

## **Contrastive Analysis of Apologizing between Persian and English Speakers**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study is a contrastive analysis of apology strategies between Persian and English speakers. One of the basic sources of comparison is Afghari's article (2007). He gathered Persian apologetic utterances via a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and the other source is Suszczynska's article (1999). Suszczynska (1999) gathered data of a corpus of English written responses to a Discourse Completion Test to highlight differences in the realization of apologetic responses in the choice and sequential arrangement of strategies and linguistic form. Both Persian and English languages show similar strategies for apologizing, according to the different situation and personality they use a special way for apologizing but in Persian language, people use swearing and hopes for forgiveness which are different from English language and also choosing one of these strategies appeared to be culture specific.*

**Keywords:** Apology, IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device), CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns), speech act, pragmatics, semantics

### **INTRODUCTION**

The use and interpretation of a language according to meaning and pragmatic function refers to semantics and pragmatics. How people use a function differently in community and how they interpret the speech act of others make them communicate differently with each others. Apology is one speech act that tends to be more situation dependent and less frequent than other speech acts. (Overfield, 1995)

As Fischbacher and Utikal (2013) stated: "an apology is a strong and cheap device to restore social or economic relationships that have been disturbed." People in different cultures and societies apologize each other if they make offense. Sometimes they make offense with ambiguous intention, so they apologize to decrease the punishment and these apologies emerge endogenously. By apologizing people reveal the intention behind the preceding offense. But how people apologize each other is different. Internal and external attributions after a competence – vs. integrity-based trust violation make us use different ways to apologize. Kim, Dirks, Cooper and Ferrin (2004) in their article stated that "trust was repaired more successfully when the mistrusted party apologized with an external rather than internal attribution when the trust violation concerned matters of integrity, but apologized with an internal rather than external attribution when the trust violation concerned matters of competence".

The purpose of this study is to compare a cross English and Persian, the patterns of a speech act – apology and to establish the similarities and differences between English and Persian speakers with the prospect of using and saying it to have a continuous relationship with each other.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Apologizing is one of the speech acts that have attracted the attention of people with different cultures and social statuses all over the world.

Shariati and Chamani (2009) stated that apology is defined according to the function it may serve. For instance, it is used as a remedial work used to correct a real or virtual offense to maintain or restore social harmony. (Goffman, 1971), or as a negative politeness strategy that indicates S (speaker)'s "reluctance to impinge on H (hearer)'s negative face" to save the hearer's face needs (Brown and Levinson, 1987:187). Furthermore, it is defined as a "speech act set of maximal potential semantic formulas, any one of which can act as a minimal element to represent apology" (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983:20).

Eva Ogiermann (2009) in his article about pragmatics and beyond new series, which is a book review, stated that "attention must be devoted to the problems connected with the possible co- existence of primary and secondary illocutionary forces which may motivate situations in which the speaker may often say what he or she means while also meaning something else. Cases which require recognition of both the literal and non- literal and implicit meaning. Situation in which the communication happens through the influence on the meaning of the utterance, so the way people apologize is different.

Kampf, Z. (2008) said that "speech act still poses a threat to the public figures image, by apologizing the transgressor admits to failing to full fill a task on conform to a norm. So the act is face threatening due to the fact that it may be regarded as a challenge to the apologizer's ability to perform his role appropriately in the public arena.

By apologizing people show that they accept their responsibility for doing that offense so it decreases the punishment and shows the forgiveness of other people.

Still Olshtain (1989) in the major CCSARP( Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns) study of apologetic strategies in Hebrew, German , French and Australian English concludes that the languages investigated did not exhibit signification differences in strategy selection and showed surprising similarities in IFID( Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) and expression of responsibility preferences across the seven situation" (Suszcynska,1999)

People's face is another crucial matter when they want to show their status of forgiveness or apologizing, according to the Kampf (2008) "Face maintenance in political contexts "is not a strategy but an end of its own" right." (Bull etal 1996)

"Olshtain (1989, p.171) points out that CCSRP data showed "surprising similarities in IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) and expression of responsibility preferences." (Afghari, 2007)

Shariati and Chamani(2009) did a longitudinal and cross sectional study over one year in different cities of Iran . They analyzed the data according to the Olstain and Cohen's (1983) framework. According to the Olshtain and Cohen (1983) if the offender accepts the responsibilities for the offense committed, s/he may select five possible strategies to apologize which are as follows:

1. An expression of apology
  - a. An expression of regret, e.g., I'm sorry (moteasefam)
  - b. An offer of apology, e.g., I apologize (ozr/mazerat mikham)
  - c. A request for forgiveness, e.g., forgive me (bebakhshid)
2. An explanation or account of the situation, e.g., The bus was late (otobus dir kard).

