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**Amin Karimnia<sup>a</sup>****Akbar Afghari<sup>b</sup>**<sup>a</sup>Islamic Azad University, Fasa Branch<sup>b</sup>Islamic Azad University, Khorasgan Branch**On apologizing in Persian: A socio-cultural inquiry**

The present study attempts to outline the degree and type of use of apology strategies in Persian and elaborate on the socio-cultural attitudes and values of this community. The informants were 330 college educated adults in Shiraz, Iran. The corpus examined was 3300 responses to a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) that consisted of 10 different social situations of varying severity of offense, strength of social relationship and power between hypothetical speakers and hearers. The survey was written in Persian to elicit responses that approximate verbal apologies that might be given in these situations. The researchers analyzed the corpus to determine the strategies used and the frequencies of their use. Although this is a study in its societal context, results supported earlier findings suggesting the universality of apology strategies; however, the selection of apology strategies in this study reinforced the culture-specific aspect of language use. Despite the fact that a restricted classification of strategies was used as a model for analyzing the data, the results are expected to be conducive to cross-cultural comparisons.

**Key words:** speech acts; politeness; cross-cultural pragmatics; apologies; language and culture; socio-pragmatics; Persian.

**1. Introduction**

Mere knowledge of language is not enough. For one to be able to communicate one's meaning functionally, one has to have both knowledge of the language and the social conventions that affect it (Sharifian 2005). Breakdowns in com-



munication usually occur as a result of the discrepancies that exist between two given cultures. Language contains formulae the uses of which are basically governed by social contexts. Using these formulae in a proper context demands awareness of both linguistic knowledge and the social rules that encompass it (Afghari and Karimnia 2007). Therefore, different studies on intercultural problems and cross-cultural pragmatics have gained importance over other types of linguistic studies recently. 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.

Although a considerable number of research done in the area of apology, few research done on apology in Persian (e.g., Eslami Rasekh 2004; Afghari 2007; Shariati and Chamani 2010). The present study, therefore, attempts to outline the type and extent of use of apology strategies in Persian and hence shed light on the socio-cultural attitudes and values of this community.

## 2. Related literature

### 2.1. *On apologizing*

Searle and Austin made intention central to the distinction between the meaning of the words in an utterance – locutionary meaning – and illocutionary force (Goody, 1978). Illocutionary force refers to the communicative force of the utterance, i.e., communicative purpose or intention (Van Dijk 1977: 198) which can basically be judged by the speaker although it can often be deduced from the communicative event and/or context. A third sub act is the perlocutionary act which relates to the effect brought about on the audience as a consequence of an utterance (Van Dijk 1977: 199; Levinson 1983: 236). However, the term ‘speech act’ is usually used to refer only to the illocutionary force, consequently narrowing the scope of the term of speech act only to the intention of the speaker (Yule 1996: 49; Levinson 1983: 236).

Some kinds of linguistic acts by their nature threaten face (face threatening acts – FTAs). Yule (1996: 61) refers to such an act as a saying that “represents a threat to another individual’s expectations regarding self-image”. Acts may threaten the speaker (S) or the hearer (H). The factors used by actors to assess



the danger of FTAs include the power differential between S and H, the social distance between S and H and the ranking of imposition in the relevant culture (Brown and Levinson 1987: 74).

Brown and Levinson (1987: 70) assert that apologies are acts that express negative politeness: they signal the speaker's awareness of having impinged on the hearer's negative face, restricting H's freedom of action in some way. Apologizing, unlike face attacks such as insults, has a positive effect on the part of the hearer (Holmes 1995: 155). To apologize is to attempt to placate or maintain H's face; therefore, it is an inherent face-saving act for H (Edmondson et al. 1984: 121). Brown and Levinson (1987: 68) assert that apologies threaten S's positive face because they directly damage S's positive face wants (that S's actions be approved and liked).

For Holmes (1995: 155) apology is a speech act that is intended to remedy the offense for which the apologizer takes responsibility and, as a result, to rebalance social relations between interlocutors. For Goffman (1971: 140) an apology is one type of 'remedy' among others. Another explanation of the nature of apology is given by Fraser (1981: 262) who argues that apologizing is at the least taking responsibility for the infraction and expressing regret "for the offense committed, though not necessarily for the act itself". Olshtain and Cohen (1983: 22) perceive apology as a social event when they point out that it is performed when social norms are violated. Bergman and Kasper (1993: 82) emphasize this view as they see that the reason for apology is to reestablish social relation harmony after the offense is committed.

The apology act is classified by linguists according to various criteria. Divisions are based on external factors such as object of regret or the situation. For Goffman (1971), however, at a certain level, apology is a class in itself within a broader category: what he calls remedial work. For him, the remediation can be carried out via one of three devices: accounts, requests and apologies. The common usage for an account is an excuse or an explanation, in an attempt to transfer responsibility to a third party. Strategies used to do so include not admitting commission of the act, claiming ignorance of the effects of the act and claiming impaired competence. Requests consist of "asking license of a potentially offended person to engage in what could be considered a violation of his rights" (112). An apology is produced after the offense but it is different in that the offender accepts responsibility for the offense and, by expressing regret, apologizing, which is not clear in accounts.



For Coulmas (1981), it is possible that people offer apologies without really feeling responsible for the offense, e.g. when the speaker apologizes on behalf of others or another, or where the offense cannot be avoided. In such cases, although the cause of the regret is not indebteding, the speaker still shows concern for the interlocutor for whom the object of offense is an unpleasant event. Coulmas claims that this type of apology is similar to expressions of sympathy and therefore, similar forms are used (I'm sorry); Coulmas goes on to argue, "at one end, apologies border and gradually merge into expressions of sympathy"; at the other end, where strong responsibility is felt by the speaker, apologies almost blend gradually into thanks (76). However, Tannen (1994: 47) argues that 'I'm sorry' is not always an apology; it can be used to achieve balance in the conversation, and if hearer understands it as an apology and responds accordingly, that may damage S's face wants.

An influential view on the classification of apologies is Goffman's (1971), in which he distinguishes two types of compensation: ritual and substantive. Following this distinction, Fraser (1981: 265) gives two motivations associated with substantive and ritualistic apologies; the speaker tries to remedy the harm or damage caused by the offense in substantive apology while the ritual apology may be produced as a habit associated with certain routines or when the respondent is not really responsible for the offense.

Another classification of apology is proposed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (cited in Obeng 1999: 714), to describe apology strategies in French. The classification outlines two main ways of performing an apology: act of apology and act of justification for wrongdoing. The first, which is an explicit apology, is the primary component while the second, which is an implicit apology, is a secondary one. Accordingly, apologies are either explicit (e.g. forgive me and I'm sorry), implicit use of one of the other strategies), or complex (explicit apology + implicit apology). However, Obeng (1999) adds a 'compound apology' (implicit apology + implicit apology), which can be considered as a fourth type of apology within the same paradigm.

People usually apologize using semantically different types of expressions; therefore, apology strategies are often described according to their semantic formulae. Different classifications introduced by different scholars often overlap and while some lists are extended and detailed, others are rather broad. It is also worthy of attention that newer classifications introduced and consequently provide more comprehensive views than previous categorization models (cf. Fraser



1981; Olshtain and Cohen 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Holmes 1989; Bergman and Kasper 1993).

Fraser (1981) provides an extended list of strategies which includes announcing apology, stating obligation to apologize, offering to apologize, requesting H to accept the apology, expressing regret, requesting forgiveness, acknowledging responsibility, promising forbearance, and offering redress. Fraser analyzed these strategies mainly on the basis of expressions of responsibility and regret, and noted that it is often the case that more than one of these strategies can be combined to perform an apology for a single offense (pp. 263–265).

