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***An Analysis of Apology Strategies as Realized by
EFL Students in an academic setting***

Case study: Master two Linguistic Students of English at Bejaia
University

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts in Linguistics at the University of Bejaia

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Dedication

- ∴ I dedicate this work to all those who will benefit from it in their future research, and to every person who takes the time to read it.
- ∴ To that special person who left us too soon, this is also for you.
- ∴ To all my family MEKSEM and KHEMMOUDJ , my brother Massil, my grandmother and my cousin Saadia
- ∴ To all my fellow students, especially the closest ones.
- ∴ To all my dear friends.

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Abstract

. This exploratory study investigates the apology strategies used by Algerian EFL students at Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia. It aims to explore how two social variables; social status and gender of the interlocutors influence the learners' choice and use of apology strategies. The study involved 32 Master two students including both males and females. Data were collected through a Written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) consisting of eight social scenarios representing different social statuses (higher social status, equal social status, and lower social status). The responses were analyzed quantitatively using the Blum-Kulka and Olshtain framework (1984). The results indicated that the participants used a variety of apology strategies when performing the speech act of apology. New strategies were observed, such as softening the offense, providing reassurance, or even choosing not to apologize, more often, when addressing male interlocutors of equal status. The findings showed that the status of the interlocutor has an effect on the participants' use of apology strategies; they adapted their strategies depending on the interlocutor's status. More formal and respectful strategies were used with higher-status interlocutors, while apologies directed to peers tended to be simple. As for the strategies used with regards to the gender of the interlocutor, the results indicated that the participants generally used similar strategy types for both male and female interlocutors. Yet, the students were more emotionally expressive when addressing female interlocutors. This study is significant as it deepens understanding of how social variables shape pragmatic behaviour among Algerian EFL learners, informing both theoretical pragmatics and practical teaching approaches to improve learners' communicative competence in English. They asked to add the significance

Keywords: apology strategies, gender interlocutor, pragmatics, social status, speech acts.

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List of Abbreviations

CCSARP: Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns.

DCT: Discourse Completion Task.

DCTQ: Discourse Completion Task Questionnaire.

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

FTA: Face Threatening Act.

IFID: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device.

L1: First Language.

SAT: Speech Act Theory.

TL: Target Language.

WDCT: Written Discourse Completion Task.

Definition of Key Terms

Apology Strategy: As defined by Trosborg, (1995) apology strategy is a communicative technique used to express regret, admit fault, or take responsibility for an offense in order to repair social relationships and restore social harmony.

Interlocutor Gender: A social variable that may influence language choices and how speech acts are performed or interpreted. (Coates, 2015)

Pragmatics: Levinson (1983) defined pragmatics as the branch of linguistics that studies how meaning is shaped by context and social interaction.

Social Status: The hierarchical position or role of a person in a social or institutional setting, which can influence interactions and communication patterns. (Goffman, 1967).

Speech Act: As defined by Austin, (1962) speech act is an utterance that performs a specific action through language, such as apologizing, requesting, or promising, instead of just sharing information.

General Introduction

Introduction

Language, as a defining characteristic of human communication, serves as a powerful tool for conveying information and fostering social interaction. It enables individuals to express themselves both personally and socially, facilitating actions such as apologies, requests, compliments, criticisms, and more (Anam, 2016). Effective communication, however, requires more than a grasp of grammar and text organisation; it also demands an understanding of the pragmatic aspects of the target language (TL), allowing speakers to use language effectively and efficiently (Anam, 2016). Research in this field, particularly in the 1970s, focused on syntactic, phonetic, and morphological variations to understand how language functions in society (Karlsson, 2007). Recent linguistic studies have shifted to emphasized more on pragmatics, examining how language is used in social situations to perform a variety of communicative tasks and create meanings beyond the literal interpretation (Mey, 2001).

Language is not merely a medium for sharing information but also a system of symbols produced through speech that adapts to the needs and circumstances of its users. Central to this system are speech acts, which, as Yule (1996) explained, represent the actions performed through language. These acts extend beyond the literal meaning of words, reflecting the speaker's intentions and influencing social dynamics. Some examples include making requests, issuing commands, apologising, and complimenting. Through such acts, language not only facilitates communication but also shapes interactions, illustrating its profound role in human connection.

Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics introduced by Charles Morris (1901–1979), examines how language users derive meaning from context. It explores concepts such as deixis, implicature, presupposition, and speech acts, emphasising the connection between utterances and their contextual significance (Stalnaker, 1972; Yule, 1996). This field highlights how meaning extends beyond literal expressions, as noted by Slotka (2021), by examining politeness, information structure, and more.

