

A Socio-Pragmatic Analysis of Appropriateness in a Speech Act of Apology in English

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Abstract

Studies in interlanguage pragmatics have shown that L2 learners' proficiency has an influence on the occurrences of L1 pragmatic transfer. This paper is designed to study the issues related to the pragmatic aspects of the use of apology strategies in English and the pragmatic transfer. To carry out this research, the qualitative research design is employed. Focus Group Discussion questionnaire is used to elicit data (recorded) from the EFL university students in Pakistan. The results of the study reveal that all the participants reported that they do not translate apology strategies from their L1 cultural norms, except one respondent who replied that he/she use apology strategies having in mind L1 social norms. Anyhow, they all agree that they use apology strategies while keeping in mind the interlocutor's social status. The study further indicates that Urdu-speaking learners of English in universities use apology strategies according to the severity of the offence. If the situation is severe they use intensifiers and indirect apology strategy and if situation is not severe, they use explicit apology strategy. The results of this study might be of pedagogical help and important for teachers, policy makers, curriculum developers, material designers, students, and researchers.

Keywords: interlanguage pragmatics, pragmatic transfer, cultural norms, pedagogical help, Pakistan

1. Introduction

In perspective of the most recent changes from linguistics to communicative proficiency and pragmatic ability in language teaching and learning, it is not amazing that speech act of apology and cross-cultural evaluations of apologies and apology techniques in different 'languages' have been well-known among scholars within the area of sociolinguistics, especially pragmatics. With the precise identification of the part of pragmatic competence in communicative ability (Bachman 1990; Bachman & Palmer 1996; Canale & Swain 1980), abundant second language (L2) research has investigated the production of pragmatic function. Pragmatic production represents the ability to execute conversation features properly in social situations (Saleem, 2014). In L2 pragmatic production, 'appropriateness' is reflected at several stages. It shows the knowledge of the conventions of communication in a community, as well as linguistics and abilities that allow students to communicate efficiently in L2. It has been observed that Pakistani EFL learners lack pragmatic competence and transfer their L1 knowledge to L2 production. Many studies show that although learners may have learned the target language grammar and the target language form, they are not necessarily able to understand the social and cultural rules which constrain the target language use. In their communication with native speakers of the target language, learners tend to transfer their native social and cultural norms into the target language, produce inappropriate linguistic behaviours, and lead to pragmatic failure. In perspective of all this, it is amazing that this is not an important consideration as far as English language teaching in Pakistan is concerned (Saleem, 2014).

Instructors of English as a second or foreign language in Pakistan have always experienced a very difficult task: how to teach communicative proficiency in the target language. It has become obvious that teaching the syntax and vocabulary of language is not enough. One also needs to teach pragmatic and cultural competence. Knowing how such socially and culturally particular factors of language operate in different 'languages' is also important, as students should be conscious of the variations between not only their native language and the target language, but also between the two societies. Being ware of such differences, but also of similarities, would help them better comprehend the target lifestyle, and thus use the target language in a socially and culturally appropriate way. With the emergence of several theoretical designs of communicative competence (Bachman 1990; Bachman & Palmer 1996; Canale & Swain 1980), second language (L2) learning is no more considered as expertise of syntax alone. Acquisition of functional and sociolinguistic control of the types has come to be considered as an indispensable part of L2 learning. Thus, pragmatic competence, the ability to perform language features properly in public perspective, forms an essential component of L2 communicative proficiency, and has drawn much research attention in L2 learning.

A number of Pakistani scholars have identified that Pakistani learners lack communicative competence and especially pragmatic competence. Though a number of aspects have been identified for this defective English language teaching, such as unsupportive program, over-crowded classes, obstructive evaluation system etc. (Kiran, 2010; Ahmad, 2004; Muhammad, 2010; Saleem, 2015), yet the central critique is mostly set on flawed language teaching techniques and methods. Within our perspective, English is handled as 'subject' not as

‘a language’ (Kiran, 2010) thus, no particular focus is given on the improvement of pragmatic competence of the learners. Keeping in view the present situation of language teaching and learning in Pakistan, the speech act of apology was examined in this study. The following four research questions (to cover the issues related to the pragmatic aspects of the use of apology strategies and the pragmatic transfer) were designed to carry out the study:

1. Do you translate apology from Urdu to English when you apologize in English? Why?
2. Do you vary apology patterns to match interlocutors’ social status who are higher, equal or lower in status? Why?
3. Do you use different apology patterns according to situation which is severe or not severe? Why?
4. Do you think explicit apology strategy instruction can enhance English students’ understanding and proficiency in using proper apology strategies in English?