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) suggest the notion of ‘speech act set of apology’ stating that apologies are realized by one of five strategies: an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), an expression of responsibility for the offence, an account of cause of violation, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance. This set of strategies they propose is the most influential on other linguists’ descriptions and analyses of apology studies (22).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984: 206) proposed another classification of apology strategies. However, it is almost a rearrangement of the set of strategies proposed by Olshtain and Cohen above. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) provide five verbs (*regret*, *excuse*, *(be) sorry*, *forgive*, *pardon*) beside *apologize* which they consider as performative verbs in English (and hence IFIDs), while for Fraser (1981) only those expressions with an explicit mention of the verb *apologize* are considered performatives. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) state that the linguistic realization of apology can take one of two basic forms or a combination of them: the use of IFID (one of the verbs they considered performatives) and/or the use of an utterance that refers to a specified set of propositions, which relate to either the doing of the event, the violation of a norm or the recognition of damage. The latter include giving an explanation or account of cause explicitly (e.g. the bus was late) or implicitly (e.g. traffic is always heavy in the morning taking responsibility (ranging from strong self-humbling to complete denial of the offense), making an offer of repair (the compensation may be specified or unspecified), and promising forbearance. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) note that any propositions can be realized linguistically by various expressions; each can be used alone or with a selected IFID. It is worth noting that they do not include intensification as a strategy; but rather they view it as a different element that can be used alongside the strategies they identified to intensify the expression. They distinguish three types of intensification: intensifica-



tion within the IFID by the use of adverbials (e.g. very) or repetition; intensification external to the IFID by showing concern for H; or through the use of multiple strategies.

Another classification of apology strategies is provided by Holmes (1989: 200), who asserts that her categorization system was based on that of others (e.g. Fraser 1981; Olshtain and Cohen 1983; Owen 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Trosberg 1987). Her main categories include: explicit expression of apology (an offer of apology/IFID, an expression of regret and a request for forgiveness); an explanation or account; acknowledgment of responsibility (accepting the blame, expressing self-deficiency, recognizing H as entitled to an apology, expressing lack of intent, an offer of repair/redress); and a promise of forbearance.

Bergman and Kasper (1993) made use of another model to analyze their data: IFID; downgrading reducing the severity of offense, and reducing responsibility – including excuse and justification, claiming ignorance and denial); upgrading or use of adverbials (i.e. intensifying the IFID); taking responsibility or admitting the offense (including self-blame, lack of intent and admission of fact); offer of repair; and verbal redress (concern for the hearer and promises of forbearance).

## ***2.2. The related empirical research***

One of the influential empirical works in speech act realization is a project called “the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns” (CCSARP). This project focused on requests and apologies and aimed at establishing native speakers’ patterns of realization, comparing speech acts across languages and establishing the similarities and differences between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs) in the realization of these acts (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 196). The investigation involved eight languages: Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian-French, Danish, German, Hebrew, and Russian. The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used in collecting the data. The results showed that participants from different groups used similar strategies and that there were cultural preferences in their use. The essential components of an apology for the majority of NNSs and NSs were explicit apology expressions and accounts.



Since then many studies have been carried out to investigate apology realization and speaker perception using different approaches. Holmes (1989) used an ethnographical approach to collect remedial exchanges produced by adult NS of New Zealand English (NS NZE). Trosberg (1987) employed role play in a study that involved native speakers of British English (NS BE), native Danish speakers (NS Dan) and Danish learners of English (Dan-En). The DCT was used by House (1988) to study apology realization patterns by native speakers of British English (NS BE), native German speakers (NS Ger) and German learners of English (Ger-En). Kasper (1989) also used the DCT to look at apologies provided by Danish learners of English (Dan-En) and Danish learners of German (Dan-Ger). Bergman and Kasper (1993: 85) reviewed and compared the findings of these studies and found that for the majority of informants the essential components of apology were explicit apology expressions (IFIDs) and responsibility statements, while explanation, minimization of the offense, offering of repair and verbal redress (concern for the hearer and promise of forbearance) were optional and context-dependent.

Suszczyńska (1999) used a DCT to investigate the realization of apology in English, Hungarian and Polish, with focus on the linguistic form rather than the choice and arrangement of strategies. The investigation adopted a more detailed analysis, which the researcher claimed was required for understanding the different communicative styles. The researcher argued that the results suggest that the present politeness theory is not enough to explain the nature of these differences, which relate to culture-specific attitudes.

Bergman and Kasper (1993) carried out a study in Thai and American English, with the aim of finding out how contextual factors were perceived by Thai and American informants, how the selection of apology strategies is determined by contextual factors and the patterns of the intercultural and intracultural variability observable in the selection of apology strategies. The Dialog Construction (DC) Questionnaire they used showed that expressing an explicit apology (IFIDs) and taking on responsibility were the essential components, while verbal redress (concern for the hearer and promise of forbearance) was the least used strategy.

Eslami Rasekh (2004) carried out a comparative study between English and Persian in the area of speech acts and links them with different cultural values and norms. She compared the Persian speakers' use of face-keeping strategies in reaction to complaints with those of American English speakers' performance.



She analyzed in detail the use of the illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) strategies. The results revealed important differences in communicative styles of the two groups. The Persian speakers were shown to be more sensitive to contextual factors and change their face-keeping strategies accordingly whereas English speakers mostly used one apology strategy and intensified it based on contextual factors.

Afghari (2007) carried out another study in Persian using the DCT to investigate the range of strategies used in performing the speech act of apologizing in Persian. The findings of his study indicated that in Persian – as in the other languages used in western societies (Olshtain and Cohen 1983; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984), apologies generally fit within the framework of the categories explored and discovered by such western studies. Also, an explicit expression of apology and an acknowledgement of responsibility were shown to be the most frequent apology formulas offered across the majority of the apology situations. The findings also revealed that the most intensified apologies were offered to intimate friends with no dominance over the apologizer and the least intensified apologies were offered to strangers with no dominance over the apologizer. It is shown that the most intensified apologies are offered to friends and the least intensified apologies are offered to strangers. Similarly, the addressee's dominance over the speaker also seems to result in more intensified apology utterances.

Shariati and Chamani (2010) conducted a study to explore the realization of apology speech act and also to examine the frequency, combination, and sequential position of apology strategies in Persian to see how the universality of apologies should be considered in this language. The results demonstrated that explicit expression of apology with a request for forgiveness was the most common apology strategy in Persian and that this strategy together with acknowledgement of responsibility formed the most frequent combination of apology strategies in Persian. The same apology strategies used in other investigated languages was common in Persian; however, preferences for using these strategies shown to be culture-specific.

Al-Zumor (2011) carried out an investigation on English apology strategies as employed in various social situations by Arab learners of English studying in India. The strategies were compared and contrasted against the strategies elicited in the same situations from Indian English speakers, American English speakers, and British English speakers. Pragmatic transfer from Arabic was also exam-



ined. The study findings revealed that the religious beliefs, concepts and values were responsible for many deviations in the Arab learners' language from that of the native speakers.

Jebahi (2011) examined the use of the speech act of apology by Tunisian university students. A hundred students whose mother tongue was Tunisian Arabic were randomly selected for the study. Discourse completion test (DCT) was used to elicit apology strategies by the subjects. The findings suggested that Tunisian university students used statement of remorse most in three main situations where the offended is: (i) a close friend, (ii) old in age and (iii) having the power to affect the offender's future. A noticeable percentage of subjects denied responsibility for the offence and shifted responsibility to other sources using accounts. Other less used strategies were: self-castigation, offer of repair, blaming the victim, invoking Allah's name, intensification, minimization, and humour. This work can have implications in intercultural communication.