The fundamental principle of pragmatics is , Speech Act Theory (SAT), introduced by Austin (1962) and developed by Searle (1969), which explains how language is used to perform actions, not just share information, such as apologising, requesting, or promising. For example, saying, “I apologise for my mistake,” expresses regret (locutionary act), assumes responsibility (illocutionary act), and aims to repair a relationship (perlocutionary act). Apologies which are expressive speech acts that acknowledge wrongdoing and express regret in order to bring about social harmony (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969).

Apology as a speech act plays a central role in social interaction, serving to repair relationships and restore social balance when a violation of social norms occurs. According to Trosborg (1995), apologies are not only acts of expression but also conversational repair mechanisms that help to re-establish harmony between the parties involved. Apologies acknowledge a wrongdoing, whether real or perceived, and provide an opportunity for the speaker to express regret and seek reconciliation. These conditions underscore the importance of both cognitive and emotional components in the apology process. According to Fraser (1981), there are two basic conditions that are needed: First, the speaker or the apologiser must acknowledge responsibility for their actions. The second, the speaker or apologiser expresses regret for any offence caused. This concluded that apologies are kinds of illocutionary and expressive speech act, which is common used in communication. It expresses the regret for a mistake. In addition, apology became the friendly action because it happens naturally in daily conversation.

The form and complexity of an apology are not universally fixed but vary significantly depending on social, cultural, and interpersonal factors, such as the relationship between the parties, social status, and the severity of the offence. In many cultures, power dynamics and social status play an important role in shaping the formality and depth of an apology. For example, people in lower positions often give more formal and detailed apologies to avoid negative outcomes, while those in higher power positions tend to offer brief, neutral apologies because of their authority and independence.

1. Statement of the Problem

The present study focuses on exploring the speech act of apology as realized by EFL students, taking into consideration social variables such as gender and social status of the interlocutors. There is a little research done in Algeria, especially in the University of Bejaia's Department of English.

The fact that apologizing can be carried out in different ways is rarely brought to student's attention. Considering the impact of the factors of social status and gender on participants' use, the present study focuses on exploring the speech act of apology as realized by EFL students at the University of Bejaia, taking into account the social status and gender of the interlocutor when realizing this speech act.

2. Research Questions

This study is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the apology strategies used by Master EFL learners at University of Bejaia?
2. Does the social status of the interlocutor affect EFL students' use of apology strategies?
3. Does the gender of the interlocutor affect the participants' use of apology strategies?

3. Research aim

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the speech act of apology as it is realised by Master 2 students of English at University of Bejaia. Specifically, this research seeks to identify the apology strategies employed by EFL learners in various social and contextual situations. Moreover, the study seeks to find out how social variables such as social status and gender of the interlocutor influence the learners' choice of apology strategies.

4. Significance of the study

This study is significant because it expands on our knowledge of Algerian EFL learners' apology strategies use, and their connection to their interlocutor social status and gender, because they show how these social factors affect language use. Moreover, the results enhance theoretical study in pragmatics and speech act theory. Practically, the results offer valuable guidance for both curriculum developers and EFL teachers assisting them in resolving communication issues and enhancing students' pragmatic competency, leading to more effective and more appropriate use of English in real contexts.

5. Population and Study Sample:

The target population for this study comprises second-year Master students in the Department of English at the University of Bejaia; specifically, those specializing in linguistics during the 2024/2025 academic year.

6. Organisation of the thesis

The organization of this study is designed to guide readers clearly through its various components, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of both the theoretical and practical parts. The research is divided into two main chapters. This research begin with a general introduction that contains the statement of the problem, research questions, aims, population, significance, and the organization of this study.

The first chapter provides the theoretical background. This chapter is divided into four sections: the first introduces pragmatics and speech act theory; the second focuses on the act of apology; the third deals with politeness theory, and the influence of social status and gender; and the fourth reviews previous studies related to ours. The second chapter is devoted to the practical side: the research methodology and data collection in the first section. For the second section, it deals with analysis, interpretation of the findings. The third section contains the discussion of the

major findings, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research. Finally, the study ends with a general conclusion.

Chapter One: Theoretical Background

Introduction

This chapter explores various theoretical perspectives related to the speech act of apology. It is organized into four sections. The first section introduces pragmatics and speech act theory. The second section focuses on the apology speech act, its types and strategies. The third section examines politeness theory, including politeness in apologizing, and the influence that social status and gender play in this speech act. Finally, the fourth section reviews previous studies relevant to the apology speech act, which forms the core focus of this research. Each section contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the topic under investigation.

1.1 Section one:

1.1.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics, was first introduced by the American philosopher Charles Morris (1901–1979), in his work *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938) is a branch of study that examines the relationship between natural language and speakers. It focuses on how context influences the interpretation of meaning and how signs are used and interpreted in specific contexts especially through conversational implicatures, and examines the relationship between speech acts and their context of occurrence.