3. An acknowledgement of responsibility
  - a. Accepting the blame, e.g., It was my fault (taqsire man bud).
  - b. Expressing self-deficiency, e.g., I was confused (man gij budam).
  - c. Recognizing the other person as deserving apology, e.g., you are right (haq ba shomast).
  - d. Expressing lack of intent, e.g., I didn't mean to (manzuri nadashtam).
4. An offer of repair, e.g., I'll help you get up (komaket mikonam boland shi).
5. A promise of forbearance, e.g., It won't happen again (dige tekrar nemishe).

However, if the offender rejects the need to apologize, s/he may not react at all; yet where s/he has a verbal reaction, it can be:

1. A denial of the need to apologize, e.g., There was no need for you to get insulted
2. A denial of responsibility
  - a. Not accepting the blame, e.g., it wasn't my fault.
  - b. Blaming the other participant, e.g., it's your own fault

As Coulmas (1981:69) declared, "One of the main problems in contrastive analysis is the relation between form and function in language".

Shariati and Chamani(2009) stated that if we want to know how a communicative function is realized in a given community we need to know how the function is defined in that community.

Karimnia and Afghari (2012) emphasized on apology strategies namely the type and extent of apology strategies used . In their study , they stated that for Holmes (1995:155) apology is a speech act that is intended to remedy the offense for which the apologizer takes the responsibility and as a result to rebalance social relations between interlocutors. For Goff man (1971:140) an apology is one type of remedy among others. Frazer (1981:262) argued that apologizing is at the least taking the responsibility for the infraction and expressing regret.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Afghari (2007) found the range of strategies used in performing the speech act of apologizing in Persian. He gathered Persian apologetic utterances via a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and Suszczynska (1999) found apologetic responses that can be found not only in the choice and sequential arrangement of strategies but also in the content and in the choice of linguistic form. He gathered data of a corpus of English written responses to a Discourse Completion Test to highlight differences in the realization of apologetic responses in the choice and sequential arrangement of strategies and linguistic form. So these two articles were used as a base to compare apology between English and Persian speakers. In both articles Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) was stated as a model in the researches.

### **Apology in English**

In English:

- I. Apology is a word or statement to say one is sorry for having done something wrong or for upsetting some body.

- II. It is an expression of regret that one cannot attend a meeting, etc. or must leave early (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

The model used in English article was as following (Suszczynska, 1999)

1. Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDS)
  - a. An expression of regret, e.g. I'm sorry
  - b. An offer of apology, e.g. I apologize
  - c. A request for forgiveness, e.g. excuse me/forgive me/pardon me
2. Explanation or account,  
Any external mitigating circumstances, 'objective' reasons for the violation, e.g. the traffic was terrible
3. Taking on responsibility
  - a. Explicit self-blame, e.g. it is my fault/my mistake
  - b. Lack of intent, e.g. I didn't mean it
  - c. Expression of self-deficiency, e.g. I was confused/ I didn't see you/ I forgot
  - d. Expression of embarrassment, e.g. I feel awful about it
  - e. Self-dispraise, e.g. I'm such a dimwit
  - f. Justify hearer, e.g. you're right to be angry
  - g. Refusal to acknowledge guilt
  - h. Denial of responsibility, e.g. it wasn't my fault
  - i. Blame the hearer, e.g. it's your own fault
  - j. Pretend to be offended, e.g. I'm the one to be offended
4. Concern for the hearer,  
E.g. I hope I didn't upset you/ are you all right?
5. Offer of repair,  
E.g. I'll pay for the damage
6. Promise of forbearance,  
E.g. it won't happen again

In English, as has been demonstrated by many researchers (e.g. Holmes, 1990. Owen, 1983) the overwhelming expression is one of regret (I'm sorry) with the few cases left to excuse me and sporadic cases of forgive me or I apologize which is used more in the written apologies. (Suszczynska, 1999)

"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 speaker's face wants." (karimnia and Afghari,2012)

According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of linguistic politeness, an expression of regret, the central strategy for native speakers of English appears much less face-threatening for both speaker and hearer than a request of forgiveness. Also it does not seem to threaten distance between individuals. (Suszczynska, 1999)

In English an expression of regret always preceded by intensified adverbials (I'm so/ terribly/ really sorry). The utterances often (64%) start with emotional exclamations (oh/ oh, my god/

lord! / oh, no!) And in a number of cases (28%) the IFID is repeated twice. So, intensifiers are obligatory, often combined with a relatively high frequency of the emotional exclamations and the offense itself is perceived as more serious than in other language group (Suszczyńska, 1999).