Tehrani et al. (2012) investigated the different primary and secondary strategies the Iranian EFL students use in different situations and the effect of gender on this. A questionnaire was developed based on Sugimoto's (1995) to compare the apology strategies used by male and female students, only gender was examined as a variable. The results showed that the Statement of remorse was the strategy most frequently used by male and female respondents across the sample and female participants used this strategy more frequently than male participants. Moreover The four primary strategies used by the male respondents were accounts, compensation reparation, negative assessment of responsibility (30%, 20%, 15%, 15%, respectively), while those used by female respondents were compensation, Showing lack of intent to do harm, accounts, reparation (20%, 20%, 15%, 10%, respectively). Male respondents tended to use negative assessment of responsibility more than their females, counterparts (15% and 5%, respectively). Female respondents used the strategy of promise not to repeat offense in 10% of the situations, while their male counterparts did not use this strategy at all.

### 3. Methodology

Apology research has primarily addressed the production of apology, i.e. the strategies used to convey the contextual factors and the illocutionary act that influence the choice of these strategies. To study the reaction of hearers to differ-



ent apology strategies in a particular cultural setting requires a prior knowledge of the kind of strategies used in apology in that cultural context; therefore, this study focuses on the production of apology strategies, namely, the type and extent of apology strategies used. The methodological framework is based on the assumptions that there are certain variables that affect the choice of strategy proposed by politeness theory, or the linguistic means, of a ‘speech act’ (Brown and Levinson 1987). These variables are mainly situational (intra-cultural) such as the perception of social distance and power relations while some are culture-specific (cross-cultural) such as the perception of the degree of imposition in an FTA and to what extent a certain violation is considered offensive. This study attempts to describe the type of apology strategies used in Persian in different contexts and with different types of offenses; therefore, the elicitation procedure chosen for this study was the DCT, first used by Blum-Kulka (1982).

Research on the methods used in speech act and pragmatics studies pin pointed the limitations of the DCT in comparison to that of naturally occurring data: the DCT responses are found to be shorter, less face-attentive and less emotional (Golato 2003). In spite of its disadvantages, the researchers believe that the DCT can be a useful instrument for providing a preliminary look at cultural preferences in the performance of apologies, such as the present study attempts to do, although clearly further studies with higher quality ethnographic data will be required to obtain a fuller picture.

The test is composed of ten situations representing different social contexts (see Appendix A). All contexts in the test are controlled by situational variables, i.e., ‘social distance’ and ‘power’, and a culture-specific factor, i.e. the degree of imposition in an FTA. Three different levels of social distance were used to roughly represent different degrees of familiarity between participants. Closeness is represented by the relationship between friends, distant relationship by participants who do not know each other (strangers) and a middle status of social distance is represented by acquaintances. Power is represented by three levels: high-low (the speaker has power over the hearer), low-high (the hearer has power over the speaker) and equals (no participant has power over the other). Offenses represent different kinds. Offenses used in these situations are described as serious or mild. Judgment of the offense as serious or mild is determined without looking at the offense in its context. For example, ‘ruining a magazine’ and ‘damaging a car’ are judged without reference to the other contextual factors.



In all the situations selected for the present study, the offenses damage H's negative face, except in Situations 3 (failed student) and 8 (borrowed money) where the transgression damages H's positive face. In other words, while all offenses are FTAs that jeopardize hearer's wants to be free from imposition, the offenses in Situations 3 and 8 are positive face threatening acts, where S threatens H's wants that his traits and wants are admired and liked.

Each situation was designed to represent a social context to make it liable to elicit various strategies. Nonetheless, while each situation is exclusive, contrasting pairs differ in at least one controlling factor. Some of the situations were chosen from other studies as they were judged suitable to fit in the frame of variables described above: situations 10 (damaged car), 2 (damaged magazine), 3 (failed student) and 4 (borrowed book) are adopted from the study reported by Bergman and Kasper (1993). For these situations, the controlling factors are similar to that study; only slight modifications have been made to make them culturally suitable and linguistically simpler. For example, the offenses in Situations 2 (Damaged magazine) and 3 (failed student) were slightly changed but the weight of the offense was kept as it had been: 'mild' in 2 and 'serious' in 3. Moreover, Situations 6 (falling bag) and 9 (late for interview high-low) are from the CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984). These situations were chosen because they represent contexts with controlling factors that were required in the study, and they are appropriate in the Persian cultural context. Situation 7 (delayed message) is from Bergman and Kasper (1993), but the social status of the interlocutors has been changed to provide a required context. Situation 5 (wrong office) was designed to test reactions to mild unintentional offences that often occur in everyday life. While Situation 1 (late for interview low-high) was constructed to provide another context of power differential, both situations 9 (late for interview high-low) and 1 (late for interview low-high) were selected to test informants' reactions to time offenses. Situation 8 (borrowed money) was designed to provide a context with a serious integrity offense.

The DCT were first given to two professors of Persian Language and Literature who were experts in discourse analysis and well aware of cross-cultural politeness to check the appropriateness of the clarity and language of the situations and to ensure that the situations were realistic, that the distribution of controlling factors among items was balanced and that each item was contextually distinct. As a result, some modifications were made; for example Situation 5 (wrong office) was introduced since the former chosen situation which was about tossing



on somebody's foot was seen as very similar to Situation 6 (falling bag); and 2 (damaged magazine) was elaborated. Then the DCT was administered to a group of sixteen non-English language and non-linguistics specialists participants to test the clarity and the contextual appropriateness of the items to elicit the speech act under study and to check whether the dialogue elicited apologies and not other speech acts. As a result, Situation 5 (wrong office) was elaborated.

Following Bergman and Kasper (1993) the situations in the final DCT were randomized then completed by 165 female and 165 male adult native speakers of Persian doing higher studies in different majors, all residents of Shiraz, the capital of Fars province, Iran. The age range of respondents was from 19 to 45, but the majority (about 75%) were between 19 and 30 years old. Informants were asked to read the situations carefully and complete the dialogue as naturally and realistically as possible in their everyday language, providing the exact expressions they would say in such situations, i.e. informants were not asked clearly to provide apologies.

#### 4. Data analysis and discussion

The analysis is based on the assumption that the answer given roughly approximates what the informant would say in a similar situation. Table 1 shows the number of valid responses for each situation. Invalid answers excluded from the analysis were responses in which informants reversed the roles of the speaker and the hearer, the respondent misunderstood the situation or the basic task required-e.g. the response is an answer to the prompt, such as 'No' in Situation 10 (damaged car) – or prompts that were not completed at all.

Table 1. The number of valid responses for each situation.

Situation	Valid responses
1	327
2	321
3	324
4	330
5	327
6	330
7	330
8	324
9	312
10	321



The remainder of the responses was considered valid in the sense that the informant understood the task and the situation. This caused a complication in the study, namely how to deal with the answers that are logical and appropriate but exhibit none of the apology strategies being studied. These included responses such as ‘I had an accident’ for Situation 10 (damaged car) and ‘Come in’ for Situation 9 (late for an interview: High-low). The latter situation registered the highest frequency of such expressions. When selecting the first type of response, it is very likely that the respondent is not apologizing (S only reports the events; see explanations; section 4.1.3), choosing the second type, it is obvious that the informant was opting out, reflecting the informant’s perception of power (in high-low contexts the offender does not necessarily apologize). The opting out choice is a pragmatic choice as any strategic choice used in speech act performance. Keeping a secret, lack of interest, avoidance of imposition and embarrassment are among the factors that can lead to an opting choice (Bonikowska 1988).