This field of study was later expanded by scholars such as Paul Grice, John Searle, and Dan Sperber & Deirdre Wilson, who contributed to theories of meaning, implicature, and speech acts.

Several key functions of pragmatics have been identified by linguists:

- Studies the meaning according to the context.
- Studies the contextual meaning.
- Studies how we use language to achieve goals (Linked to Speech Act Theory, developed by John Austin 1962 cited in his work “How to do things with words” and later expanded by John Searle 1969 mentioned in his book “Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language”).
- Studies the invisible meaning (introduced by Paul Grice 1975 from his book “Logic and conversation”).
- Studies what the speaker said and the interpretation of the listener (developed by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson 1986 in their book “Relevance: Communication and cognition”).

Similarly, Austin, in his work “*How to Do Things with Words*” (1962), extended pragmatics beyond the semantic content of words to consider how language is used in context to perform actions and create meaning. He argued that the meaning of utterances depends on the interaction between linguistic content and situational context.

Later, Levinson (1983) defined pragmatics in his work *Pragmatics* as the study of the relationship between language and its context of use, which is crucial for understanding meaning beyond the structural level. He emphasised that pragmatics deals with the principles of language usage, including deixis, conversational implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and context. Levinson explored how speakers and listeners use language effectively, considering social, cultural, and interactional factors to create and interpret meaning (Levinson, 1983).

In other words, pragmatics is the study of language from the perspective of its users, particularly with regarding to the decisions they make, the limitations they face when using language in social situations, and the impact their language use has on other people involved in the communication process (Crystal, 1985).

Importantly, Huang (2007) distinguished between two perspectives on pragmatics: sociocultural-interactional and cognitive-philosophical. The former, known as the "component view," looks into the systematic study of meaning through or in relation to language use. It emphasises key ideas such as reference, deixis, speech acts, implicature, and presumption. However, the latter is a functional perspective that links sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, discourse analysis, pragmatic variation, and other social science fields (Huang, 2007).

In a similar vein, Slotta (2021) stated that pragmatics investigates how language is connected to the contexts in which it is used. It includes a wide range of issues such as deixis, presupposition, speech acts, implicatures, politeness, and information structure. These topics stem from difficulties encountered when trying to understand language in isolation from the situations in which it is used.

According to Betti (2021), pragmatics is the study of how context contributes to meaning. It encompasses phenomena such as implicature, speech acts, relevance, and conversation. Theories of pragmatics go hand-in-hand with theories of semantics, which study aspects of meaning. The ability to understand another speaker's intended meaning is called pragmatic competence.

Pragmatics is often compared to related fields such as:

- a. **Semantics**, which focuses on the literal, rule-based meanings of linguistic expressions.
- b. **Syntax**, which examines the structure and word order that form sentences with specific meanings.

- c. **Semiotics**, which studies signs, symbols, and their interpretation (Eka Chandra et al., 2023).

1.1.2 Speech Act Theory

1.1.2.1. Definition of Speech Act Theory

In pragmatics, Speech Act Theory (SAT) is one of the most influential theories that focuses on how words not only convey meaning but also perform actions. Speech act theory was first systematically presented by the British philosopher Austin (1962). In his important work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), he enunciates that speech itself can shape the world through the act of uttering words; in his theory in language, “*to say something is to do something*” (Austin, 1962) means that language is not merely used to describe reality but also to perform actions. Further refined by John Searle (1969), who expands on Austin’s ideas, ‘‘Speech Act Theory, a foundational concept in pragmatics, studies how language is used in specific contexts to perform actions as well as communicate information (Searle, 1969)’’.

Speech Act Theory is how language is used to perform actions. It explains that communication is not just about conveying information but also involves performing specific acts (e.g., promising, requesting, or apologising through spoken or written words). Speech act theory, as explained by Searle in *Speech Acts* (1969), highlights that speaking is more than just sharing information; it is a kind of action.

1.1.2.2. Levels of Speech Acts

A speech act, according to Austin (1962/1975), can be analysed as a simultaneous performance of three internal acts: locution, illocution, and perlocution. There are two fundamental components to any utterance: sense and force. In order to account for the actional nature of language, Austin believed it was important to distinguish between three simultaneous aspects, similar to an utterance in terms of its form, function, and effect/result. Locution is defined as composed of three elements: Phonetic act (uttering certain noises). Phatic act (noises of specific type). Rhetic acts (where sense plus reference are equivalent to meaning”) are the form of an utterance. In contrast, illocution corresponds to the function (or force) of an utterance. And the perlocution is about the result of the utterance.

In short, Austin (1962) identifies locution, illocution, and perlocution as three simultaneous acts done “*of saying*,” “*in saying*,” and “*by saying*,” respectively:

- **Locutionary act:** The basic act *of saying* meaningful sounds and words that make sense (*what is said*).

