

## Students' apologizing in Arabic and English: An interlanguage pragmatic case study at an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

It is hard to select and produce appropriate semantic formulas of apologizing for paying off violation of social norms to restore harmony. It seems that it is even harder to realize such processes of selection and production in a non-native language. The study is of three folds; namely, it examines the realization of the apology strategies by students of a senior Boarding School in Arabic and English as a non-native language, the effects on the contextual factors (external vs. internal) on the students' apologizing, and the pragmatic transfer. The participants were 101 male and 101 female students, recruited to fill in a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which consisted of eight situations about the flouting of the politeness rules in the context of the Islamic boarding school, by drawing upon the five semantic formulas of apologizing from Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983) of Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) for analyzing the data. The findings show that the students used identical semantic formulas in both languages. They prefer to use the "expression of regret" and "promise for forbearance" strategies. The findings also reveal that the internal and external factors affected the students' selection and production of the apology strategies in both languages. In addition, the students' pragmatic transfer occurred in linguistic areas, namely overgeneralization, inappropriateness, grammatical contrast, and conceptual transfer from L1 to L2, which are categorized into two types, namely, micro-negative transfer and macro-negative transfer. To conclude, these results indicate the students' on-record-negative politeness attitudes towards the offended parties, which are determined by the contextual factors and the students' lack of grammatical competence.

**Keywords:** Apologizing; interlanguage pragmatics; Islamic boarding schools; pragmatic competence; pragmatic transfer

**First Received:**

14 January 2020

**Revised:**

16 September 2020

**Accepted:**

13 October 2020

**Final Proof Received:**

21 November 2020

**Published:**

31 January 2021

### How to cite (in APA style):

Al-Rawafi, A., Sudana, D., Lukmana, I., & Syihabuddin. (2021). Students' apologizing in Arabic and English: An interlanguage pragmatic case study at an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(3), 589-602.  
<https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i3.31740>

### INTRODUCTION

Basically, apologies, in all cultures, are admissions of wrongdoings require forgiveness (Al-Zumor, 2011; Anna, 1983, 1995; Augoustinos et al., 2011; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008, 2006; Dalmau & Gotor, 2007; Edwards, 2010; Koutsantoni, 2007; Nureddeen, 2008) and re-establishing trust in

negotiations and dispute resolution (Maddux et al., 2011, p. 218). In the theory of speech acts, apologies belong to the class of behaviorist speech acts in Austin's classification and as an expressive speech act in Seale's classification. For Austin (1962, p. 159), apologies are a kind of reaction to people's behavior, such as expressions that might vent the

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listener's feelings. In line with Austin's classification of the apologies as speech acts, Searle sees apologies as a kind of expressive illocutionary act expressing "the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional condition" (Searle, 1979, p. 15). Structurally, apologies have the syntactical structure of directives because they belong to a directive speech act in Searle's classification of speech acts.

In interlanguage pragmatics, apologies have received a considerable research interest in various languages and cultures. Such research focuses mainly on the Non-native speakers' realization of various speech acts in Western languages, such as (Bergman & Kasper, 1991; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Maeshiba et al., 1993, 1996). These studies paved the way for researchers to conduct research in various languages and contexts, mainly focusing on pragmatic competence development in a non-native language, especially by university students. Students of Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia, as young learners, belong to that speech community when they acquire Arabic and English, both as non-native languages. In these boarding schools, the students acquire the pragmatic competence of the Arabic and English languages as two international languages. Thus, based on previous observations, "the school students in Indonesia work hard to pass national exams but do not perform well in the Illocutionary force indicating device" (Sundayana et al., 2018), and students of boarding schools lack an interlanguage model for developing their pragmatic competence in those two languages, for example, in terms of the acquisition and development of the speech acts of apologizing. This issue is essential because of the fact that the students of the Islamic boarding schools are taught to perceive a high degree of politeness based on Islamic values.

### **Apologies as remedial and ritual work**

In line with the former definition of the apology act, it can be concluded that one of the remedial devices that might work to eliminate the offensive work in most societies and religious events are apologies. A remedial work usually comes after "worst possible readings" or "virtual offense"; acts in which the offender is obliged to repair the damage. Goffman claimed that apologies are a remedial work in which a change of state from what is seen as an offensive act to what is seen as an acceptable act. As a remedial work, apologies, according to Goffman (1971, p. 113), are 'the central' and a 'gesture' in which the speaker of an apology act is split into two types; the guilt of an offense and the part sympathetic. Regarding their location in any act or event, Guffman (1971) claimed that apologies are "characteristically occurring after the event" (p. 114).

### **Classification of apology strategies**

The Cross-Cultural Study Analysis realization Patterns (CCSARP) established the five universal apology strategies, which are recently divided into two semantic formulas, namely, "Head Acts and Supportive Moves" (Leech, 2014). Head Acts strategies refer to the Illocutionary Indicating Device (IFID), and the Supportive Moves refer to the external intensifications attached to the Head Acts that are simplified in Figure 1.

#### **Head act strategies**

##### ***Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)***

It is the most direct realization of an apology by which the speaker selects among words, expressions, and sentences that contain relevant performative verbs such as 'apologize,' 'sorry,' and 'forgive.' The use of such performative verbs is conventionalized across languages. The IFID semantic formula can be intensified if the speaker feels the need to strengthen his/her apology. Such intensifications are usually brought about by adding adverbial expressions (e.g., 'very,' 'really,' 'so,' etc.) to fit the situation and the severity of the offense. This strategy consists of three sub-strategies:

1. Expression of regret, e.g., I am sorry
2. Offer an apology, e.g., pardon me.
3. Ask for forgiveness, e.g., forgive me.