2. Review of Relevant Literature

Studies have provided evidence that it is vital for L2 learners to be appropriately cultured with pragmatic rules of the target language to help them develop functional proficiency and be able to convey communicative intent and use target language appropriately in various contexts. The acquisition and precision of pragmatic competence of EFL/ESL learners has gained significant consideration in recent times from researchers in the field. Studies dealing with the interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) and pragmatic transfer have shown how non-native speakers, due to the influence of their native language, are at variance from native speakers in understanding a particular speech act and this causes misunderstandings and communication breakdowns (Holmes, 1990; Wolfson, 1989). A number of empirical studies in contrastive pragmatics substantiate these differences and difficulties that brought forth the issue of sociopragmatic competence in second language learning and teaching (Olshtain & Cohen 1981). Pragmatic transfer is the influence of learners’ pragmatic knowledge of language and culture other than the target language on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information. Pragmatic transfer can be either positive, which considers evidence of sociolinguistics and pragmatics universality among languages, or negative which shows inappropriate transfer of L1 linguistic norms into L2. Pragmatic error or failure occurs where speech act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2 (Rizk, 2003).

Olshtain & Cohen (1989) indicate that Hebrew learners of English fail to transfer apology strategies of the native language and modifying devices into the target language because they have not had a good command of the complex target language knowledge. They say “it often happens that nonnative speakers are aware of sociolinguistic need to apology, yet because their competence is limited, they use erroneous language forms and produce speech acts that sound deviant or even create communication failure”. Several other studies also show that L2 learners fail to express themselves effectively in the target language because they have the limited target language proficiency. Scarcella and Brunk (1981) report that Arabic EFL learners often use a very few variety of politeness strategies in their target language apologies. Scarcella (1983) reports that Spanish learners of English use less consecutive back channel cues when they communicate in the target language than when they communicate in the native language. These findings imply that even if L2 learners want to transfer pragmatic knowledge of their native language, they will not be able to do so in that their limited L2 proficiency prevents them from expressing sociocultural norms of their native language through the appropriate target language forms.

Wudaa (2010) attempted to point out the breakdowns committed in using apology strategies by twenty-five Iraqi EFL learners. The results revealed that Iraqi EFL learners lack semantic knowledge for most of the strategies of apology. Most of the breakdowns committed by Iraqi EFL learners were a result of a negative transfer of their first language. An interesting study was conducted by Zareipur (2010) to analyze the use of apology strategies and the offenses that inspired apology among native speakers of British English and Persian-speaking English learners by examining a large corpus of naturally-occurring data gathered from real-life situations. Results indicated that both British and Persian speakers used relatively the same sets of apology strategies, yet with considerably different choices. The two groups did not make apologies to remedy the same offense types and even the same violations required different apology rates. Hacettepe (2010) analyzed the apology techniques of Turkish EFL students having different levels to education in order to determine that respondents of high and low level of education use different patterns of apology techniques in different situations. The findings showed that most of the breakdowns committed by the participants were the result of negative transfer of learners L1 (first language) cultural norms.

Based on Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) classifications of apology strategies, Shariati and Chamani (2010) investigated a corpus of 500 apology exchanges, in spoken standard Persian. Findings revealed that an IFID was the most common strategy used with four sub-strategies, “offer of apology”, “request for forgiveness”, “an expression of regret”, “expression of shame”, and “an acknowledgement of responsibility” was the second highest strategy found in the corpus. “Promise for forbearance” was the least frequent used strategy. Persian apologies also seemed to be as formulaic as in other investigated languages; anyhow variance in the use of

apology strategies seemed as cultural specific.