- **Illocutionary act:** The intended action or function performed *in saying* something, what you will do with the words. An illocutionary act refers to the intended action performed by the speaker in making an utterance, such as asserting, promising, commanding, or questioning. It gives words their social function, or communicative intentionality.
- **Perlocutionary act:** The effect or result produced *by saying* something, the impact of your words on the listener, such as acceptance.

1.1.2.3 Searle's Taxonomy of Speech Acts

Searle's (1976) analysis of speech acts differs from Austin's (1962) in two key ways. First, Searle introduces a clearer distinction between the content of a speech act (what is expressed) and its force (what it achieves), a distinction that Austin's classification lacked. Second, Searle's (1976) approach emphasises the speaker's intention, arguing that a speech act requires the speaker's intention to be recognized. Austin (1969) believed that actions cannot rely solely on intention. Searle (1969) also asserts that performing a speech act depends on the speakers expressing their desire to perform it and committing to its obligations. To create a new semantic account of speech acts, Searle's (1969) taxonomy combines conventional rules with intentional elements, focusing on the speaker's intention as essential for the act's realization.

Searle (1976), categorized speech acts into the following five types (as cited in Trosborg, 1995, p. 66).

- **Assertive /Representative:** It represents the speaker's belief or proposition, which can be true or false, e.g., It is raining.
- **Directive:** Aim to get the listener to do something, e.g., Can you pass me the notes from yesterday's lecture?
- **Commissive:** Commit the speaker to do a future action; promising, treating, e.g., I will do it next week.
- **Expressive:** It occurs when the speaker expresses his psychological state; feelings or attitudes, e.g., I'm sorry, I miss her.
- **Declarations:** when the speaker declares something that brings a change, e.g.: you are hired.

1.2 Section 2: The Speech Act of Apology

1.2.1 Definition of apology Speech Act

Apologies, classified as expressive speech acts, are essential in everyday communication. They allow speakers to express their psychological states and feelings, particularly when seeking to restore relationships after having offended someone, whether intentionally or unintentionally. According to the Collins English Dictionary (2024), an apology is "something that you say or write in order to tell someone that you are sorry that you have hurt them or caused trouble for them." This definition highlights the apology's role in expressing regret and acknowledging responsibility for a social violation. Searle (1969) classified apologies under the category of expressive-speech acts used to convey the speaker's emotions. Goffman (1971) viewed an apology as a form of "remedial work" that aims to repair a situation caused by an offence. He described it as involving two parts: one where the speaker acknowledges their guilt for the offence and another where they align with the addressee and the violated social norms, showing understanding and respect for the addressee's feelings and the disrupted norms.

Meanwhile, Searle (1976) further elaborated that apologies acknowledge wrongdoing and express regret, signalling recognition of a violation of social norms. Thus, apologies serve to repair relationships between a speaker and hearer. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) further emphasized that apologies are typically post-event acts, addressing offences that have already occurred or are anticipated. The seriousness of the offense is a key factor influencing the decision to apologize, with additional offences as culture, context, power dynamics, social distance, and individual traits also playing a role. According to Blum-Kulka (1992), cultural interpretations of politeness significantly shape how apologies are understood and performed across different social contexts.

Trosborg (1995) outlined the conditions for an apology, stating that an apology involves two participants: an apologiser and the recipient. The offender must acknowledge their responsibility for the offence, signalling their intention to set things right.

Apologies can therefore function as both face-saving and face-threatening acts, depending on the context. When viewed as face-saving, apologies acknowledge the offence and take responsibility, which helps restore the hearer's positive face (their desire for respect and value). By demonstrating respect for the hearer's feelings, apologies help repair the relationship. Holmes (1990) argued that apologies are crucial for maintaining social harmony and addressing the hearer's need for respect. On the other hand, apologies can simultaneously threaten the speaker's face. Offering an apology requires admitting fault, acknowledging wrongdoing, and exposing vulnerability, which risks damaging the speaker's positive face and self-image. As Brown and

Levinson (1987) argued, apologies are inherently face-threatening because they require the speaker to admit guilt, potentially harming their self-image.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) reported that indirectness in apologies does not increase politeness or forgiveness, as apologies are both expected and beneficial for the hearer. They examine apologies in two contexts: one where apologies respond to an offence, restoring the hearer's face, and another where apologies precede a potential offence as part of negative politeness strategies.

According to Robinson (2004), an apology plays a key role in managing relationships. It involves the speakers acknowledging and accepting responsibility for their offensive behaviour, signalling that they recognise they have wronged the other person. The apology also serves as the beginning of a process in which the speaker seeks forgiveness, or "absolution," from the offended party. This process helps to restore and maintain the relationship between the speaker and the hearer by addressing the harm caused.