The researchers decided to take into account all the logical, realistic responses; therefore, the percentages given are of ‘strategy use in the responses given for contexts that call for apology’. However, Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of expressions that bear none of the apology strategies in this study.

Table 2. Frequencies of the use of reporting and other expressions in all the situations.

Situation	Frequencies and percentages
1	12/4
2	3/1
3	21/7
4	0/0
5	12/4
6	21/6
7	12/4
8	12/4
9	69/22
10	27/8

\*the first number in parentheses shows frequency and the second one shows percentage.

The corpus obtained consists of 3246 valid responses. The valid responses were analyzed to identify the type of strategies used. As the study is of a descriptive nature, frequencies, percentages and the means of these percentages are used. The main aim is to find out the apology strategies used and the frequency of their use.



#### 4.1. *Use of strategies in situations*

The categories of the apology speech act are defined by scholars with differing ranges of breadth. Some classify multiple speech events under the same category; others treat them as separate strategies.<sup>1</sup> However, all studies tend to circulate around the same kinds of speech events no matter what names are given to these speech events.

In the present study, the data were collected and categorized as various strategies based on the illocutionary force of the expression. The model for analysis limits strategy definitions to a greater extent than do other models (see the analysis of strategies below). However, a number of the definitions are identical to those identified in other studies: illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), explanation, taking responsibility, offer of repair, promise of forbearance, minimization of offense, and intensification of apology (see Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Holmes 1989; Trosberg 1987). Other less frequently studied strategies that have been studied here are ‘concern for the hearer’ and ‘denial or avoidance of responsibility’. Moreover, the data show certain expressions bearing a pragmatic force that can be categorized as humor. Another point observed is the tendency to use IFIDs at the end of a compound apology. This has also been accounted for separately in the analysis, as it may be a culture-specific feature.

##### 4.1.1. *IFIDs*

IFID is a category including the explicit use of apology expressions that mean sorry, forgive me, etc. (see Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984: 206). Some examples in Persian are:

- (1) *moteassefam* (I am sorry).  
*bebakhshid* (forgive me).  
*ozr mikhaam* (excuse me).

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<sup>1</sup> In transcriptions from Persian, the letter “a” symbolizes a low front vowel which is close to the sound of “a” in the word *cat*. The “aa” sequence, on the other hand, stands for a low back vowel which is close to the sound of “a” in the word *father*.



Shariati and Chamani (2010) reported that *bebakhshid* (forgive me) was the most frequent IFID in the corpus. This is in line with Afghari (2007), yet, not Eslami-Rasekh (2004) who reported *ozr mikhaam* (excuse me) as the most common IFID in Persian. Whereas, an expression of regret *moteassefam* (I am sorry) was used less than other IFIDS. The findings of the present study in this regard confirms Shariati and Chamani (2010) and Afghari (2007).

As Table 3 demonstrates, informants used IFIDs in all ten situations with some frequency ranging from 30% to 95%. IFIDs were supplied with high frequency in response to distant relation situations. In comparing the distant relation situations, however, it becomes apparent that informants used fewer IFIDs (62% and 70%, respectively) in Situation 9 (late for interview: high-low) and 1 (late for interview: low-high), compared to Situation 5 (wrong office; 95%) and 6 (falling bag; 84%). This may be explained by the assertion that the offense in the latter situations calls for ritualistic use of IFIDs. The lowest frequency supplied was for Situation 10 (damaged car; 47%) and 3 (failed student; 30%), though they are relatively serious offense contexts. At the same time, more IFIDs were provided for Situation 5 (wrong office; 95%), Situation 2 (damaged magazine; 64%) and 4 (borrowed book; 62%), which are mild offense contexts. However, Situation 6 (falling bag) and 8 (borrowed money), which are relatively serious offense contexts, registered a high frequency of IFIDs (84% and 79%, respectively). In the latter case, this may be attributable to the type of face damaged, while a ritualistic use of IFID, when the respondent does not feel responsible for the offense (Fraser 1981: 265), is the possible cause of the high frequency in Situation 6 (falling bag).

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of IFIDs in all the situations.

Situation	IFIDs
1	228/70
2	204/64
3	96/30
4	204/62
5	309/95
6	276/84
7	192/58
8	255/79
9	192/62
10	150/47



#### 4.1.2. Final IFIDs

A pattern observed in the present corpus is the use of IFIDs at the end of the response. The possible explanation is that the informant intended to demonstrate that the IFID is not used only in a ritualistic sense. In other words, the informants emphasized the apology by using an IFID as the final utterance heard to ensure that the hypothetical hearer recognized the sincerity of the apology. Another explanation is that the informants used final IFIDs as a habit associated with specific routines or sympathy token when the respondent was not responsible for the offense (Fraser 1981: 265). Instances of final IFID fall into two patterns: the response begins with one IFID and ends with another, with other element(s) between them or the response begins with another strategy and ends with an IFID. For example:

(2) *moteassefam tu khune jaa gozaashtam farda baratun miaaram, bebakhshid.* (I am sorry, I left it at home but I will bring it tomorrow, excuse me.)

Expressions with more than one IFID and without any other expression or strategy between them are not considered in this classification since there is not any clear indication that the speaker intends to finish the expression with an IFID(though it is possible that the respondent wants to finish with an IFID).

Table 4. Frequencies and percentages of final IFIDs in all the situations.

Situation	Final IFIDs
1	12/4
2	36/11
3	6/2
4	12/4
5	15/5
6	21/6
7	15/5
8	72/22
9	9/3
10	12/4

Table 4 shows that participants used this strategy in all situations with notable but relatively low frequencies. Twenty-two percent of the respondents produced an IFID as the final strategy when they used other strategies in their apology in Situation 8 (borrowed money). This relatively higher frequency can be attributed



to the type of face damaged and the type of offense (integrity concerning money). The point that the most serious offence context elicited the most final IFIDs favors the explanation that final IFIDs were used to show the respondent's sincere regret.

#### 4.1.3. Explanations

An Explanation in this study is an expression that gives an account of the cause of the offense. In other words, the speaker explains why the damage or violation happened. Some examples in Persian are as follow:

- (3) a. *Fekr kardam otaaghe aghaye karimie* (I thought this was Mr. Karimi's office).
- b. *Tu terafik gir kardam* (I was stuck in a traffic jam).
- c. *Ketaab tu kifam bud amma az bas ajale daashtam un kife digam ra aavordam* (The book was in the bag but since I was in a hurry, I took another bag).

Both implicit and explicit Explanations have been considered. It is worth noting that accounts in which the informants just reported the event have not been included in the statistics. It is feasible, of course, that reporting is a proper apology if it is accompanied by one or more of the apology strategies or certain prosodic features. However, since the present study is based only on written answers it is also possible that the speaker did not have the least intention to apologize and consequently only reports the event. Therefore, responses which included only such kinds of expressions were not analyzed as Explanations.

Even with this restriction, Table 5 shows that respondents supplied a considerable number of Explanations. In each pair of situation that hypothetically differs in severity of offense and agrees in social distance, informants used more Explanations in situations with less severe offenses. Situation 10 (damaged car) and 2 (damaged magazine) are similar in social distance as well as in social status, but the offense in the latter is relatively less serious. However, far more Explanations were provided in response to this situation (93%) than the former (48%). Further evidence of the use of more Explanations in mild offense contexts can be seen in comparing Situations 3 (failed student; 57%) and 4 (bor-



rowed book; 88%), or Situations 7 (delayed message; 76%) and 8 (borrowed money; 74%). The same observation is relevant to Situation 5 (wrong office; 87%) and 6 (falling bag; 14%): more explanations were supplied for the situations with the less serious offense (see Table 5). Moreover, in situations with power differentials, we notice that more Explanations were used when the hypothetical apologizer is of a lower rank: Situation 3 (failed student; 57%) and 4 (borrowed book; 88%); Situation 9 (late for interview high-low; 70%) and 1 (late for interview low-high; 92%).