Devi (2009) investigated the apology strategies of Indonesian English teachers and Australian native speakers. She found the differences between the apology strategies of Indonesian English teachers and Australian native speakers of English. Indonesian English teachers used problematizing a precondition and the Australian native speakers used downgrading responsibility with denial, the similarities between Indonesian English teachers' and Australian native speakers' apology strategies were found in expressing regret, as they used IFID, upgrader, taking responsibility with self blaming, exhibiting lack of intent, admitting the fault, downgrading responsibility with excuse, justification, claiming ignorance, reducing severity of offence, offer or repair, and verbal redress.

Istifçi (2009) investigated the act of apologizing with participants from two different levels of English proficiency and tried to determine the similarities and differences in their use of apology strategies and whether or not they approach native speaker apology norms. The results showed that there were many instances in which L1 cultural norms affected the participants' realization of apology speech acts.

Moreover, Saleem (2014) found that Pakistani EFL university students in Pakistan use a few apology strategies (explicit expression of apology, explanation, expressing self-deficiency and intensifiers of apology). This shows lack of knowledge of the participants about the different types of apology strategies in different contexts and the need of developing L2 English pragmatic ability of university students in Pakistan. As far as the differences between male and female respondents were concerned, they were found to be similar in their use of apology strategies. One of the main reasons might be the cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the respondents of this study. Keeping in view the pragmatic competence and pragmatic transfer, the present study could be important.

Nevertheless, this study was significant in many different ways. The results of this study would be the fundamental information used to assist learners to develop their pragmatic competence in English. Further, the study was expected to give theoretical and practical contribution in relation to the teaching of different speech acts in English to English learners in Pakistan. This study would also be helpful for the policy makers, curriculum designers and material developers in Pakistan to understand the social and cultural differences in the use of apology strategies of the speakers of different languages and develop ESL courses according to the learners' sociolinguistic needs. The results of this study would provide practical contributions. First, for second language learners, this study would enrich their understanding on using appropriate apology in conversation. Second, this study would also be useful for English teachers in Pakistan in teaching and developing their students' knowledge about the use of different speech acts, especially apologies and apology strategies in English. Finally, this study would become a source of information for other researchers who are interested in knowing about the use of apology strategies by Pakistani EFL learners.

3. Research Methodology

The focus of the study was to explore the sociopragmatic aspects of apology realization patterns in English by Urdu-speaking university students in Pakistan. I used qualitative research design while keeping in mind the nature of data (qualitative) and data collection procedures (Focus Group Discussion), and data analysis procedures. For data collection, Focus Group discussions in class were conducted, while having discussions with the participants, researchers created certain situations where the participants had to respond the situation verbally. The researchers personally participated and English language was used in the Focus Group discussions. All participant responses were audio recorded, interpreted and analyzed qualitatively by using summary narrative methods in order to present a realistic description of the use of apology strategies in English by Urdu-speaking university students in Pakistan.

3.1 Population and Sample

The target population of this study was all students of MA English and BS English degree programs, especially in their final years of study, in departments of English in the institutions of higher education in Pakistan. Only 18 students out of the 106 students participated in Focus Group discussions. The participants were selected using *non-random, purposive, and convenience sampling procedures* from the following higher education institutions of the Punjab: (1) Punjab University, Lahore, (2) Lahore College for Women University, Lahore, (3) Govt. College University, Faisalabad, (4) University of Gujarat, (5) University of Sargodha, (6) Govt. College University, Lahore, (7) Kinnaird College, Lahore. The sample was relatively homogeneous in terms of their cultural and linguistic background (Urdu) and academic experiences. There were twenty one (21) male and eighty five (85) female respondents. These students were perusing their Master/ BS degrees in English Literature, Linguistics, English Language Teaching (ELT), and TEFL/TESOL or TESL. Respondents were asked to rate their speaking ability in English by themselves in the questionnaire (FGD) and majority of the respondents (85) out of 106 rated themselves at good level. The master's students were studying in their 4th semesters and the BS students were studying in their 8th semesters. The reason for selecting the students of these semesters was that

they were in their final semesters of the degree programs, and it was assumed that they would be more proficient and have knowledge and some L2 English pragmatic ability, especially in apology speech acts.