According to the strategy order, in English data, the IFID is immediately followed by an expression of concern (77%) and offers of repair (help) (100%) in all responses e.g. are you ok? Let me help you, so all these strategies, are all listed as implicit expressions of responsibility. (Suszczyńska, 1999)

### **Apology in Persian**

According to CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns) coding scheme, In Persian the linguistic realization of the act of apologizing can take the form of any of the five possible strategies to the apologizer as follows. (Afghari, 2007)

1. An expression of an apology (use of IFID)  
e.g. mazerat mikham, poozesh mikham, ozr mikham
1. An expression of regret e.g. motaassefam
2. An offer of apology e.g. mazerat mikham
3. Request for forgiveness e.g. bebakhshid.
2. An acknowledgement of responsibility (RESP)  
e.g. taqsir-e man bud
  - a. Explicit self-blame: e.g. taqsir-e man bud
  - b. Lack of intent: e.g. manzuri nadashtam
  - c. Justifying the hearer: e.g. haqba shomast
  - d. Expression of self-deficiency: e.g. gij budam
  - e. Concern for the hearer: e.g. omidvaram be shoma sadame nazadeh basham

Other examples about this part stated by Karimnia and Afghari (2012) are as following:

- Shokre khoda saalemid. ( thanks God you are safe)
- Ishallah ke toritun nist (If God wills you are not hurt)
- f. Statement of the offense: e.g. akh chairi rikhtam.

Karimnia and Afghari (2012) stated some more examples about taking responsibilities in their research, e.g.

- Hagh daarid mano sarzaneh konid (you have the right to blame me)
- manzuri nadashtam ( I didn't say or do it intentionally).
- dige rum namish tu suratetun negaah konam (I can't look at your face any more).
- Rum siaah (literally means 'my face is black', a humble way of showing regret and shame).

3. An explanation or account of the situation (EXPL)  
E.g. Motoasefam, otobus dir kard.

4. An offer of repair (REPR)

E.g. pule goldan-e shekasteh ro midam.

Karimnia and Afghari (2012) stated some more examples about this part in their research:

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

5. A promise of forbearance (FORB)

E.g. Dige tekrar nemishe.

Other example was stated by Karimnia and Afghari (2012):

- a. Dige faramush nemikonam. (I will not forget again)

"The expression "I'm embarrassed" (sharmandeham) is a head act in Persian and was studied as a direct apology. In the literature, any expression of embarrassment has been categorized under the category of indirect apology" (Afghari, 2007)

According to Afghari (2007), more over some new sub- formulas in Persian data and the external apology intensifier or concern for the hearer might be regarded as an indirect apology formula than an intensifier.

Afghari (2007) said that in Persian the following form for intensifiers are used:

- a. Internal intensifiers (within direct or indirect apology)
- b. Supportive intensifiers (the use of multiple- strategies)

Through the combination of CCSARP's internal intensifiers and the researches' hypothesized new-formulas, there is a list of intensifiers:

1. Intensifying adverbials e.g. kheili motasefam
2. Emotional expressions e.g. vay Khoda
3. Double intensifier e.g. man kheili kheili motasefam
4. The word please e.g. khahesh mikonam mano bebakhshid
5. Hope for forgiveness e.g. omidvaram mano bebakhshid
6. Swearing e.g. quasam mikhoram yadam raft

Other example was stated by Karimnia and Afghari (2012):

- Be khodaa taghsire man nabud. ( I swear by God it was not my fault
- Be ghoraan ghasam... (I swear by Quran....)
- Be Abolfazl .....(I swear by Abolfazl, a religious figure in Shiite, Islam...)
- Be arvaahе khaake aaghaam ke.... ( I swear by my father's soil spirit that ...)