1.2.2 Types of Apology

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) introduced some important apology strategies, starting from dividing them into two major types that can also take a combination of both, which are the IFID which is the illocutionary force indicating device which selects a routinized, formulaic expression of regret (a performative verb) such as: (be) sorry; apologize, regret; excuse, etc. The research on apologies suggests that each language has a spectrum of conventional ways to express IFIDs (intentional force indicators). In English, the most common realization of an apology is the phrase "be sorry," while in Hebrew, the word "slixa," which literally translates to "forgiveness," is the most conventional IFID. This indicates that while the underlying concept of apology is universal, the specific linguistic markers used to convey it can vary significantly across languages, reflecting the influence of cultural norms and linguistic conventions.

The second type can be classified as a conditional apology, characterized by the use of propositional content to indicate the conditions under which the apology is valid.

In this type, the speaker uses an utterance that references specific elements from a predefined set of propositions, each proposition representing a condition necessary for the apology to be considered sincere. For instance, an utterance like "if I offended you, I apologise" employs a proposition ("I offended you") as a condition for the condition to be valid.

1.2.3 Strategies of Apology

As for the strategies of apologising, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) identified several key strategies that individuals use when making apologies. These strategies include the use of

Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFID), offers of repair, accounts or explanations, acknowledgment of responsibility, and promises of forbearance. They observed that these strategies are used by students from the English department at Padang State University. Their study revealed that although there are differences in their frequency of use, both men and women utilise all these strategies. The expression of apology was the most popular, while the promise of restraint was the least common. Factors influencing the choice of strategy include the severity of the offence, the cultural context, and other elements such as the power or age of the individuals involved.

A. Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID): This strategy involves directly apologising, such as saying "I'm sorry." This is often the first reaction people have when they realise they have hurt someone. It shows immediate acknowledgement of the harm caused.

B. Offer of repair: Here, the person proposes to compensate for the offence in some way. This can include concrete actions, like reimbursing a lost item or offering a service. This strategy aims to restore the relationship by showing a desire to correct the mistake.

This strategy has two sub-strategies, which are:

- **The specified offer of repair** by specifying exactly the act of repairing that you are intending to produce; for example, you break someone's phone and you offer to buy him a new one.
- **The unspecified offer of repair** consists of mentioning that you have the intention to fix things and that you are ready to repair without mentioning exactly how, for example: you arrive late to the classroom, the teacher gets mad, and then you tell him that you will do your best to avoid this from happening again.

C. Account explanation: This strategy allows the individual to provide reasons or circumstances that led to the mistake. This may include external factors or misunderstandings that played a role in the situation. It helps the other person understand why the error occurred.

These strategy also two sub-strategies, which are:

- **Explicit:** for example, you arrive late to the wedding and you just justify yourself directly and clearly by saying that the tire of your car was broken down.
- **Implicit:** here we suggest the cause without explicitly stating it by relying on the listener's understanding and interpretation, for example, by justifying to the case above that the traffic is always so heavy in the morning.

D. Acknowledgement of responsibility: In this approach, the person admits to making a mistake. They take responsibility for their actions, which can enhance the credibility of their apology and show that they understand the impact of their behaviour.

On the other hand, this strategy has three sub-strategies, which are:

- **Self-blame**, by blaming yourself to apologise, for example: It my fault; I should have worked better in the exams.
- **Denial of fault**, It is the act of rejecting the fault to show that you are not responsible for the damage that was caused.
- **trait of self-deficiency**, which is a characteristic that indicates self-doubt or a lack of self-esteem; for example, if you don't finish your work on the deadline and you apologise to your co-worker by saying, You know me, I have always been lazy.

E. Promise of forbearance: This strategy involves a commitment not to repeat the mistake in the future. It reassures the other person that the incident will not happen again, which can help restore trust in the relationship. For example, you were pulled over by the police for speeding and in the moment when he is about to book you, you apologize to him by saying: I promise, won't do it again.

1.3 Section 3: Politeness Theory

1.3.1 Politeness Theory

Politeness strategies and acts are generally considered from the perspective of politeness theory, which was for the most part developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in their seminal work, *Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena* (1978). Mills (2003) defined politeness as a speaker's intention to soften the potential face threat, while Foley (1997) described it as a set of social skills that ensure affirmation in interactions. Kasper (1990) also pointed out that breaches of politeness norms may result from ignorance rather than intentional rudeness. This theory says politeness is a key to good communication. When people are polite and avoid making others feel bad, conversations go more smoothly, and everyone is happier.