#### **Supportive move strategies**

##### ***Taking on responsibility***

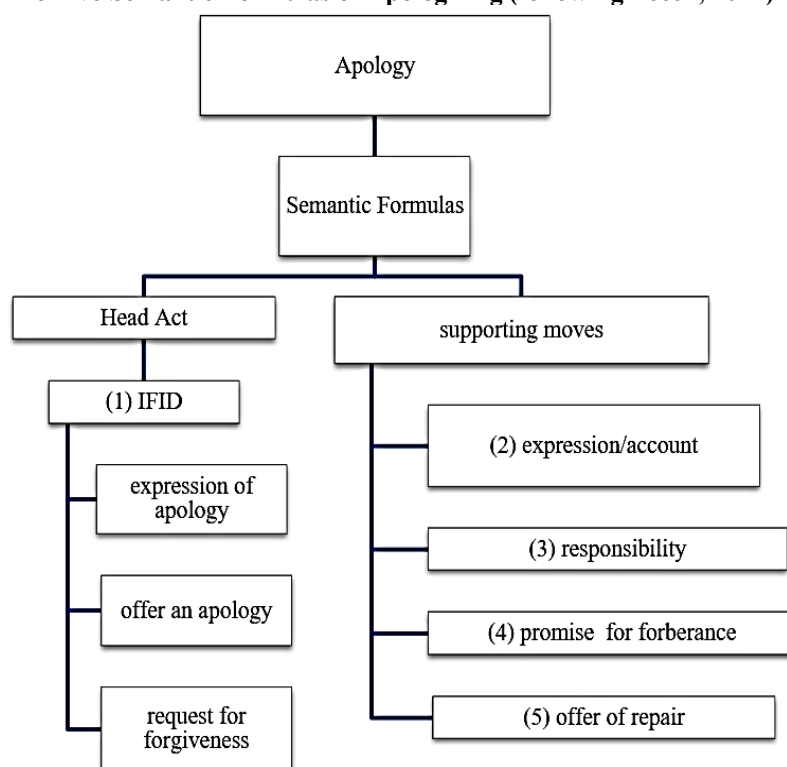
In this semantic formula, the speaker takes on the responsibility of the offense or infraction he/she might cause. The speaker chooses among the available sub-strategies inside this semantic formula. Therefore, Cohen (1986) put the sub-strategies on a scale based on the speakers' need to use them from highest to lowest. The highest used sub-strategy is the acceptance of the blame: 'it is my fault.' Lower is the expression of self-deficiency: 'I was confused.' At a still lower level might be the expression of lack intent: 'I did not mean it.' Lower than that is the implicit expression of responsibility: 'I was sure I had given you the right directions.' Finally, the speaker/apologizer may not accept the blame or denial of responsibility at all (e.g., it was not my fault) and/or even blaming the hearer (e.g., it is your own fault).

##### ***An explanation or account***

In this semantic formula, the apologizer explains the "situation which indirectly caused the apologizer to commit the offense and which is used by the speaker as an indirect speech act of apologizing" (Cohen et al., 1986, p. 52). In other words, the apologizer "intends to justify the offense as resulting from external factors that are over his hands" (Blum-kulka & Olshtain, 1983, p. 208).

Figure 1

The Five Semantic Formulas of Apologizing (following Leech, 2014)



***A promise of forbearance***

In its simplest function, the apologizer uses this semantic formula to promise the offended party or the like the offense will not have occurred in the future. This strategy is of less frequent use (Cohen et al., 1986, p. 52).

***An offer of repair***

In this strategy, the apologizer makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for the infraction or the damage.

To date, interlanguage pragmatics and cross-cultural studies have so far examined apology strategies in a variety of cultures and languages, comparing non-native speakers with native speakers (Addiss & Amon, 2019; Banikalef et al., 2015; Chiravate, 2019; Chung & Lee, 2017; Guilfoyle et al., 2019; Hartanto, 2002; Hodeib, 2019; Mu & Bobocel, 2019; Schumann, 2018; Sunstein, 2019).

Regarding gender and apologizing, Harb (2016) investigated whether gender (Arab males and females express apologies in different situations) plays a role in the apology strategies employed by native speakers of Arabic. He selected 20 respondents to participate in a DCT consisting of 10 real-life situations, which were analyzed according to five distinct strategies: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Responsibility (RESP), Explanation (EXPL), Repair (REPR), and Forbearance (FORB). He found that there is no difference in the choice of apology strategies between male and female participants.

As for the apologizing and the level of proficiency, Chiravate (2019, pp. 116–129) investigated the interlanguage of the Thai students’ realization of the speech acts of apologizing in the English language, taking into account the differences between learners with high and low levels of exposure to the target language by comparing their apology strategies with the native speakers of English. The study confirms that despite the different cultural backgrounds between the participants, the Thai learners of the English language show more similarities to the NEs. In addition, the study recommends that the higher the learners’ level of exposure, the higher the knowledge of the pragmatic competence of the target language. Even though the study came up with a pedagogical perspective, the results fail to be generalized due to the individual differences that vary in L2 pragmatic development. In addition, Cedar (2017, pp. 214–222) explored the effect of the proficiency level of the apology strategies by the Indonesian EFL learners from two groups, namely group A2 and B1. His study revealed that the two groups, with different levels of proficiency in the English language, demonstrated no significant difference in the overall use of the apology strategies. However, Cedar concludes that a significant difference appeared in the individual strategy levels.