The last two sub formulas, hope for forgiveness and swearing used in Persian apology expressions but the others shared by CCSARP coding scheme. He also stated that according to Olshtain & Cohen (1983) people often combine two or three apology strategies together to intensify their apology speech act. E.g. I'm sorry. It was my fault I promise to buy you a new one. In the above example, the most direct apology formula (IFID) is considered as the head act and the other two indirect apologies are considered as supportive intensifiers.

Karimnia and Afghari (2012) in their study showed that by using final IFIDs, the informants emphasized the apology to ensure that hypothetical hearer recognized the sincerity of the apology or they used final IFIDs as a habit to show specific routines or sympathy of the respondent when he/she was not responsible for the offense. (Fraser 1981:265)

E.g. moteaasefam tu khune jaa gozashtam farda baratun miaaram bebakhsid. (I am sorry, I left it at home but I will bring it tomorrow, excuse me.)

Persian apologies were as formulaic in semantic structure as are English apologies. In Persian people apologize either directly or by using one of per formative verbs such as (*mazeratmikham*) 'I apologize' or indirectly by accepting the responsibility for the offence, offering repair for the damage caused or promising the forbearance of the offense to ever happen again. The most frequent apology formula in Persian was an IFID or most direct apology formula e.g. bebakhsid (excuse me) sharmandam (I'm embarrassed) offered as head act and in Persian, this expression can function as a direct formulaic expression of apology rather than an indirect apology formula. *Puzeshmikham* and *afvkonid* are very formal and are usually used in formal conversation or in written materials.

Shariati and Chamani (2009) stated that bebakhsid (forgive me) was the most frequent IFID in the corpus. According to Karimnia and Afghari (2012) this is in line with Afghari (2007) yet, not Eslami-Rasekh (2004) who reported Ozr mikham (excuse me) as the most common IFID in Persian, where as an expression of regret moteaasefam (I am sorry) was used less than other IFID. The results of their study confirm Shariati and Chamani (2010) and Afghari (2007).

In case of second apology strategy in Persian people rarely took responsibility for the offence being committed. They say that it happened because of some other factors e.g. sharmandeh. Vali jaye goldan inja nabud. So they don't accept the responsibility of their works and relates it to some external factors.

Karimnia and Afghari (2012) stated some other strategies as following:

1. Minimization: utterances or statements that minimize the severity of offense. E.g.
  - 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)
2. Denial of Responsibility, E.g.
  - a. Be man rabti nadare. (This is not up to me)
  - b. Ghesmate dige (it is fate any way)
  - c. Man dorost gozashtam, otoboos yeho tormoz kard. (I put it properly but the bus stopped suddenly)
3. Humor: using proverbs or expression with a sense of teasing
  - a. Bikhial, ghossasho nakhor pir mishi. (Take it easy! Don't be sad about it, you get old)

Karimnia and Afghari (2012) found that beside IFID, the primary strategy used in this cultural context is explanation. They showed that informants are more reluctant to intensify the apology or take responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

By comparing the apology strategies between two languages, it is clear that both languages have the same strategies. In Persian people use I'm embarrassed (*sharmandeham*) as the head act and in English people use I'm sorry more than other expressions such as I apologize or excuse me.

Chamani and Zareipur (2010) investigated the use of apology strategies and also the offenses that motivated apologies among native speakers of English and Persian. They reported that hearing offenses in English and accidents in Persian elicited the highest rate of apologies. According to their findings *Sorry* in English and *bebakhshid* "forgive" in Persian were the most common IFIDs. And both languages used the same apology strategies

In different situation, people use different ways for apologizing. When they are in a more formal position, both English and Persian people use the more polite way to show their responsibilities for the problem. They also use some intensifiers to show their feelings and try to compensate their works. Also according to the people's personality and the type of trust violation, external and internal attribution can be used for apologizing. Kim et.al (2004) in their research stated that "external attributions diminished observer's assignments of blame for failure." (Crant and Bateman, 1993) e.g. in internal attribution condition, people accept the full responsibility for the violation but in the external attribution condition, people accept only partial responsibility for the violation and attributed the rest of their responsibility to some external factors.

Shariati and Chamani (2009) stated that explicit expression of apology with a request for forgiveness (*bebakhshid*) was the most common apology strategy in Persian. This strategy together with acknowledgement of responsibility formed the most frequent combination of apology strategies in this language. Thus, it seems that the same set of apology strategies used in other investigated languages was common in Persian; however, preferences for using these strategies appeared to be culture specific.

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