1.3.2 Politeness in Apology

Since apologies frequently include repairing face damage, politeness is especially important. The theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) explains how people decide on apologetic techniques depending on politeness factors. The concept of "face" (one's social image) is defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has

taken during a particular contact” (Goffman, 1967, p. 5). Brown and Levinson (1978) conceptualise face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself/herself” (p. 61), encompassing two dimensions: positive face, according to face, is the need to be accepted by others, the desire to be liked, approved of, treated as a member of the same group, and to know that his or her wants are shared by others (Yule, 1996). While the negative face represents the need for autonomy, freedom from imposition, and the desire not to be controlled by others. It represents the desire to maintain control over one’s decisions and actions.

A. Strategies of Politeness

The linguists identify four main politeness strategies developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in 1978 and further refined in their 1987 book *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*:

- **Bald on record strategy:** This involves saying precisely what one means without mitigation, without minimizing the threat to the hearer's face. It is used in situations where they prioritise efficiency over politeness, such as when giving urgent instructions or issuing orders. For example, I'm sorry. I won't do it again.

- **Negative politeness strategy:** minimising imposition and prioritising respecting others' negative face, which encompasses their desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition. This employs indirect language, hedging, and polite requests to maintain personal boundaries and autonomy. For example, I feel really bad about what happened. I hope you're not upset."

- **Positive politeness strategy:** this is orientated to the maintenance and enhancement of social relationships by avoiding any threat to the others' positive face, such as the desire for acceptance and recognition from others. Using compliments, expressions of solidarity, and empathy creates a friendly, inclusive atmosphere that fulfils this desire. for example: "I hate to bother you, but I really regret what I did."

- **Off-record strategy:** Uses implicit, indirect, or ambiguous language to avoid making a direct request; it leaves room for the hearer to interpret the speaker's intent and decide whether to comply. Often includes hints, metaphors, and sarcasm. For example: "It looks like I may have messed up..."

B. The Rules of Politeness in Communication

According to Lakoff (1973), the rules of politeness in communication exist to guide how people interact with each other without causing offence or discomfort as a means of maintaining

social harmony and facilitating proper dialogue. We are going to look at three main rules of politeness, their implications, and how they relate to the rules of conversation.

The Three Rules of Politeness proposed by Robin Lakoff in 1973 as part of her work on politeness theory are:

- **Don't Impose:** This rule highlights how crucial it is to avoid intruding into other people's private affairs or making demands that might be interpreted as unpleasant. It advises speakers to keep a respectful distance and get consent before discussing delicate subjects or private questions. For example, asking, "May I ask how much you paid for that vase?" exemplifies this rule by requesting consent before delving into personal financial matters.

- **Give Options:** This rule suggests providing the addressee with choices in order for him to choose freely and not to feel obliged; this may be realised under hedging language or indirect speech acts, for instance, "I guess it is time to go," which mitigates the sentence by giving space to the decision of the listener. This also makes the listener feel more independent, and all this shows respect in the conversation.

- **Make a feel-good be Friendly:** The third rule is all about making people feel good about themselves. This can involve demonstrating warmth, friendliness, and camaraderie, which occasionally calls for the use of informal address forms or sincere gratitude. Using first names or nicknames, for example, might improve participants' sense of belonging and indicate a pleasant relationship.

C. Face and Politeness

Brown and Levinson (1987) defined "face" as the public self-image every individual wants to claim, which includes their feeling of value. Face can be improved, preserved, or lost, necessitating ongoing attention during encounters.

Consequently, saving face means maintaining the face of both the speaker and the other participants. Politeness, intrinsically connected with the concept of face, applies particularly to the class of directive speech acts, which are essentially dangerous to face and hence identified as face-threatening acts (FTAs), (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

FTAs are behaviours that can threaten or protect one's face during interaction. For example, criticisms and rejections threaten positive face (the desire for approval), while orders, warnings, and threats threaten negative face (the desire for autonomy).

Apologies, accepting compliments, and admitting mistakes protect your positive face (desire to be liked). Conversely, giving options and making promises you're not thrilled about protect your negative face (freedom to choose).

As these two scholars explain, certain acts intrinsically threaten face because they inherently contradict the face wants of the speaker and/or the addressee. In any interaction, participants engage in "face work," either avoiding FTAs or performing them. If an FTA is performed, it can be done off-record (indirectly) or on-record (directly). On-record FTAs can be realised without any mitigating effort, so as to diffuse the threat the least polite option or with redressive strategies that employ politeness to diffuse the impact. These efforts use positive politeness focused toward rapport maintenance or negative politeness focused toward respect for autonomy. The amount of face loss varies according to the strategy of choice, while avoiding the FTA all together is the most polite option, and performing it on record without redress is the least polite. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that the level of politeness employed when performing a face-threatening act (FTA) is determined by three key factors: Social distance is the degree of familiarity between interlocutors; relative power is the speaker's power over the hearer; and the ranking of imposition suggests that the bigger the imposition on the hearer, the politer the speaker must be.