Such empirical studies have been important in ‘providing preliminary evidence for a universally valid apology speech act set, and the differential

selections from this set according to contextual factors' (Kasper & Dahl, 1991, p. 146). While it is a requisite to extend the scope of the study to non-native western languages and cultures to advance the fundamental issue in cross-cultural pragmatics (Bergman & Kasper, 1991, p. 146), it is necessary to extend the same scope to determine the realization of the speech acts of apologizing performed by the students of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. However, the concept of an apology is used as remedial work, and we argue that young non-native speakers (NNS) would find it hard to use this technique to remedy their wrongdoings.

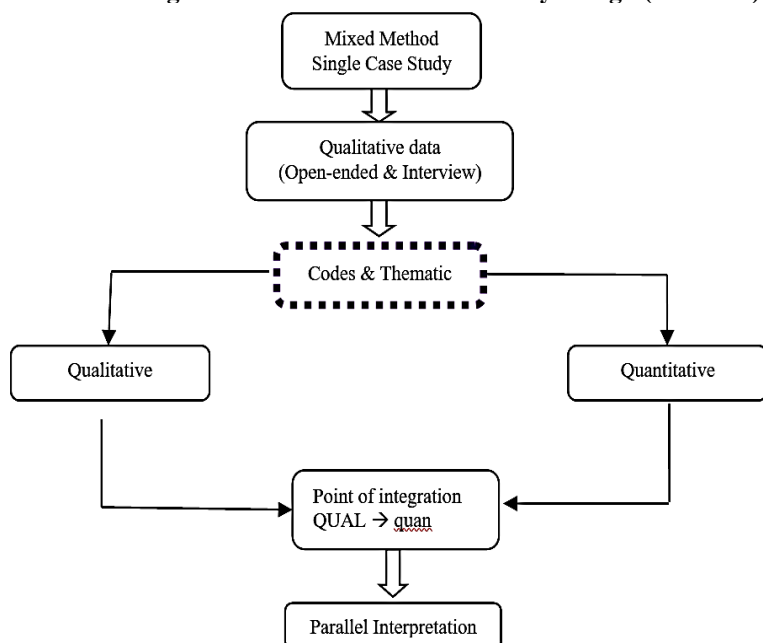
To this end, the existing literature, however, still leaves us an incomplete picture about the nature of the relation between the linguistic environment and the acquisition of the pragmatic competence of the speech acts of apologizing by non-native speakers. Therefore, this research is intended to more or less contribute to the literature on the effects of the linguistic environment and the contextual factors in the Boarding School on the interlanguage development of the students' acquisition of the L2 pragmatic knowledge, which may enhance the students' (*santri*) pragmatic competence of the speech acts of apologizing in the Arabic and English languages. More specifically, this article focuses on revealing the apology strategies used by Senior Islamic Boarding School Students in the Arabic and English languages, the

effects of contextual factors (external & internal) on the students' selection of the apology strategies, and exploring the pragmatic transfer when apologizing in non-native languages.

## METHOD

This research is a case study aimed at exploring the realization of the speech acts of apologizing by the students of a Boarding School in Indonesia. To be precise, this study is primarily qualitative in its design, which allows us to obtain deep insights pertaining to the use of politeness strategies by non-native speakers of English. However, there are also simple computations of percentages of strategies used by the participants. Hence, there is a greater emphasis on the qualitative aspects. As can be seen in Figure 2, we derived qualitative themes (e.g., the five apology strategies) from the qualitative questionnaire data (derived from the students' responses to the eight situations) and scored the themes dichotomously as [1] if present and left empty if not present for each response. Meanwhile, the quantitative data were derived from the frequent occurrences of each strategy and/or its sub-strategy in the eight situations. These frequencies were then accumulated based on each strategy to make a clear comparison between the occurrences of each strategy in the eight situations.

**Figure 2**  
**Research Design in a Mixed Method Case Study Design (MMSCS)**



## Research site and participants

This study took place at a Senior Islamic Boarding School in Subang, Indonesia. Collecting naturally occurring data entails studying people's behavior in natural contexts that are not invented by the

researcher in which observation is the main data source. In this regard, the researchers became part of the natural setting, which gave us more opportunities to understand the participants and to become familiar with the "shared cultural meaning,"

which then helped us in comprehending the social and linguistic behavior of that participants. The reason for selecting that Boarding School as a research site is its “multilingual environment” (Al-Rawafi & Syihabuddin, 2019, p. 6). In that school, the students must learn and speak Arabic and English every day. In other words, these two languages are compulsory in the students’ daily conversations and talks by which they produced different types of speech acts.

The total number of students of this school is 1070 enrolled at an Islamic Boarding School in the academic year 2018/2019. The participants were 202 senior students selected purposively to fulfill the subjectivity of this research. The participants signed a consent form contains a disposition to be volunteers in this research and are recruited to fill in a DCT regarding the eight situations requiring apology strategies.

**Table 1**

*The Distribution of the Variables According to the Number of Participants*

Name of Variable	Categories of Variables	Number of Respondents and Percentage
Gender	a. Male	a. 101 (50 %)
	b. Female	b. 101 (50 %)
First language	a. Indonesian	a. 202 (100%)
Second language (L2s)	a. Arabic	a. 202 (100%)
	b. English	b. 202 (100%)

As Table 1 demonstrates, the distribution of the participants is relatively equal. In other words, there are 101 male and 101 female students. This group was selected purposively from class 10 through class 12 in which the students had learned a fundamental background regarding the speech acts of the English and Arabic languages. All of these participants are native speakers of the Indonesian language.