3.2 Instrumentation

Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire was the instrument for this study that aimed to elicit what are the frequently used apology strategies in English by EFL learners when apologizing (six situations were designed (as cited in Thijjing, 2010) to elicit apology strategies by modifying those situations used in the previous apology speech act studies), and whether or not respondents transfer apology strategies from their L1 to English and vary apology patterns in different situations with interlocutors of various social statuses (high, equal and low) as well as severity and non severity of the situation, and they think or not that explicit apology strategy instruction can enhance English students' understanding and proficiency in using proper apology strategies in English. The Focus Group discussions in class were recorded. Items of the Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire were written in view of the purpose of the study. The Focus Group Discussion questionnaire consisted of two major sections. The first part (Part A) asked questions about the participants' year of study, major of study, gender, and their own English proficiency evaluation. The second part (Part B) asked questions about their use and transfer of apologies and the importance of apology strategy instruction. All questions were open-ended.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Before administrating the FGD for data collection, I first sought the permission from the chairpersons of the departments of English in each of the selected eight universities. Responses were collected from participants of MA/BS English (4th and 8th semesters of 2013) degree program. Only one instrument was used for data collection: Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire for Urdu-speaking university students. Ethical issues of the research were taken into account in gathering data. At each campus, I personally invited students to take part in the Informed Consent Sessions. Students were provided with the information related to this study and requested to participate in the study. Each student was provided with the Informed Consent Sheet. After obtaining their consent for Focus Group discussions in class at a mutually agreed upon time, the discussions were conducted in university classrooms. Each Focus Group discussion in class was for an approximate duration of 20-25 minutes. All discussions were audio-recorded to ensure accurate responses were obtained. They were told and their consent was sought about the recording of the Focus Group discussions in class. English language was used during the discussion when participants were asked to explain their answers.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

For the analysis of Focus Group Discussion in class data, dominant pattern of responses were identified.

4. Results

This section presents results of the analysis of qualitative data obtained through the Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire in class. Focus Group discussions in class were organized to find out whether or not respondents (1) transfer apology strategies from Urdu culture and language to English while apologizing in English in different situations, (2) vary apology patterns according to (a) the social status (higher, equal and low) of the interlocutors (b) severity of the situation, and (3) feel the need of explicit apology instruction to help them use appropriate apology strategies in English.

As stated earlier, Focus Group discussions in class were recorded and transcribed. The data were studied from the transcripts of Focus Group discussions in class with the students of eight universities of the Punjab province. Only eighteen (18) students among 106 respondents participated in the Focus Group Discussion sessions in class. While analyzing the responses, dominant patterns in views were highlighted and organized according to the focus of the study and purposes for which Focus Group discussions in class were conducted. In order to find out whether or not Urdu-speaking students of English translate (pragmatic transfer) apology strategies from Urdu to English, transcribed data were analyzed.

As results show, almost all respondents said that they never translated apology strategies from Urdu language, keeping in mind their own cultural norms while reporting their use of apology strategies in English. There was only one exception among eighteen students who said that she/he translate apology strategies according to L1 norms. Few examples out of eighteen respondents' responses are given below:

- 1) "No, we do not translate... we use only English, the word 'sorry'."
- 2) "We do not translate apology strategies from Urdu language."
- 3) "We do not translate from Urdu..."
- 4) "I never find need to translate because I simply say, 'sorry'.
The word sorry is used more often"
- 5) "Yes, I personally think we do more often We say that it's

Allah's will, when we do some mistake, instead of excusing etc"

- 6) "I don't remember, ...I did so"

The second question of Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire asked:

Do you vary apology patterns to match interlocutors' social status who are higher, equal or lower in status? Why?