Research indicates that those in lower-status roles may employ more negative politeness techniques when apologising to those in higher-status roles. Politeness also rises with increased social distance, higher power, and degree of imposition.

Furthermore, it is argued that women use more elaborate apology strategies than men. These three variables not only influence the speaker's choice of politeness strategy but also determine the severity of the FTA itself. As Yule (1996) reinforces this by saying that politeness serves as a means of demonstrating awareness of others' feelings regarding FTAs. Whenever the speaker's words threaten a person's face, they will employ strategies that mitigate the risk-at least-involved in what is called a face-saving act. Understanding politeness and the way to manage face are crucial to interacting effectively socially.

D. Primary Strategies for Executing an Apology

In particular, apologies frequently deal with FTAs and can involve preserving the speaker's positive face by acknowledging regret for the act. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), an apology is used to convey regret or hesitation about a Face Threatening Act (FTA). They identify four primary strategies for executing an apology:

- **Admitting Intrusion:** The speaker admits their violation of the hearer's face, using phrases like, "I am sure you must be very busy, but..." (p. 188).

- **Indicating Reluctance:** This strategy shows the speaker's unwillingness to force something on the hearer, exemplified by expressions such as, "I normally would not ask you this, but..." (p. 188).

- **Providing Overwhelming Reasons:** Here, the speaker justifies their FTA by pointing to unavoidable circumstances that demand the action with phrases like, "I simply cannot manage to..." (p. 189).

- **Beseeking Forgiveness:** The speaker seeks forgiveness from the hearer using expressions like, "Excuse me, but..." (p. 189).

Overall, politeness theory provides a strong framework for comprehending the dynamics of interpersonal communication, particularly in the management of self-image and face-threatening situations. (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Its dual emphasis on negative and positive politeness explains why people occasionally unintentionally violate standards, making it essential to studies of social interaction, particularly in situations like apologies where maintaining social harmony is crucial. While Lakoff (1989) observes that polite behaviour frequently goes unobserved unless it is violated.

1.3.3 The Effect of Social Status in the Use of Apology Strategies

Social status is a complex term that involves lifestyle, parental occupation, family income, and level of education (Durif, 1968). As a whole, these establish an individual's position in the social hierarchy, not only their opportunities, but also their values, goals, and style of communication (Durif, 1968). Social status is important when dealing with others, like apologizing, since it influences the manner in which people deal with actions that threaten their face (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967). For instance, lower-status people may demonstrate more respect or give explanations to mitigate perceived offense, while higher-status individuals may place more emphasis on maintaining one's appearance or demand more formal apologies.

Apologies are sociolinguistic behaviours that represent larger societal norms and affect interactions between people. According to Wolfson (1986), social hierarchies have a big impact on how people behave when they apologize; things like status, authority, and familiarity affect both the need to apologize and the language used. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), choosing the right strategies to prevent misunderstandings requires sociopragmatic competence, which is an understanding of the social identity and relative power of interlocutors.

Goffman's (1967) theory of "face" brings more light to how individuals behave in society. Showing tact and social skills is essential for preserving face, particularly in situations when status disparities are present. Without it, reputation and long-term relationship dynamics can suffer if it is

not accomplished. Both high- and low-status individuals negotiate their relationships with an implicit awareness of mutual face protection, as demonstrated by the principle of "noblesse oblige," which states that those in higher positions should exercise restraint and grace.

1.3.4 The Effect of Gender in the use of Apology strategy

Understanding the role of gender in language use is fundamental when exploring how speakers express themselves. Coates (2015) distinguished between sex and gender 'Sex' refers to a biological distinction, while 'gender' is the term used to describe socially constructed categories based on sex. Most societies operate in terms of two genders, masculine and feminine, and it is tempting to treat the category of gender as a simple binary opposition. Until recently, much of the research carried out on language and gender did so '.

This means that modern research no longer sees gender based on biology. It is not just about being born male or female, rather it concerns how individuals behave, express themselves and interact with others in different situations Gender is something that people do, not just something they are, it is behaving or performing certain speech act that the society associates with being a masculine or a feminine. Since social norms differ across cultures, beliefs, traditions, and historical periods, gender expression and patterns of communication also changes. For example the way a person speaks, shows politeness or apologizes may be seen as reflecting how they perform their gender roles.

Similarly, Tannen (1991, as cited in Cots, 1992) explains that gender is not a set of traits possessed by individuals, but it is accomplished in interaction. This means that gender identity is constantly being constructed and reinforced through everyday language use.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) argue that speech acts like apologies, compliments, and requests are more than routine expressions. They serve as ways in which speakers manage relationships, construct their identities and their gender-identities, and negotiate their social roles. In other words, when someone apologizes or gives a compliment, they are expressing who they are and how they wish to be perceived in relation to others; not just following social manners.