**Data collection**

The nature of the data of this research was written responses to eight situations requiring apologies in the Arabic and English languages. The eight situations consist of eight offenses (severe-different) regarding the students’ violation of the rules of the Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia.

The data consisted of 1.616 responses: 808 in the Arabic language and 808 in the English language. The technique of data collection of this research is a Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which is the most common data collection technique (Afghari, 2007; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Bella, 2012; Jebahi, 2011; Nelson et al., 2002; Nurani, 2009; Nureddeen, 2008; Xu & Wannaruk, 2015).

**Instrumentation**

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1983) and Schauer (2009) developed a situational framework for exploring the realization of speech acts of apologies. Their work has been adapted by many researchers to

Purposive sampling was used to minimize threats of external validity in the sense that purposive sampling worked well in eliciting data of the researcher’s interest. To fulfill this interest, one of the researchers is a volunteer teacher of the English language at that boarding school and a native speaker of the Arabic language. According to Denscombe (2007, p. 17), with using purposive sampling, ‘researchers already know something about the specific people or events and deliberately select particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data.’

To avoid this bias, the selection was based on the students’ pragmatic knowledge in L2, that is, the students’ scores in a final exam of the Arabic and English languages of the academic year 2018-2019.

reveal the speech acts of the apology strategies in different languages and cultures by native and non-native speakers. However, this situational framework cannot be adapted for this case study in the sense that the context and culture are relatively different. Yet, the researchers built on their work to develop situations that matched with the context of the Islamic Boarding School under investigation. Hence, we developed eight situations requiring apologies regarding the students’ violation of the rules of the Islamic boarding school.

We selected the situations carefully to include different types of offenses, offended parties, and severity of the offense/degree of imposition, social power, and social distance. Each situation follows by a blank in which the participants wrote their apologies or ‘what they would like to say in each situation’ (Schauer, 2009, p. 66). Table 2 presents the categorization of the eight situations and their internal and external factors.

It is imperative to highlight the abbreviations and symbols used in this study. A (apologizer), O (offended), SP (Social Power between participants such as A < O apologizer has less power than the offended, A > O apologizer has more power than the offended, and A = O apologizer and offended have the same power), and SD (Social Distance such as, -SD and offended do not know each other, =SD apologizer knows the offended to some extent, +SD apologizer and offended know each other very well).

**Table 1**  
*Categorization of Face-threatening Situations*

Situation (theme)	What is offended	The offended	Severity of the offense	Social power	Social distance
1. Late to school	time	The Dormitory Community Manager	Low	A < O	=SD
2. Late to class	time	The Academic Teacher	Low	A < O	+SD
3. Smoking	social gaffe	The Dormitory Superintendent	High	A < O	=SD
4. Have a mobile phone	social gaffe	The Students' Supervisor	High	A < O	=SD
5. Bothering a younger student	morality (Fraud)	Younger student	Medium	A < O A > O A = O	+SD
6. Use the belongings of older student	possession (damage)	Older student	Medium	A < O	+SD
7. Put a trash in improper place	Inconvenience	The Cleaning Service	Low	A < O	+SD
8. Communication with opposite sex	morality	The Dormitory Room Teacher	High	A < O	+SD

As Table 2 demonstrates, the selected eight situations were adapted from several situations with different offenses regarding the students' flouting of

rules of the Islamic boarding schools. Table 3 illustrates the data analysis of the male students' responses to situation one (late to school).

**Table 2**  
*Illustration of the Data Analysis in English*

Gender	(1) You came late to the school, and you did not join the school morning assembly. The Dormitory Community Manager wants to punish you. How do you apologize for that? You say ...	(1) IFID		(3) Taking on Responsibility					total	Type of Transfer	
		Expression of regret offer an apology Request for forgiveness	(2) Explanation or Account	Accepting the Blame	Expressing self-deficiency	Expressing lack of intent	Recognizing others as Deserving Apology	Expressing Embarrassment			Refusal to Acknowledge guilt (4) Offer of Repair
M	I am sorry, Sir, I will not late again. I swear	1							1	3	N
M	I'm sorry for being late to go to school. It won't happen again, I promise.	1							1	2	P
M	I'm sorry for being late, the traffic was crowded, and I'm stuck on the road	1	1							2	P
M	I'm really sorry for my indiscipline action	1		1						2	P
M	I'm sorry for being late, and I'll try not to be late next time. I will accept the punishment	1		1				1		3	P

As Table 3 illustrates, the analysis of the five given examples is based on the five universal strategies of the speech acts of apologizing. The researcher fits the students' responses with these five strategies and their sub-strategies. In the end, if the apology fits the pragmalinguistic of apologizing in the target language, it is marked as positive transfer (P), otherwise negative transfer (N).

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 4 shows that from eight given situations with different topics and degree of offenses regarding the students' violation of the rules of the Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Overall, the students produced and selected 3277 apology strategies in the Arabic language and 3781 apology strategies in the English language.

These frequencies are distributed based on two semantic formulas, **Head Acts** and **Supportive Moves**. Overall, Table 5 compares the distribution of the semantic formulas in the Arabic and English languages, which is significantly quite different.

There are 3277 (46%) occurrences in the Arabic language, whereas, in the English Language, there are 3781 (54%) occurrences. Specifically, the

Head acts semantic formula (IFID) exhibits different frequencies in both languages. There are 1651(47%) occurrences in the Arabic language, and in the English language, there are 1842 (53%) occurrences. There are 1626 (46%) occurrences in Arabic and 1936 (54%) occurrences in the English language regarding the Supportive Moves.