Respondents reported that social status plays a significant role in their everyday conversation and that in most cases they prefer to use apology strategies according to the situation and keeping in mind the social status of the person in interaction. Out of eighteen responses a few instances are reported below:

- 1) "social status matters a lot... if we are with friends we are not as formal... but when we are in front of our boss or superior one, our apology strategy will be different.... we'll say I'll not do it again..."
- 2) "It varies from person to person or status to status.... we can't talk informally with our teachers.... if there is a waiter we should keep in mind etiquettes.... even a waiter is a part of our society"
- 3) "status of the person with whom we interact is important.... and I feel the need to use apology patterns according to the status of the interlocutor"
- 4) "yup, we are supposed to follow the patterns according to the situation and person in talk"
- 5) "Yes, we use different patterns according to the status...."

In order to confirm their views regarding variation in apology strategy according to the social status of the interlocutors, I asked the participants as to what will they say (how will they apologize?), if they find themselves in the following situation (higher status):

At the office, you forgot to pass on an urgent letter to your boss. The next day your boss complained that you did not pass it to him. What would you say?

Out of eighteen responses, a few examples are reported below:

- 1) **"I'm sorry, it's my fault"**
- 2) **"I just forgot** to pass it on. **I'm sorry"**
- 3) **"I apologize** because I was late yesterday"
- 4) **"Sorry Sir, I forgot to pass"**
- 5) **"I'll be more careful in future"**
- 6) **"Oh, I literally forgot"**
- 7) "I would say that **I forgot to** pass that letter"
- 8) **"I apologize** because I was late yesterday"
- 9) "Sorry, I got a call from home so I had to rush in an emergency"

In another example, (equal status) I asked:

You and your friend did a role-play for a speaking test in English class.

The conversation was not smooth because you did not prepare well. Your friend was upset.

What would you say to your friend after the test?

The participants replied:

- (1) **"Sorry buddy, I was nervous"**
- (2) "Do not be tense, it happened"
- (3) "I was not prepared for this"
- (4) **"Got lazy yar,** didn't prepare"
- (5) "sorry I was sleepless due to load shedding"
- (6) "I'd say I'm really very sorry, if I'd have prepared well, I performed better"
- (7) "I know, I did bad"
- (8) "sorry, I'm having some health issues"

In another example of different higher status, I asked:

You are a university lecturer, you made an appointment with students to get the assignments back but you haven't yet graded them when they came. What would you say to the students?

Out of eighteen responses, seven responses are reported below:

- (1) "I have been very busy. I'll get them marked today"
- (2) "I'm very much busy in office work that's why I have no time to return your assignments"
- (3) "There is a lot of office work, I'll mark your grades soon and then show you"
- (4) "Oh, I was occupied with the other class tests"
- (5) "I was busy in mid-term paper checking, I'll return you

assignments very soon”

- (6) “I’m very mush busy in office work that’s why I’ve no time to return you assignments”
- (7) “there is a lot of office work I’ll mark your grads soon and show you”

In an instance of lower status, I asked the students, as to what would they say if they find themselves in the following situations?

At the restaurant, you stepped on the foot of a waiter passing by you. What would you say to him?

A few instances are reported below:

- (1) **“I’m sorry”**
- (2) **“I’m really sorry”**
- (3) **“Sorry, sorry”**.
- (4) “oops sorry”
- (5) **“sorry, sorry dear”**
- (6) “I’d say I beg your pardon. I couldn’t see you. I was in hurry”
- (7) “awe, hopefully you won’t get hurt”
- (8) **“sorry dear”**
- (9) “oh, forgive me”

All these instances show that the respondents vary apology strategies in some way or the other according to the social status of their assumed interlocutors. For example, in case of higher status, respondents were found using apology strategies such as (sorry sir, I forgot to pass), (I’ll be more careful in future), and (I’m sorry, it’s my fault). In case of equal status, respondents were found using apology strategies such as (sorry buddy, I was nervous), (got lazy yar, didn’t prepare), and (sorry, I was sleepless due to load shedding). Moreover, in case of lower status, participants were found in using apology strategies such as (Oops sorry), (sorry dear) and (awe, hope you won’t get hurt).

The third question of the Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire asked:

Do you use different apology patterns according to situation which is severe or not severe?