Table 5.

Situation	Explanation
1	300/92
2	297/93
3	186/57
4	291/88
5	285/87
6	45/14
7	249/76
8	240/74
9	219/70
10	153/48

#### 4.1.4. *Taking responsibility*

Taking responsibility refers to expressions in which the apologizer admits to having responsibility for the offense. In certain studies, the definition includes expressions of an offer of repair (Holmes 1989) or of denial of the offense (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984). In the present study, Taking Responsibility is limited to expressions in which the informant explicitly takes responsibility for the offense, such as regretting committing the offense, accepting the blame, expressing self deficiency showing that the offended is entitled to an apology, indicating lack of intent and/or admitting the offense. The following are some examples:

- (4) a. *Hagh daarid mano sarzanesh konid* (You have the right to blame me).
- b. *manzuri nadashtam* (I didn't say or do it intentionally).



- c. *dige rum namish tu suratetun negaah konam* (I can't look at your face any more).
- d. *rum siaah* (literally means 'my face is black', a humble way of showing regret and shame).

The data showed use of expressions in which a word that literally means 'face' is used; these expressions were also classified as taking responsibility since the expressions demonstrate regret and imply admission of the self-humbling or offense.

Table 6. Frequencies and percentages of taking responsibility in all the situations.

Situation	Taking responsibility
1	12/4
2	33/10
3	42/13
4	6/2
5	24/7
6	72/22
7	102/31
8	63/19
9	3/1
10	63/20

Taking responsibility is the most direct, most explicit and strongest apology strategy; nevertheless, Table 6 shows that participants provided this response in low frequencies in all situations. In certain situations, participants used more expressions of Taking responsibility: Situation 7 (delayed message; 31%), Situation 6 (falling bag; 22%), Situation 10 (damaged car; 20%), Situation 8 (borrowed money; 19%) and 3 (failed student; 13%). All of the five above situations are relatively serious offense contexts.

#### 4.1.5. *Offer of repair*

S may try to repair or pay for the damage caused by the offense. An offer of repair is often expressed explicitly. While stating an offer of repair is usually associated with the future time, expressions that demonstrate that the repair has already been done are also categorized as offer of repair in the present study. The following are two examples:



- (5) a. *Dorost mishe ishalla* (It will be fixed, if God wills).  
b. *Age khodaa bekhaad fardaa miaaramesh* (I will bring it tomorrow if God wills).

Table 7. Frequencies and percentages of offer of repair in all the situations.

Situation	Offer of repair
1	3/1
2	9/3
3	180/56
4	177/54
5	0/§
6	9/3
7	12/4
8	0/0
9	0/0
10	75/23

Table 7 shows that participants offered more repair for Situation 3 (failed student; 56%) and 4 (borrowed book; 54%). Situation 10 (damaged car) is the next in rating (23%). In all other situations, very low frequencies (0–4%) were supplied. This suggests that this strategy is context-dependent: two out of the three situations that elicited a considerable number of repairs are those in which material compensation can be provided.

#### 4.1.6. *Promise of forbearance*

In certain situations, the speaker may promise not to repeat the offense in future. While in most studies of apologies ‘promise of forbearance’ is a separate category, in Bergman and Kasper (1993) it is classified alongside ‘concern for the hearer’ as ‘verbal redress’. In this study it is seen that each strategy reflects a different attitude and is therefore considered as a separate strategy. Promise of forbearance is a clear confession of being responsible for the offense and performing it damages S’s positive face wants, while concern for the hearer does not necessarily imply any sense of responsibility and carries no risk of damage to S’s face; for example, in Situation 6 (falling bag), some participants showed concern for the offended person and at the same time denied responsibility of



the offense. Expressions classified in this category are direct and indirect promises of forbearance. The following are two examples of promise of forbearance:

(6) a. *Dige tekraar namishe.* (it will not happen again)

b. *Dige faramush namikonam.* (I will not forget again)

Table 8. Frequencies and percentages of promise of forbearance in all the situations.

Situation	Promise of forbearance
1	6/2
2	0/0
3	0/0
4	3/1
5	0/0
6	3/1
7	9/3
8	0/0
9	0/0
10	0/0

Informants generally supplied few occurrences of promises of forbearance (see Table 8). This probably reflects a social attribute; expressions of forbearance threaten positive face and are therefore avoided.

#### 4.1.7. *Concern for the hearer*

There are linguistic patterns that demonstrate concern for the hearer. In some studies, this strategy was not explicitly addressed (cf. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Holmes, 1989). The following two examples show this strategy:

(7) a. *Shokre khoda saalemid.* (thanks God you are safe)

b. *Ishallah ke toritun nist.* (If God wills you are not hurt)



Table 9. Frequencies and percentages of expressions of concern for the hearer in all the situations.

Situation	Concern for the hearer
1	0/0
2	15/5
3	42/13
4	3/1
5	3/1
6	102/31
7	6/2
8	36/11
9	3/1
10	3/1

Table 9 shows the frequency of occurrence of expressions of concern for the hearer which were offered more than promises of forbearance. Situation 6 (falling bag) registered the most expressions of concern (31%). Other situations that elicited concern are Situation 3 (failed student; 13%) and Situation 8 (borrowed money; 11%). This choice indicates that concern for the hearer is context-dependent and mainly influenced by the type of offense. In Situation 6 the informant offers compensation for physical damage and in Situations 3 and 8 the informant compensates for emotional harm.

#### 4.1.8. *Intensification*

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) treated intensification as an element within an apology strategy and not a separate apology strategy. However, the force of apology depends not only on the choice of an apology strategy but also on the number and type of strategies used in an apologetic utterance (compare between the use of an explanation only and the use of an explanation plus a taking responsibility expression). Taking this into account, an apology that consists of an IFID only (*I'm sorry*) does not have the apologetic power of another that contains an IFID and an intensification marker (*I'm deeply sorry*); therefore, in this study intensification is treated as a separate apology strategy. Alongside the use of adverbials (e.g. *very*) with the IFID and the repetition of the IFID, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) classified 'concern for the hearer' and use of more than one strategy as intensification. Using multiple strategies as an intention of intensification is dependent on the type of strategies used. In this study intensifi-



cation refers only to the use of adverbials (e.g., terribly, very, extremely, etc.) and repetition of IFID (e.g., *I'm sorry. Please forgive me.*) These examples clearly indicate the speaker's explicit intention of intensification:

- (8) a. *Kheili moteassefam.* (I am very sorry)  
 b. *Motessefam, bebakhshid.* (sorry, excuse me)

Table 10. Frequencies and percentages of intensification in all the situations.

Situation	Intensification
1	63/19
2	48/15
3	15/5
4	60/18
5	57/17
6	63/19
7	39/12
8	87/27
9	18/6
10	42/13

Table 10 displays that most situations elicited approximately the same degree of intensification. Situation 8 (borrowed money) registered the maximum quantity of intensification (27%). This statistic implies recognition that an offense involving integrity is the most serious; however, the fact that the other integrity context, Situation 3 (failed student), registered the least intensification can be attributed to the type of offense in the two contexts (i.e. persistent accusation of dishonesty is more serious than an unintentional error).