**Table 3**  
*Students' Apology Strategies Based on Language and Gender*

No	Situations	Arabic		English	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	Late to school	199	223	219	224
2.	Late to class	178	214	204	224
3.	Smoking	216	250	245	243
4.	Having a mobile phone	201	236	228	243
5.	Bothering a friend	220	244	261	287
6.	Using a friend's belongings	215	228	227	245
7.	Wrong place	200	226	238	231
8.	Impolite communication	209	229	224	236
<i>n=8</i>		<b>1638 (47%)</b>	<b>1850 (53%)</b>	<b>1846 (49%)</b>	<b>1933 (51%)</b>

**Table 4**  
*Head Acts and Supportive Moves Strategies in Arabic and English*

	Languages	Semantic Formulas			
		Head Acts	Supportive Moves	Σ	%
	English	1842 (53%)	1939 (54%)	3781	54.%
	Arabic	1651(47%)	1626 (46%)	3277	46%
	Σ	3493	3565	7058	100%

It is needed to be highlighted that in Arabic and English, the head Acts and Supportive Moves exhibited different frequency occurrences. For instance, in English, the students used more supportive moves, whereas, in Arabic, they used more head acts. According to Holmes (1989, p. 199) that the IFID is considered to be “the most and direct strategy for remedy an offense.” In terms of this strategy, the offender uses routinized expressions and performative verbs like ‘sorry, apologize, forgive, regret, pardon’ in English. In the Arabic language, expressions such as *samihni* (forgive me), *isbir/ isbir’alay* (be patient with me), *ana asif* ( I am sorry), and *ana a’tadhir* (I apologize) are the common expressions of the IFID semantic formulas in the Arabic language (Al-Luhaibi & Ya’llah, 2014, pp. 1–29).

On the contrary, the use of more supportive moves in the English language than in the Arabic language indicates the students’ high proficiency and pragmatic competence in performing the speech act sets of apologies in English than in Arabic. This happens due to the fact that the students found it ‘difficult to form indirect strategies’ (Holmes, 1989, p. 200; Leech, 2014, p. 117) in a non-native language.

Regarding gender and the selection of the semantic formulas of apologizing, this research found that there is relevant statistical evidence that

indicates differences between the male and female students in the selection of the semantic formulas of apologizing in the English language and the Arabic language. It is obvious that the male and female students selected and produced different occurrences of the apology strategies in the English language with (49%) and (51%) occurrences, respectively. Besides, the male and female students selected and produced different occurrences of the apology strategies in the Arabic language with (47%) and (53%) respectively.

**Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)**

The first semantic formula with more occurrences in the students’ responses in the Arabic and English languages is the Head Act strategy IFID.

The Head Act strategies are the most important components of the speech acts of apologizing. They contain the basic elements or the nucleus of the apology strategy, and they are explicitly in nature by using the direct performative verbs, such as apologize, forgive, and pardon in English. On the contrary, the Arabic language contains the expression *asif* and the performative verbs *a’tadhir*, *samih* ... etc. as Head Act strategies. Generally, the male and female students made use of the Head Act apology strategies with identical frequencies of 50% in the Arabic language. On the contrary, in the

English language, the male and female students used 49% to 51% head act occurrences, respectively.

These differences occur in the distribution of some preferred sub-strategies of the IFIDs. First, the male and female students prefer to use the expression of regret strategy (e.g., *ana asif* ('I am sorry')) with a percentage ranging from 60% to 72%. On the contrary, the female students did not express regret as frequently as the male students did in both languages. To be precise, the male students used 63% in Arabic and 72% in English, whereas the female students used 60% in Arabic and 70% in English. Second, the offer an apology strategy consists of expressions such as (e.g., *afwan/ ana a'tathir* 'I apologize') in which the male students did not offer an apology as frequently as the female students did in the Arabic language. The male students used 25%, whereas female students used 27% in the Arabic language. More specifically, the male students used 11%, whereas the female students used 8% in the English language. Third, the semantic formula request for forgiveness consists of expressions such as (e.g., *samihni* 'forgive me') in which the male students did not ask for forgiveness as frequently as the female students ask. Specifically, the male students used 13% in Arabic and 17% in English, whereas the female used 12% in Arabic and 15% in English.

Yet, the expression of regret strategy is the most commonly used by both genders in both languages to show remorse. Besides, the female students use the request for forgiveness strategy as a punishment-avoidance device apology. Previous research showed similar findings, for example (Banikalef et al., 2015, p. 140; Al-Zumor, 2011, p. 22; Banikalef & Maros, 2013, p. 138; Uгла & Abidin, 2016, p. 36). These studies confirmed that Arabs and Arabic learners of English prefer to use the explicit strategy expression of regret more often in the Arabic and English languages, whereas offering an apology and asking for forbearance strategies come second and third. Other researchers

left this finding unclear in their studies, for example (Ruba Fahmi Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Rula Fahmi Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008; Harb, 2016; Jebahi, 2011; Nureddeen, 2008) due to the sub-strategies of the IFID were not analyzed individually. Other researchers argued that the request for forgiveness strategy is the most frequently used in the Arabic language, see (Al-luhaibi & Ya'llah, 2014, pp. 10–11), and in the Indonesian language, see (Wouk, 2006, p. 1463).