The following responses of the respondents show that Urdu-speaking students of English used different apology patterns according to the severity of the offense. If the offence was severe they used direct apology “sorry” in addition to the acknowledgment of responsibility (it’s my fault) or promise of forbearance (it won’t happen again) etc. A few instances are reported below out of eighteen responses.

- 1) “Yes we use some time for the sake of face impression or when I face problem then I use very or so sorry”
- 2) “There are many strategies,... sorry or forgive me... I’ll not do it again.... when we make any mistake”
- 3) “I say sometimes.... I’m very sorry,.... sometimes relation also matters a lot... if my mother is there then ‘sorry’, word is enough.... it also depends on the mentality of others as well....”
- 4) “For me the word “sorry” is enough, And honestly speaking we mostly say “sorry” or give long list of excuses”
- 5) “I only use word “sorry” no matter what happens”
- 6) “I keep in mind the severity of situation and give explanation if needed”
- 7) “for the sake of convenience I use really etc as the situation demands”
- 8) “I use intensifiers in order to take care of good relations”
- 9) “Keeping in mind the offense and situation I use “really or very” etc.”

Moreover, during the Focus Group Discussion in class I also asked the students that if they find themselves in the following situation, what they would say?

You copied an essay from a website for your assignment and your teacher found it out. What would you say to your teacher?

Out of eighteen responses, a few examples are given below:

- (1) **“Sir, I’m really ashamed** of it. mmm..Infact I was awfully busy”
- (2) **“Extremely sorry Sir,** ... I had no time to type the data so, I copied it”
- (3) **“I’m really sorry on my act Sir”**
- (4) **“Ma’am, so so sorry,** was unable to find in books”
- (5) **“Dear Ma’am, I’m really really sorry and embarrassed”**.
- (6) **“Very sorry Sir,** I had no time to be creative for my other responsibilities”
- (7) “I’m so ashamed of this act”

In another instance of apology situation, I asked the participants as to what they will say if they find themselves in the following situation:

You are working as a tourist-guide. You came to pick the tourists late because you went to the wrong

hotel. They waited for an hour. What would you say to them, when you reached the hotel?

Seven instances are out of eighteen responses are reported below (see Appendix E).

- (1) “Believe me, it’s not my mistake, but **I’m very very sorry**”
- (2) “Oh, so sorry I went to the wrong hotel”
- (3) “**Awfully sorry** I was on the wrong way. It has happened first time”
- (4) “**Dear**, I got stuck in traffic”
- (5) “There was great rush on the road”.
- (6) “oh, I forgot the right path”
- (7) “I’m on the way suddenly a car came towards me and hit my car that’s why I late”

The fourth question of the Focus Group Discussion Questionnaire asked:

Do you think using explicit apology instruction can enhance English students’ understanding and proficiency in using proper apology strategies in English?

The following examples of responses show that the respondents think that explicit teaching of apology strategies in English will help students in Pakistan to enhance their understanding and proficiency in using appropriate apology strategies in English. Few examples are reported below out of eighteen responses.

- 1) “Yes, we should teach our students 'explicit apology strategies in English’”
- 2) “Explicit apology teaching is very important for different situations.... and it tells about the appropriate and educated person.....”
- 3) “We should teach our students explicit apology strategies in English”
- 4) “As I mentioned, apologies show us good human beings..if we are making mistakes obviously we will admit it...by using apology speech act..... we of course should teach our students and learn ourselves... this is the word which makes us that we are going to confess our fault...and in future we will overcome... obviously we should teach our students explicit apology strategies in English”.
- 5) “Yup, speech acts should be taught and included in our teaching materials and especially apology and compliment speech acts.. because they urge us to act quickly and instantly..... and when we don’t know the real word then we use only “sorry” apology strategy”
- 6) “As a student I think I must know and learn apology strategies and these must be taught to ESL/EFL learners”
- 7) “For me, absolutely sure, in our everyday conversation speech acts play important part and they exhibit my personality traits.... Learners should be given explicit apology instructions”
- 8) “Yea, clear instruction related to apology speech act should be given to students and there is a need ... to create awareness in EFL/ESL learners”

This chapter presented the results of both quantitative and qualitative data. These results will be discussed and interpreted in the following chapter.

