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 14(1), pp. 179-195
- Fahmi Bataineh, Ruba, Fahmi Bataineh, Rula, 2006. Apology strategies of Jordanian EFL university students. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38, 1901–1927.
- Fraser, Bruce, 1981. On apologizing. In: Coulmas, F. (Ed.), *Conversational Routines*. Mouton de Gruyter, The Hague, pp. 259–271.
- Goffman, Erving, 1971. *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*. Penguin, London.
- Garcia, C., (1989). Apologizing in English: Politeness strategies used by native and non-native speakers. *Multilingua*, 8, 3–20.
- Gass, S., & Neu, J. (2006). *Speech acts Across Cultures: Challenges to Communication in a Second Language*. Walter de Gruyter, New York.
- Guan, X., Park, & H., S., Lee, & H., E., (2009). Cross-cultural differences in apology. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33, 32-45.
- Holmes, Janet, 1989. Sex differences and apologies: one aspect of communicative competence. *Applied Linguistics* 10, 194–213.
- Holmes, Janet, 1990. Apologies in New Zealand English. *Language in Society* 19, 155–199.
- House, J., (1988). 'Oh excuse me please': apologizing in a foreign language. In: Kettemann, B., Bierbaumer, P., Fill, A., Karpf, A., (Hrsg.), (Eds.), *Englisch als Zweitsprache*, Narr, Tuebingen, pp., 303–327.
- Ide, Risako, 1998. Sorry for your kindness: Japanese interactional ritual in public discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics* 29, 509–529.
- Jebahi, K.H, (2011). Tunisian university students' choice of apology in a discourse completion task. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 648-662.
- Jung, E. H., (1999). The acquisition of communicative competence in a second language. *Journal of Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 3, 13–37.
- Kasper, G., (1989). Variation in interlanguage speech act realization. In: Gass, S., Madden, C., Preston, D., Selinker, L. (Eds.), *Variation in Second Language Acquisition: Discourse and Pragmatics*. Multilingual Matters, Clevedon, pp. 27–58.

- Kim, H., (2008). The semantic and pragmatic analysis of South Korean and Australian English apologetic speech acts. *Journal of pragmatics*, 40, 257-278
- Liebersohn, Yousef Z., Neuman, Yair, Bekerman, Zvi, 2004. Oh baby, it's hard for me to say I'm sorry: public apologetic speech and cultural rhetorical resources. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36, 921-944.
- Lukasik, V., J., (2000). *Predictors of the Willingness to Use Forgiveness as a Coping Strategy in Adolescent Friendships*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, USA.
- Mackey, A. & Gass, S., (2005). *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. Lawrence Erlbaum Ass.
- Marquez Reiter, Rosina, 2000. *Linguistic Politeness in Britain and Uruguay*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Philadelphia.
- Mattson Bean, Judith, Johnstone, Barbara, 1994. Workplace reasons for saying you're sorry: discourse task management and apology in telephone interviews. *Discourse Processes* 17, 59-81.
- Meier, Ardith J., 1992. A socio-pragmatic contrastive study of repair work in Austrian German and American English. Doctoral Thesis. University of Vienna, Austria.
- Meier, Ardith J., 1996. Two cultures mirrored in repair work. *Multilingua* 15, 149-169.
- Meier, Ardith J., 1997. What's the excuse? image repair in Austrian German. *The Modern Language Journal* 81, 197-208.
- Mir, M., (1992). Do we all apologize the same? An empirical study on the act of apologizing by Spanish speakers learning English. *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, 3, 1-19.
- O'beng, Samuel Gyasi, 1999. Apologies in Akan discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics* 31, 709-734.
- Olshain, E., Cohen, A. (1983). Apology: a speech act set. In: Wolfson, Nessa, Elliot, Judd (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*. Newbury House, Rowley, MA, pp. 18-3.
- Olshain, E., (1989). Apologies across cultures. In: Blum-Kulka, Shoshana, House, Juliane, Kasper, Gabriele (Eds.), *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*. Ablex, Norwood, NJ, pp. 155-173.
- Owen, Marion, 1983. *Apologies and Remedial Exchanges. A Study of Language Use in Social Interaction*. Mouton, Berlin.
- Pejman Fard, M., 2004. *Politeness principles: requests and apologies in Spoken Persian*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Allame Tabatab'ei University, Tehran.
- Soliman, Abdelmeneim, 2003. Apology in American English and Egyptian Arabic. In: Paper Presented at TESOL 3rd Annual Graduate Student Forum, Maryland, Baltimore.

- Suszczyn´ska, Malgorzata, 1999. Apologizing in English, Polish and Hungarian: different languages, different strategies. *Journal of Pragmatics* 31, 1053–1065.
- Tajvidi, Golam Reza, 2000. Speech acts in second language learning process of Persian speakers: communicative and pragmatic competence in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspective. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. Allame Tabataba'i University, Tehran.
- Takimoto, M., (2006). The effects of explicit feedback and form-meaning processing on the development of pragmatic proficiency in consciousness-raising tasks. *System* 34, 601–614.
- Tannen, Deborah, 1994. *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work, Language, Sex and Power*. Virago Press, London.
- Trosborg, Anna, 1987. Apology strategies in natives/non-natives. *Journal of Pragmatics* 11, 147–167.
- Trosborg, Anna, 1995. *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Requests, Complaints and Apologies*. Mouton de Gruyter, New York.
- Vollmer, Helmut J., Olshtain, Elite, 1989. In: Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., Kasper, G. (Eds.), *The Language of Apologies in German*. Ablex, Norwood, NJ, pp. 197–218.
- Wolfson, Nessa, Judd, Eliot, 1983. *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*. Newbury House, Rowley, MA.
- Wolfson, Nessa, Marmor, Thomas, Jones, Steve, 1989. In: Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., Kasper, G. (Eds.), *Problems in the Comparison of Speech Acts Across Cultures*. Ablex, Norwood, NJ, pp. 174–197.
- Wouk, F., (2006). The language of apologizing in Lambok Indonesia. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38, 1457-1486.
- Yu, M., (1999). Universalistic and culture-specific perspectives on variation in the acquisition of pragmatic competence in a second language. *Pragmatics*, 9, 281–312.