The findings also reveal that the distribution of the head act semantic formulas is situation-dependent. The students prefer to apologize to the younger students than to their teachers and older friends. These findings do not match with Brown and Levinson's model (1978, 1987) that states 'the greater the social distance, the heavier the weighting of the FTA' (as cited in Holmes, 1989, p. 205).

### Supportive move strategies

The second semantic formula is the Supportive move strategy, which consists of external intensifiers attached to the IFID to intensify, strengthen, and/or soften the apology. Blum-Kulka (1983, p. 208) suggests five (possible) supportive moves that empowered the IFIDs strategy mentioned above. These strategies are explanation (EXPL.), responsibility (RESP.), repair (REP.), and promise for forbearance (FORBE.). The other strategies are newfound supportive moves of this research such as blame the offended party, requesting in apologizing, and non-verbal (N.V.) strategies.

As Table 6 indicates, the findings show that the students performed higher pragmatic competence of the speech acts of apologizing in the English language than in the Arabic language. It has been indicated from the fact that the students used higher occurrences of the supportive moves in the English language, which is represented with 51% of the frequency occurrences compared with 49% in the Arabic language.

**Table 5**  
*Students' Use of Supportive Moves*

Supportive Moves		EXPL.		RESP.		REP.		FORBE.		Blame		N.V.			
Language	Gender	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	SUM	%
	Arabic		154	197	204	295	70	116	356	353	12	17	1	1	1776
English		222	211	256	331	82	85	361	319	5	10	1	1	1884	51
	<i>F</i>	376	408	460	626	152	201	717	672	17	27	2	2	3660	
	Presentage	10	11	13	17	4.2	5.5	19.6	18.4	0.46	0.7	0.05	0.1	100	

This slight difference is significant in revealing the pragmalinguistic and pragmatic transfer of some linguistic actions from the native language (Indonesian) into the L2s (Arabic and English). It is also apparent that the frequency distribution of the occurrences regarding gender varies. In other words, the female students used more strategies than male

students. Having the five universal apology strategies, the promise for forbearance is the highest used strategy with 19.6% by male students and 18.4% by female students. The second should be the taking on responsibility with 13% by male students and 17% by female students. The third strategy with high occurrences should be the explanation or



account with 10% by male students and 11% by the female students. The least used strategy was the repair strategy, with 4.2% by the male students and 5.5% by the female students. The other two new supportive moves are the lowest used by male and female students. These strategies will be discussed accordingly.

### **Promise for forbearance**

The students' use of the promise for forbearance strategy in the Arabic and English data is situation-dependent. Therefore, the frequency distribution is relatively different in the eight situations. The finding was unexpected and suggested that the selection might be affected by the context-internal (e.g., type of offense) than context-external (e.g., social power & social distance).

Yet, the strategy promise for forbearance represents the most used strategy by the male and female students with 1346 occurrences in the Arabic and English languages. This finding differs from the findings of previous research, such as (Al-Luhaibi & Ya'llah, 2014; Cohen et al, 1986; Dendenne, 2016; Harb, 2016; Jebahi, 2011; Mišić Ilić, 2017; Saleem & Anjum, 2018; Samarah, 2016; Taguchi, 2011b; Winda, 2014) who concluded that the promise for forbearance strategy was among the least frequently used strategies and it was not a preferable strategy.

Surprisingly, the findings show that male students promise more than female students. For example, in the Arabic language, the male students used 355 (44%) and female students used 352 (37%) promise occurrences, whereas in the English language, the male students used 335 (35%), and female used 304 (31%) promise occurrences.

Regarding the expressions used to convey the promise strategy, the findings show that the students used explicit and implicit expressions. On the one hand, the students use the explicit performative verbs of promise, such as the performative verb 'a'iduka' (lit. promise) in Arabic and the performative verb 'promise' in the English language. On the other hand, the students use expressions that imply the speech act of promise for forbearances, such as the intensifiers or pragmatic markers that refer to Allah's name, such as *Insha'Allah bi'ethnillah*, and *astaghfirullah*.

There is still controversy about whether these indirect expressions are independent strategies or just expressions and intensifiers attached to the speech acts of promise. In terms of this controversy, previous studies categorized the pragmatic marker *insha'Allah* as an independent strategy that evokes Allah's name (Ruba Fahmi Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006, p. 1913; Jebahi, 2011, p. 654). The findings of this research further support the claim that the expressions that are attached to the name of Allah are intensifiers or pragmatic markers attached to the speech acts of promise to describe the speakers' commitment to fulfilling the promise

(Al-Rawafi & Gunawan, 2019; Aziz, 2000; Nureddeen, 2008).

In other cases, the students intensify their promises by swearing by the almighty God 'Allah.' Swearing has been found as an independent strategy of apology and used to intensify expressing embarrassment (Al-Zumor, 2011, p. 25) and justify lack of intent (Ugla & Abidin, 2016, p. 35).

### **Taking on responsibility**

Based on the data in table 6, the strategy taking on responsibility is the second most used strategy of the supportive moves. Even though the taking on responsibility strategy is the "most explicit, most direct and strongest apology" (Nureddeen, 2008, p. 290), people of some cultures consider it a hard task to take responsibility, such as shifting responsibility from S by Arabs (Al-luhaibi & Ya'llah, 2014, p. 19). This research claims that Indonesian students take responsibility for the offense. Referring back to the data in Table 5, the strategy taking on responsibility was the second indirect strategy used by the students in the Arabic and English languages with 1023 occurrences. This strategy consists of sub-strategies such as accepting the blame, expressing self-deficiency, expressing a lack of intent, recognizing others as a deserving apology, feeling guilty, expressing embarrassment, and refusal to acknowledge the guilt. The students (both male & female) tend to prefer the sub-strategy accepting the blame as an avoidance device (Holmes, 1989; Wouk, 2006) than denying the offense. Having gender in taking responsibility for the offense, it appears that the female students are more responsible for acknowledging the offense, which does not support the claim that "male take more responsibility than the female" (Holmes, 1989, p. 200). Overall, the selection of this strategy is situation-dependent, where social and contextual factors determine the selection. For example, situation 2 (late to school) scores the least frequency occurrences compared to situation 3 (smoking) with the most frequency occurrences. To be precise, the findings reveal that this strategy's distribution is based on the severity of the offense.