5. Discussion

The first research question of Focus Group Discussions Questionnaire asked whether or not the respondents (1) translated apology strategies from Urdu language and cultural norms while reporting the use of apologies in English, (2) vary apology patterns to match interlocutors’ social status (higher, equal or lower), (3) use different apology patterns according to situation which is severe or not severe, (4) think apology strategy instruction can enhance English students’ understanding and proficiency in using proper apology strategies in English. As reported earlier, results of the Focus Group Discussions in class showed, out of eighteen participants, 17 students said that they never translated apology strategies from Urdu cultural norms to English while documenting their responses to different apology scenarios as in the DCT. There was one respondent who reported that they translate their apology strategies from their L1 cultural norms. Perhaps, the respondents did not understand the exact concept of pragmatic transfer operationalized as translate. It is worth noting here that there is a greater need for a comparative study of apology strategy use in English and Urdu so that the issue of pragmatic transfer could be explored.

As the analysis of the responses of participants related to varying apology patterns according to the social status of the interlocutors (second question of the Focus Group Discussions Questionnaire) indicated, all the eighteen respondents agreed that social status plays a significant role in their everyday conversation. They reported that in most cases they prefer to use apology strategies according to the situation and keeping in mind the social status of the person in interaction. For example four instances of the respondents’ responses out of

eighteen responses are as under:

- (1) "social status matters a lot... if we are with friends we are not as formal... but when we are in front of our boss or superior one, our apology strategy will be different.... **we'll say I'll not do it again...**"
- (2) "It varies from person to person or status to status.... we cannot talk informally with our teachers.... if there is a waiter we should keep in mind etiquettes.... even a Waiter is a part of our society."
- (3) "Yup, I keep status in mind while apologizing"
- (4) "Yea, it is quite apparent, we have to do"

As these instances indicate, the respondents took it quite serious and showed concern for the interlocutor's social status in their apology strategies. In other words, participants were likely to apologize to an interlocutor of higher status with more polite and formal forms. Participants used 'title' and 'honorific' forms by calling the interlocutor 'teacher', 'm'am' and 'sir' (indicated in bold form in chapter 4) in a formal way. They also used an explicit expression of apology with intensifiers. They sometimes were found using double explicit expressions of apology with other indirect strategies. All this shows that the people in Pakistan give a lot of importance to social status and Pakistani society is very status conscious. As the analysis revealed, the participants preferred using simple forms of apology or even preferred not using explicit apology forms while apologizing to interlocutors of equal or low status. For examples, the respondents used simple forms of apology 'Sorry' and the solidarity marker 'dude', 'buddy', 'yar', or 'dear'. They were found sometimes hesitating to use the explicit expressions of apology and preferred using another indirect strategy such as "explanation" (there was terrible traffic). All these instances reveal that more apologies strategies were used while apologizing to higher status people than people of equal or lower status.

So far as the question related to the use of different apology patterns according to situation (severe or not severe) is concerned, the instances such as "sorry **Sir**, I'm really **ashamed** of it", "**I'm really sorry** on my act Sir", "I won't do it again", and "**Awfully sorry** I was on the wrong way", "It has happened first time", revealed that the respondents used different apology strategies while keeping in mind the severity of the situation/offense. If the offence was severe they used direct apology in addition to the "acknowledgment of responsibility" or "promise of forbearance" etc. As the above stated instances show in some situations they used IFID (sorry) and other indirect strategies to calm down the interlocutor. Participants were found using simple strategies and less combination of apology strategies such as "sorry buddy, I was nervous", "I'm sorry, it's my fault", "**don't worry dude**, we'll do **better next time**", and "don't be tense, it happens sometime" for non-severe offenses. On the contrary, they preferred using a more complex and a great range of apology patterns such as "Believe me, it's not my mistake, but **I'm very very sorry**", "**Oh, so sorry** I went to the wrong hotel", "**I'm extremely sorry sir**, I didn't know **how to do the assignment**", and "**Dear Ma'am**, I'm really really **sorry and embarrassed**". All these instances show that the severity of offense is one of the important factors in guiding the speaker's choice of an appropriate apology strategy in Pakistan. However, this factor cannot be considered in isolation from other related aspects of the situation and from relationship between interlocutors.