#### 4.1.9. *Minimization*

In some studies, minimization expressions were classified as 'downgrading' and, in these cases, the term refers to utterances or statements that minimize the severity of offenses as well as those that downgrade the Speaker's responsibility for the offense as these two examples show:

- (9) a. *Nim saa't ke touri nist.* (half an hour doesn't really matter)  
 b. *In ke masa'lei mohemmi nist.* (this is not an important problem)



In the present study, each strategy was classified separately; Minimization refers to utterances used to minimize the severity of the offense, (cf. Bergman and Kasper, 1993). Expressions that downgrade the responsibility for the offense were categorized as denial of responsibility since they can fit in a scale at one end of which the speaker can explicitly deny responsibility for the offense.

**Table 11.** Frequencies and percentages of minimization in all the situations.

Situation	Minimization
1	6/2
2	24/8
3	69/21
4	6/2
5	3/1
6	18/6
7	0/0
8	6/2
9	3/1
10	72/22

In Table 11, one can see that certain situations elicited more minimizations. Situation 10 (damaged car) and 3 (failed student) elicited more minimization (22%; 21%) than the other situations. Curiously, these two situations registered more minimizations than intensifications although they are serious offense contexts. This tendency to downgrade the offense in these situations can possibly be explained in relation to the perception of contextual factors. It is possible that in Situation 10 (damaged car), the respondents responded in proportion to the magnitude of the damage in relation to the damaged object (only the rear of the car was damaged), and in Situation 3 (failed student), the informants responded according to the feasible ability of the hypothetical S (the university teacher) to fix the problem (cf. offer of repair; section 4.1.5).

#### 4.1.10. *Denial of responsibility*

In previous studies, expressions that demonstrate ‘avoidance’ or ‘denial of the responsibility’ were classified with other strategy groupings. Bergman and Kasper (1993) classified both minimization of the offense and denial of responsibility as ‘downgrading’. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) classified all statements related to responsibility – ranging from strong self-humbling to complete denial of the offense – in one category. However, this researcher sees that ex-



pressions in which the informant explicitly takes responsibility (e.g. It is my fault.) reflect a different position than those in which responsibility is avoided or denied (e.g. It is not my fault). Expressions in this category range from those in which respondents avoid taking responsibility to expressions in which they directly blame another party as the following examples show:

- (10) a. *Be man rabti nadare.* (this is not up to me)
- b. *Ghesmate dige.* (it is fate anyway)
- c. *Man dorost gozaashtam, otoberos yeho tormoz kard* (I put it properly, but the bus stopped suddenly)

Table 12. Frequencies and percentages of denial of responsibility in all the situations.

Situation	Denial of responsibility
1	21/6
2	6/2
3	18/6
4	3/1
5	3/1
6	84/26
7	12/4
8	(9/3
9	(9/3
10	(21/7

Though the examples are few in numbers, Table 12 displays that denials of responsibility were used in nine situations. Situation 6 (falling bag) registered a considerable use of this strategy (26%). Almost a quarter of the informants indicated that it was not their fault that the bag fell on the passenger. Some explicitly accused either the bus driver (e.g. of bad driving) or the conductor (e.g. for not directing them where or how to place the bag). Some possible explanations to this are that informants endeavored to deny responsibility because of the possibility of physical harm involved in this context, or since the context suggests that the informants are not the direct cause of the offense respondents indicated that they are not responsible for the damage by denying responsibility for it.



#### 4.1.11. *Humor*

In this study, the data showed expressions in which the informants tried to be humorous. This was done in different ways, sometimes by using proverbs or expressions with a sense of teasing. For example:

- (13) *Bikhial, ghossash nakhor pir mishi.* (Take it easy! Don't be sad about it, you get old)

Table 13. Frequencies and percentages of humor in all the situations.

Situation	Humor
1	6/2
2	15/5
3	9/3
4	0/0
5	0/0
6	0/0
7	15/5
8	39/12
9	9/3
10	21/7

As Table 13 shows, informants used expressions that can be described as humorous in seven situations. While the use of this strategy is low (0–12%), interestingly, Situation 8 (borrowed money) registered relatively higher use of such expressions. Since the offense in this situation threatens H's positive face (integrity), it is considered the most serious offense. The relatively high use of humorous remarks in this situation implies that such expressions are used to minimize the great threat in the act. The fact that the other integrity offense context registered only 3% can be explained in light of the power differential (a teacher is not likely to behave humorously with a student in an official matter) or/and that the threat of the act in Situation 3 is not as serious as in Situation 8 due to the fact that the hypothetical speaker committed the offense inadvertently and it can be repaired (cf. offer of repair; section 4.1.5).



#### 4.2. *The overall use of strategies*

Table 14 shows the total frequencies and average percentages for the overall use of each strategy. The magnitude of use of strategies varies across situations. The two strategies used most frequently to realize apology are explanation (70%) and IFID (65%). Taking responsibility and intensification are far less frequent (13%; 15%) and there is very little use of promise of forbearance (1%), although forbearance theoretically applies to all situations. The relatively lower frequencies of offer of repair (14%) and concern for the hearer (7%) are due to their context dependency. Participants used final IFIDs, concern for the hearer, minimization and denial of responsibility with nearly the same frequency (6%-7%). Humor is the second least used strategy (4%), and it has been used more frequently in what appears to be the most severe offense context.

Table 14. Total frequencies and means of percentages of the use of each strategy in all contexts.

Strategy	IFID	F. IFID	Exp.	Res.	Rep.	For.	Con.	Min.	Int.	Hum.	Den.	Rep./other
Frequency	2106	310	2265	420	495	21	213	207	492	114	186	189
Mean %	65	7	70	13	14	1	7	7	15	4	6	6

Respondents' performance in this study provides evidence for the claims of universality of the speech act of apology and the set of apology strategies used in other apology studies. However, there is evidence that language use is culture-specific. This is clear when the findings of this study in Persian are compared to the results of other studies in the informants' first language that employed this same data collection technique.

**Table 15.** Apology strategies performance in the present study and other studies (House 1988; Kasper 1989 – cited in Bergman and Kasper 1993: 85).

Strategy	IFID	Exp.	Res.	Rep.	Min.	Int.	Hum.
Persian	65	70	13	14	7	15	4
British	80	3	70	15	13	40	9
German	69	5	66	13	11	31	4
Danish	72	18	49	13	9	22	8

The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was used by both House (1988) – to study apology realization patterns by British native speakers (NS BE) and German native speakers (NS Ger) – and Kasper (1989) to examine apologies provided by native speakers of Danish (NS Dan). For the majority of informants in



these studies, the essential components of apology were explicit apology expressions (IFIDs) and responsibility statements, while ‘explanation’, ‘minimization of the offense’, ‘offering repair’ and ‘verbal redress’ (‘humor’) were optional and context-dependent (Bergman and Kasper 1993: 85).

Moreover, Bergman and Kasper (1993) used the Dialogue Construction questionnaire to study the use of apology strategies by native speakers of English and native speakers of Thai. They reported that ‘taking responsibility’ and IFID were the most used strategies, “used in more than half of the possible cases”.