### **Expressing an account**

Referring back to the data given in table 6, the strategy expressing an account is the third most used strategy of the supportive moves with 784 occurrences, which come in different frequencies in the eight situations in the Arabic and English languages. The findings assure that gender signifies the use of accounts or explanations in the sense that the female students account more than the male students with 11% compare to 10% respectively. This slight difference supports the findings of (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006) that the female students accounted for 27.8%, whereas the male accounted for 27.4% when apologizing in a non-

native language, as well as the findings of (Holmes, 1989, p. 200). Besides, the results show that the distribution of the expressing an account is situation-dependent and offended-dependent, although “the social power between the offended and the offender is not equal” (Chu, 2016, p. 303). Therefore, the most occurrences of the expressing an account is in situation 1, 2 and 6 in which the degree of the offense is lower. Meanwhile, situation 7 (throw trash in the improper place) scores the least occurrences of expressing account. In these situations, the students provide explanations about what happened. This account might be explicit, as in *I used that (handphone) to help me memorize Qur’an and searching about school lessons (explicit)*, or implicit as in *everyone has his own business, Sir*.

**Offer of repair**

Referring back to the data given in Table 6, the strategy “offer of repair” is the fourth indirect strategy used by the students in the Arabic language and English language with 353 occurrences. Like the previous indirect strategies, the students distribute the offer repair strategy differently in the eight situations. Therefore, the distribution is

situation-dependent. In this regard, male and female students tend to repair the offenses of the eight situations, which is represented with 5.5% compared to 4.2%. This difference in the occurrences implies the fact that the female students consider repairing as a way of re-establishing solidarity and harmony between them and the offended parties, whereas male students tended to promise for forbearance than to repair the offense. For example, situation 7 (throw trash in improper place) scores the most occurrences of repair, whereas situation 2 (late to class) scores the least occurrences. It can be concluded that the social power and the social distance manipulate their selection of the strategy “offer and apology”. Studies in this concern do not come up with such a conclusion, e.g., (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Chu, 2016; Holmes, 1989). However, they just figure out the situations that participants offer a repair.

**Contextual factors**

Regarding the contextual factors, the findings show that the contextual factors affect the students’ selection and production of the apology strategies in the Arabic and English languages in several ways. Table 7 represents this influence.

**Table 6**  
*The Contextual Factors*

Situation	Type of offense	of	What is offended	The offended party	Imposition	Context-internal					Context-external				
											Social power		Social Distance		
						A < O	A > O	O	+SD	=SD	-SD	A =	+SD	=SD	-SD
S1	time		late to school	the dormitory community manager	L	A < O	--	--	--	=SD	--				
S2	time		late to class	the academic teacher	L	A < O	--	--	--	=SD	--				
S3	social gaffe		smoking	the dormitory superintendent	H	A < O	--	--	--	=SD	--				
S4	possession		having a mobile phone	the student’s supervisor	H	A < O	--	--	--	=SD	--				
S5	inconvenience		bothering a younger student	younger student	M	--	A > O	--	+SD	--	--				
S6	possession		Using belongings of older student	older student	M	A < O	--	--	+SD	--	--				
S7	inconvenience		Do not put trash in a proper place	the cleaning service	L	--	A > O	--	-	--	-SD				
S8	social gaffe		communication with opposite sex	the dormitory room teacher	H	A < O	--	--	--	=SD	--				

Based on the data in Table 7, there is a relationship between contextual factors and expressing an apology. For example, there is a correlation between the type of offense and the degree of the imposition in influencing the students’ selection and production of the speech acts of apologizing. The highest the severity of the offense, the most the remorse. In other words, the type of offense is a matter of fact for the students and varies from one language to another.

To be precise, the influence is apparent in the Arabic language than in the English language in the sense that some offenses like time exhibit little frequency occurrences of apology strategies compared to other types of offenses like an inconvenience. Consequently, the female and male students apologize differently in the Arabic language regarding the offense type. For example, the female students are likely to apologize for the offense of time more often, whereas the male

students apologize for the inconvenience offense more often.

On the contrary, in the English language, the students use identical semantic formulas in the four types of offense. The severity of offense influences gender in the selection and production of the speech acts of apologizing in the sense that the female students employ more apology strategies than male students. This finding is relatively different from previous studies, which state, “females apologize for light offenses more often, whereas males apologize for heavy or more weight offenses more often” (Holmes, 1989, p. 203).

Regarding the external context, the research reveals that social power and social distance affect the students’ selection of the semantic formulas in Arabic and English. In other words, the statuses of

the offended party have an impact on the students’ apology. The more power the offended party possesses, the stronger the apology will be. Regarding social distance, the students do not consider this factor as a big influence on their apologies. Thus, they apologize to their friends than their academic teachers.