Concerning the question related to the need of explicit apology instruction to enhance English students' understanding and proficiency in using proper apology strategies, almost all the respondents agreed that explicit teaching of apology strategies in English will help students in Pakistan to enhance their understanding and proficiency in using apology strategies. This realization on the part of respondents shows the importance of teaching pragmatic competence, specifically teaching apology strategies in English in the language classroom. Therefore, exploring and developing appropriate approaches to explicit and/or implicit teaching of English L2 pragmatics need to be studied in order to help language learners in Pakistan acquire and develop their pragmatic knowledge and proficiency.

5.1 Conclusion

The findings of the study related to the four questions of the Focus Group Discussions Questionnaire are concerned, almost all the respondents reported that (1) they do not translate apology strategies from Urdu cultural norm to English language, (2) they consider that social status plays a vital role in their everyday conversation and in most cases they prefer to use apology strategies according to situation and keeping in mind the social status of their interlocutors, (3) they used apology strategies according to the severity of offense, and (4) all these respondents agree that explicit teaching of apology strategies in English will help students in Pakistan to enhance their understanding and proficiency in using appropriate strategies in English. Perhaps, the respondents did not fully understand the concept (pragmatic transfer) behind the term "translate" and they seem to have understood it as literal translation from Urdu language to English. The reason that these respondents consider the social status of the interlocutors important while apologizing is that Pakistani society is a very status conscious society and in turn this seems to be the reason that they vary apology strategy patterns according to the

severity and non severity of the situation/offense. Moreover, the agreement of the respondents related to the need of explicit apology instruction shows greater realization on the part of the respondents about the importance of improving their L2 English pragmatic ability, especially apology speech acts.

5.2 Research Implications

As apology speech acts fall within pragmatic ability/competence, research in the area provides greater evidence that EFL/ESL learners have no or limited L2 pragmatic ability. One of the major factors is that EFL/ESL learners are not taught English L2 pragmatic rules as well as the sociolinguistic rules of speaking English and developing L2 pragmatic ability is not considered important. The study also provides some evidence that undergraduate level students of English in Pakistan lack knowledge of majority of the apology strategies in English and L2 English pragmatic ability. This implies that (1) there is a greater need of teaching L2 pragmatic rules, especially apology strategies; in order to help students/learners of English in Pakistan develop higher level functional proficiency in English, (2) curriculum developers and course materials designers need to offer such courses and include materials that will help students develop pragmatic ability and learn sociolinguistic rules of speaking/using English.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

At first level, English teachers need to raise awareness and understanding of their students regarding the socio-cultural difference between their L1 culture and English speakers' culture and that sociolinguistic rules of speaking English language vary from their L1 norms and cultures.

At second level, English language teachers need to be conscious of the importance of pragmatic competence because learners should be competent not only in linguistic ability but also in pragmatic ability.

At third level, research findings can be implied in designing and developing English language materials. Our English language books need to be designed with such activities which reflect the English speakers' way of speaking and thinking in real life situations. Furthermore, activities in English language textbooks should be based on samples of authentic materials, especially written conversations which show the conversational routines and strategies used by native speakers in the realization of an apology act. Pakistani English language learners are surrounded by their local languages and cultures and they rarely have the opportunity to use English outside of the classroom, they need to be given as many opportunities as possible to develop L2 English pragmatic competence.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

Based on the findings of the present study, it is suggested that the following studies need to be conducted to substantiate these findings and add more to the research in this area in Pakistan:

1. As pointed out already, there is a need to conduct a comparative study on the use of apology strategies in English as well as in other languages spoken in Pakistan to see the question of pragmatic transfer
2. One of the most valuable research study and contribution in this area would be to see the impact of explicit apology strategy instruction on the use of apology strategies in English.

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