In all the above-mentioned studies, respondents used more intensification and more statements of taking responsibility than in this study, more importantly, informants in this study still provided far more explanations than those occurred in the above mentioned studies. This shows that, besides IFID, the primary strategy used in this cultural context is Explanation. At the same time, the comparison indicates that informants in this study are more reluctant to intensify the apology or take responsibility.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of this study cannot be generalized to all Persian speakers; however, they provide insights into the general view of politeness in this community and therefore suggest implications for intercultural communication. Concerning the claim that societal members tend to orient towards either negative or positive politeness (Lorenzo-Dus 2001: 108), the results suggest an orientation toward positive politeness as indicated by the respondents’ attempts not to damage their own positive face. Whether this orientation genuinely characterizes this community can only be determined by further research since the dominance of positive or negative politeness can be manifested in various ways in communication. However, in this study informants attempted to preserve their positive face by avoiding use of apology strategies (e.g., taking responsibility, intensification and promise of forbearance), which are most damaging to S’s face. Instead they relied on ‘less dangerous’ strategies i.e., IFID and explanation. IFID can be interpreted as ritualistic, while explanations carry no direct signal of apology and may therefore be used by the respondent as an excuse and avoidance of self-blame (cf. Goffman 1971: 112). Correspondingly, in order to reduce the threat of a strong apology, informants used unthreatening – or face saving – strategies



(humor, minimization, denial, and opting out) most frequently in five out of six serious offense contexts.

The finding that respondents apologized more often by use of IFIDs and Explanations in situations with less serious offenses, in almost each of the matched pairs of situations, supports the speculation that informants generally, by using Explanations, preferred not to apologize explicitly and that the informants used IFIDs in a ritualistic method. Although there are some other possible explanations of this use of IFIDs (encouraged by the relative weakness of the offense in these situations, and consequently the less face-threatening weight of the apology, respondents meant to use IFIDs to sincerely apologize, or as Tannen (1994: 46) argued that the IFID was used to achieve balance in the conversation), the interpretation of the ritualistic use of IFIDs is supported by the fact that in the most serious context, Situation 8 (borrowed money), informants used more final IFIDs suggesting that they were not convinced that the general use of IFIDs would effectively realize the apology. To indicate that they meant to use IFIDs to show genuine regret, they used IFIDs again in final position. To conclude, when dealing with an event that requires apologizing, participants were to a considerable extent aware that apologies damage their positive face, and this clearly affected their choice of apology strategy.

Due to the small sample size in the present study and the fact that respondents were all college students involved in higher studies, more research is needed incorporating more respondents and different social groups. As it was mentioned in the Methodology section, research on the methods used in speech act studies and pragmatics pin pointed the limitations of the DCT in comparison to that of naturally occurring data: the DCT responses are found to be shorter, less face-attentive and less emotional (Golato 2003); therefore, more reliable results could have been obtained if natural data was collected and analyzed. Although the situations in Appendix A were randomized, another drawback of this and any similar studies (e.g. House 1988; Suszczyńska 1999; Eslami Rasekh 2004; Afghari 2007; Sharifian 2005) is that the respondents can be affected by the order of the situations on the DCT (e.g. misunderstanding the task at the beginning (i.e. the first situation in the DCT), being influenced by the previous situation(s) or response(s), etc.). In every study where the DCT is used, the possible weak points of the ordering of the situations can be limited using different copies of the DCT with different ordering. In spite of its disadvantages, the researchers believe that the DCT can be a useful instrument for providing a preliminary look at cultural preferences in the performance of apologies, such as the present study



attempts to do, although clearly further work with higher quality ethnographic data will be needed to obtain a fuller picture.

The analysis and results of the present study suggest that to obtain a complete picture of the speech act of apology in the Iranian context, further research is imperative. Research investigating the degree to which speakers choose to perform the speech act of apology (or opt out), may yield more useful information for intercultural communication than the manner of apology. However, the analysis and classification of apology strategies according to their illocutionary force applied in this study seems to suggest that all strategies can be divided into two main categories: taking responsibility (S admits the offense and/or regrets it) and avoiding responsibility (S attempts to avoid responsibility by relying on explanations, minimization and/or denial). To what extent this is true, and whether there are other categories, is a topic for discussion and research.

It is also worth mentioning that since the weight of the offense in this study has not been assessed in relation to other contextual factors (social distance and power), reliable results about the relationship between social or contextual factors and the choice of strategies will require a different study. To assess the effect of contextual factors on the choice of strategies and also on their patterning informants need to rate these factors on a scale, rather than, as in this study, having the researcher rating, for example, the relative weight of the offense as mild or serious regardless of the social factors (social distance and power). Such a study will provide a more accurate assessment of the social or contextual factors (cf. Bergman and Kasper 1993).

The use of the IFID in final position indicates the importance of sequence and patterning of strategies in the realization of apology. Similar studies with other languages can illustrate universal or culture-specific rules of language use, and deeper analyses can offer greater understanding into the norms of use, hence shedding light on the subtle differences in speech act performance across cultures. For example, research on the patterns of strategies can disprove or prove the claim that use of explanations can sometimes be attributed to an attempt to avoid apologizing.

This can be determined by studies that scrutinize the extent of use of explanations with other strategies in which the apologizer admits the offense or shows regret (i.e. by taking responsibility or promising forbearance) in relation to the



use of explanations alongside other types of strategies such as minimizations and denial of responsibility.

More studies can also add to the understanding of culture-specific language use. For example, it is interesting that some conventionalized apology utterances in Persian center on the word that literally means ‘face’; the illocutionary force is an explicit admission of the self-humbling or offense. It is possible that such statements are derived from an expression in Persian that literally translates as ‘going the water of one’s face’ (*aaberoo raftan*) which is used to mean losing one’s positive face wants. For example, *aberuyam raft* that literary translates as ‘my water of face went away’. The present study also illustrates the use of religious words and phrases in everyday communication, for example:

- (14) a. *Be khodaa taghsire man nabud.* (I swear by God it was not my fault)
- b. *Be ghoraan ghsam ...* (I swear by Quraan ...)
- c. *Be Abolfazl...* (I swear by Abolfazl, a religious figure in Shiite, Islam, ...)
- d. *Be arvaathe khaake aaghaam ke ...* (I swear by my father’s soil spirit that ...)

They are used with varied illocutionary forces, possibly as fillers, hedges, or devices to soften the threat of an act. Studies into these areas are of great significance for understanding differences in language use and successful intercultural communication.

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## O ISPRIKAMA U PERZIJSKOM: SOCIOKULTURNA STUDIJA

Cilj je ovoga rada predstaviti tipove strategija ispričavanja i stupanj njihove uporabe u perzijskome jeziku te razmotriti odgovarajuće (uz njih vezane) društvenokulturne stavove i vrijednosti toga društva.

Ispitano je 330 visokoobrazovanih odraslih osoba u iranskom gradu Širazu. Korpus se sastoji od 330 odgovora na test dopunjavanja primjera diskursa kojega čini 10 situacija različitog stupnja uvredljivosti, jakosti društvenih odnosa te odnosa moći između zamišljenih govornika i slušatelja. Uпитnik je sastavljen na perzijskome jeziku da bi se dobili odgovori što sličniji usmenim isprikama koje bi se moglo upotrijebiti u sličnim situacijama. Korpus je analiziran s ciljem utvrđivanja korištenih strategija te njihove čestote. Iako je studija smještena u specifičan društveni kontekst, rezultati uvelike potvrđuju ranije nalaze koji govore u prilog univerzalnosti strategija ispričavanja. Međutim, odabir strategija ispričavanja u ovoj studiji potvrđuje ulogu vidova jezične uporabe karakterističnih za specifičnu kulturu.

Unatoč ograničenoj klasifikaciji strategija kao modelu za analizu, očekuje se da rezultati mogu biti polazište za daljne međukulturne usporedbe.

**Ključne riječi:** govorni činovi; uljudnost; interkulturalna pragmatika; isprike; jezik i kultura; sociopragmatika; perzijski jezik.



## Appendix A

The English equivalent of Persian DCT (Discourse Completion Test) given to Participants.

Please read the following description of situations and then write what you would SAY in each situation.