### Pragmatic transfer

Pragmatic transfer occurs in both languages. It appears that the students exhibit less pragmalinguistic transfer in the English data compared to the Arabic data. Therefore, the discussion of the pragmatic transfer in this study will be limited only to the pragmatic transfer in the Arabic language. Table 8 presents the main areas in which the pragmatic transfer happens.

**Table 7**  
*Pragmatic Transfer in Arabic and English*

	Interference	Male		Female	
		F	%	F	%
Overgeneralization (Ellis,1997) L2 Proficiency impediments 'pragmatic competence' (Takahashi, 1996; Ellis, 1997)	1. Using not accurate IFID	138	27%	309	38%
	2. Improper pragmatic forms	127	24%	78	10%
	3. Apologetic lexical shifting	14	3%	14	2%
	4. Performative verb ' <i>khilaf</i> '	41	8%	47	6%
	5. Phonological transfer	18	3%	22	3%
Misinformation (Ellis, 1997)	6. Misuse of pronominal	45	9%	311	38%
	7. Word selection	52	10%	16	2%
	8. Misconception	65	13%	16	2%
	9. Idioms transfer	8	2%	0	0%
Total	n=9	508	100	813	100

Based on the data in Table 6, the students’ pragmatic transfer occurs in three linguistic areas, namely, overgeneralization, L2 proficiency impediments (pragmatic competence), and misinformation. These categories are listed under two main areas of transfer, namely, micro-negative transfer and macro-negative transfer. **Micro-negative transfer** occurs due to the lack of linguistic actions in the first L1 language (e.g., Indonesian language).

For example, the pragmatic transfer occurs to the lack of proficiency in various domains, such as word selection: the use of modal verbs, past tense forms, and the final [-s], pronominal, and propositional. Direct transfer from their L1, such as conceptualization and omissions/additions of some linguistic items that are not in the L1 or L2, ‘I am sorry,’ which becomes after omission as ‘I sorry.’

These types of errors are categorized as ‘micro-transfer’ because they merely affect a single constituent inside the sentence and are likely less affect the pragmatic meaning of the sentence. In addition, the results find that few respondents use idioms in their responses to promising not to violate the school rules. These idioms are in the English data and translated by the students into Arabic. For example, the English idiom ‘reinvent the wheel,’

which is translated as ‘*lan u’aidu iktra Al-ajalah*’, hence this idiom is not known in the Arabic language. This happens due to the students’ low proficiency in selecting and producing accurate speech acts in the Arabic language. **Macro-negative transfer** occurs when the students transfer apology semantic formulas from their L1 into the L2s (Arabic & English), which may cause L2 Proficiency impediments in performing the ‘pragmatic competence’ in the target language, as in ‘I am sorry,’ which is transferred from the apologetic formula ‘*saya maaf*’. It also occurs due to the misuse of linguistic actions in the target language, as in the ‘*ana khilaf ya ustadz*,’ which means (lit. I am different, Oh teacher) to be used as an apologetic formula with the meaning ‘I am sorry, I was mistaken.’ This pragmatic competence impediment is attributed to the use of improper pragmatic form, apologetic lexical shifting, the misuse of performative verbs, and the phonological disorder. Consequently, their apologies look like formula-apology rather than genuine-apology.

Consequently, the huge gap in the degree of the pragmatic transfer reflects the influence of the proficiency level in the L2s. These findings do not confirm the previous study by (Takahashi, 1996) where she found that the L1 has no direct effect,

either positive or negative, on the students' transferability perception of requests in English; rather, their perception was influenced by their proficiency in the L2.

## CONCLUSIONS

The students used typical Head acts and Supportive Moves strategies in both languages. Specifically, the students tended to use less direct apology strategies more than direct apology strategies in the Arabic language, 49% Head Acts vs. 51% Supportive moves. In the Head Act semantic formula, the students prefer to use the less formal sub-strategy "expression of regret" with most occurrences in the two languages in the eight situations. In the supportive moves semantic formula, the students tended to use the "promise for forbearance" strategy with more occurrences. This is due to the impact of the social power and dominance between the offender and the offended party. There is a huge gap in the level of performing the speech acts of apology between Arabic and English. It can be attributed to the fact that the Arabic language is staffed by teachers of lack quality where qualified teachers of the Arabic language are assigned to teach Islamic Education. Due to the pragmatic transfer, the boarding school students perform less to perceive native-like apology strategies, particularly in the Arabic language. However, their politeness was measured high through the use of various intensifiers, such as *jiddan* 'very', *haqqan* 'really,' and *wallahi* in the Arabic language and so, really, and very in the English language. Moreover, there are expressions manifesting the students' cultural and religious beliefs, such as the use of expressions related to the name of Allah (e.g., *insha'Allah*, *bi'ithni'Allah*). Besides, the selection and production of the apology strategies were influenced by internal factors rather than external factors. Thus, the students used more apologies to the younger students than to the academic teachers. Thus, female students tended to use typical apology occurrences to situations with different degrees of imposition (light, middle, and severe), whereas male students tended to be selective. To this end, the boarding school students' apologies sound as self-humbling in the sense that they contain expressions indicating their low social power, which is released by down-grader expressions such as 'my stupidity.' It can be said that the lack of the students' pragmatic competence, grammatical competence, and proficiency in the Arabic and English language as non-native languages make their apologies sound formulaic-oriented rather than genuine-oriented.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study receives a fund from the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture under the

scholarship program *Beasiswa Unggulan*. I appreciate the Indonesian Government for funding me to conduct this study, as it is part of my Ph.D. project in interlanguage pragmatics of the Islamic Boarding Schools in Indonesia.

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