Age:      Sex:      Degree:      Native language:      University major:

1. Reza Amini applied for a job in a factory and had an interview with the manager. He was caught in a traffic jam and arrived half an hour late. Now the secretary takes him into the manager's office.

The secretary: This is Reza Amini.

The manager: You are here at last?

Reza: .....

2. Mina and Maryam are friends. Mina borrowed a magazine from Maryam, but a child at home tore the cover page. Now they are at Maryam's home. Mina is giving back the magazine to Maryam.

Maryam: Oh! What happened to the magazine?

Mina: .....

3. A university teacher mistook one student's exam paper for another due to the similarity in their names and failed him. The teacher knew that he made a mistake, and the student knew what happened and went to the teacher.

The student: What has happened Sir?

The teacher:

.....

4. A university student (female) borrowed her teacher's (male) book and promised to return it that day. When she arrived at university, she discovered that she forgot the book at home. Now she meets her teacher.

The teacher: Have you bought the book?

The student:

.....

5. Amin wanted to visit Omid in his new office at the university. She went to the university and opened a door of an office and went in supposing that it was Mr. Rezaee's office, but she discovered that it was somebody else's office (it was Mr. Karimi's). Amin and Mr. Karimi don't know each other. Amin opened the door and went in suddenly while Mr. Karimi was writing; he stopped writing and looked up. Amin knew that it was the wrong office.

Amin: .....

6. While travelling, Ali placed a heavy bag on the bus shelf. The bus stopped suddenly and the bag fell on the passenger.

The passenger: Oh God! What was that?



Ali: .....

7. Mrs. Karimi and Mr. Hosseini are co-workers. Mrs. Karimi forgot to pass a private message to Mr. Hosseini – this is a second time she forgets to pass message on to him. Mr. Hosseini knew Mrs. Karimi had a message for him and went to her.

Mr. Hosseini: I've been told that you have a message for me.

Mrs. Karimi:

.....

8. Mr. Akbari and Mr. Rezaee are co-workers. Somebody in the office borrowed some money from Mr. Akbari and did not give it back. He insisted that Mr. Rezaee is the one whom borrowed money from him. Mr. Rezaee insisted that he did not borrow anything from him. He did not believe him. Suddenly another co-worker came into the room and heard the discussion. He told Mr. Akbari that he was the one who borrowed the money, not Mr. Rezaee.

Mr. Rezaee: (angrily) Do you believe me now?

Mr. Akbari:

.....

9. A company manager is supposed to interview a man for a job, but he had been called to an unexpected meeting in another place, therefore he arrived at his office half an hour late.

His secretary: This is Mr. Mohammadi. He has been waiting for you for half an hour.

The manager:

.....

10. Ali and Amir are friends. Ali borrowed Amir's car but while he was backing up, he hit a lamppost and damaged the rear of the car. Ali is returning the car to his friend.

Amir: I hope you are OK! What happened?

Ali: .....



## Appendix B

The original Persian DCT (Discourse Completion Test) given to Participants.

موقعیهای زیر را مطالعه نمایید و مکالمات را کامل کنید. لطفاً تا آنجا که امکان دارد واقع بینانه پاسخ دهید. آن گونه که در مکالمات روزمره، برخورد می‌کنید.  
سن: ..... جنسیت: ..... مقطع تحصیلی: ..... زبان مادری: ..... رشته تحصیلی: .....

1- آقای رضا امینی جهت استخدام در یک شرکت با رئیس مصاحبه حضوری دارد اما در یک ترافیک سنگین، گیر می‌کند و حدود یک ساعت با تاخیر وارد می‌شود منشی رئیس او را به اتاق رئیس راهنمایی می‌کند.  
منشی: ایشان آقای امینی هستند.  
رئیس: بالاخره تشریف آوردید؟

..... آقای امینی

2- مینا و مریم دوست هستند. مینا مجله ای از مریم قرض گرفته است. خواهر مریم در خانه جلد مجله را پاره می‌کند. حال آنها در خانه مریم هستند و مینا مجله را به مریم پس می‌دهد.  
مریم: ! چه به سر مجله آمده؟  
مینا: .....

3- یک استاد دانشگاه برگه امتحان دانشجویی را، به علت شباهت نام او با یکی دیگر از دانشجویان، اشتباهی تصحیح کرده و آن دانشجو از آن درس نمره نیاورده. استاد متوجه اشتباهش می‌شود. دانشجو نیز پی می‌برد که چه اتفاقی افتاده است و به نزد استاد می‌رود.  
دانشجو: استاد! چه اتفاقی افتاده؟  
استاد: .....

4- خانمی دانشجو، کتابی از استادش (مرد) قرض می‌گیرد و قول می‌دهد که آن کتاب را روز بعد بر گرداند. وقتی که به دانشگاه می‌رسد؛ متوجه می‌شود که کتاب را با خود نیاورده. اکنون با استادش ملاقات می‌کند.  
استاد: کتاب را آوردید؟  
دانشجو: .....

5- امین می‌خواهد دوستش امید را در دفتر جدید، واقع در دانشگاه ببیند. او به دانشگاه می‌رود و در یکی از اتاق‌ها را باز می‌کند، به خیال آن که دفتر امید است. اما متوجه می‌شود که دفتر شخص دیگری است (دفتر آقای کریمی). آقای کریمی در حال نوشتن است. این دو یکدیگر را نمی‌شناسند، او از نوشتن دست می‌کشد و به امین نگاه می‌کند. امین متوجه می‌شود که اشتباه کرده است.  
آقای کریمی: بفرمایید! با کی کار داشتی؟  
امین: .....

6- علی کیف سنگین خود را در قفسه اتوبوس می‌گذارد. ناگهان اتوبوس ترمز می‌کند و کیف روی سر مسافری می‌افتد.  
مسافر: آخ سرم !!!  
علی: .....

7- آقای حسینی و خانم کریمی همکار هستند. خانم کریمی فراموش کرده است که پیام رئیس را به آقای حسینی برساند این بار دوم است که خانم کریمی فراموش می‌کند پیغامی را به آقای حسینی برساند. آقای حسینی نزد خانم کریمی می‌رود.  
آقای رئیس برای من پیغامی گذاشته‌اند؟



خانم کریمی :

.....

8- آقای اکبری و رضایی همکار هستند یک نفر در اداره مقداری پول از آقای اکبری قرض گرفته و پس نداده است آقای اکبری اصرار می‌کند که رضایی همان شخصی است که پول قرض گرفته است. آقای رضایی گرفتن هر پولی را انکار می‌کند اما آقای اکبری باور نمی‌کند ناگهان یکی از همکاران دیگر که وارد اتاق شده است و بحث آنها را می‌شود؛ می‌گوید که او پول را از آقای اکبری قرض گرفته است نه آقای رضایی. آقای رضایی (با عصبانیت) حالا حرف مرا باور می‌کنی؟  
آقای اکبری:

.....

9- رئیس یک شرکت که قرار است شخصی را برای یک شغل مصاحبه نماید به علت حادثه‌ای پیش بینی نشده با یک ساعت تاخیر وارد شرکت می‌شود. منشی رئیس: ایشان آقای محمدی هستند و حدود یک ساعت است که منتظر شما هستند?  
رئیس :

.....

10 - علی و امیر دوست هستند. علی خودروی امیر را قرض می‌گیرد. زمانی که در حال حرکت به عقب است، با تیر چراغ برق بر خورد می‌کند و پشت اتومبیل ضربه می‌خورد. علی، اتومبیل را به دوستش امیر پس می‌دهد. امیر: امیدوارم حالت خوب باشد. چه اتفاقی افتاده؟  
علی :