Robin Lakoff (2004) contended that the way women are taught to use language reflects and reinforces their lower social status. For instance, when women speak they tend to use more politeness strategies, tag questions, hedging or show their uncertainty. Women were taught to speak more politely, which reflects societal expectations and contributes to maintaining unequal power dynamics.

However, Mills (2003) challenges the common view in the literature on language and gender that women are always more polite than men. She believes that both men and women use politeness depending on the context, the social norms and the interaction goals. In some cases women may be less polite than men and this depends on the situation, and sometimes men express politeness more than women do.

Brown and Levinson (1987) defined politeness as the way speakers manage social relationships by attending to the "face wants" of others. It means the desire to be appreciated and approved by others and not to be imposed upon. These face needs are deeply influenced by social and cultural norms which shape how politeness is expressed and interpreted. These politeness strategies are shaped by social and cultural norms rather than by gender alone.

Moreover, gendered power dynamics in conversation can influence the way apologies are used and interpreted, affecting how they are exchanged and received across genders. Zimmerman and West (1975) observed that in mixed-gender conversations, men often deny women equal status as conversational partners by dominating and interrupting them. Their study showed that men's and women's conversations are often unequal which reflects the large inequalities that exist in society.

Finally, Tannen (1991, as cited in Cots, 1992) explained that throughout history, women have been kept silenced and have been banned of talking extensively in many societies. For the majority of women, the conversational language tends to serve as a means of building rapport and creating connections and negotiating relationships. In contrast, for many men, talk is primarily a means to save independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order.

1.4 Section four: Literature Review

This section reviews the existing literature related to speech act of apology highlighting key theories, findings, and gaps that inform the current study

Ugla & Zainol Abidin (2015) examined in their research study the Iraqi English foreign language (EFL) students' apologetic methods, Iraqi Arabic apology strategies, and pragmatic strategies for using an apology as a speech act. The study employed a questionnaire and interview based on past research methods. Quantitative data were collected from 55 Iraqi EFL students acquired from Al-Yarmouk University College and the University of Diyala via Discourse Completion Task Questionnaires (DCTQ), while qualitative data were collected through individual interviews with 12 Iraqi EFL students. The two authors conducted this research study because of the

lack of performance of Iraqis in a speech act of an apology and to highlight some differences between Iraqis and foreigners and their view of politeness during apologising. The findings demonstrated the many apologetic techniques employed by Iraqi EFL students. The study's findings demonstrated that Iraqi EFL students employed a range of apology techniques, *understood how to tailor their responses to the demands* of particular circumstances and relationships, and *felt compelled to provide clarification* in order to prevent their response from being interpreted as an apology.

Alilli (2016) intended to explore the apology strategies used by English-speaking university students in Algeria, with an emphasis on how social power, social distance, and the severity of the offence affected the strategies they chose. The study involved 60 third-year English majors at the University of Constantine who were pursuing a BA in Applied Language Studies. The data in this study was collected through interviews and a Discourse Completion Questionnaire and analysed quantitatively and qualitatively following Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) model. Algerian EFL learners mostly used *direct expressions* of apology and *acknowledgement of responsibility*, in addition to culturally specific strategies like calls to *hold anger*, *determinism*, and *arrogance*. High-status interlocutors received formal and intensified apologies; close friends were *offered remedial strategies*. Severe offences resulted in complex and explicit apologies, while low-severity offences usually led to simpler forms or opting out. Apologies maintained harmony a balance of universal and culturally specific practices.

Alsulayyi (2016) examined the apology strategies employed by Saudi EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers in Najran, particularly how factors like social distance, power, and offence severity influenced their choices. It also examined gender differences in using these strategies. Thirty Saudi EFL teachers (15 males and 15 females) from Najran participated in this study, responding to a discourse completion task (DCT) containing 10 hypothetical situations representing varying levels of offence severity, social distance, and power dynamics. The researcher employed a qualitative descriptive method, classifying the data according to Bergman and Kasper's (1993) framework. This study showed that the *Illocutionary Force Indicating Device* (IFID) was the most frequently used apology strategy, particularly used more by males than females. According to the study, two new prominent strategies were found: *downgrading and taking responsibility* were more frequently used by females while *upgrades* were preferred by males. As the least common strategies, males were more likely than females to use *verbal redress*, *take responsibility*, and *offer repair*. Depending on the relationship with the interlocutor, the study discovered that the choice of

apology strategies was influenced by social distance, power dynamics, and the seriousness of the offense.

Alrshoudi (2020) made a study to examine L1 Qassimi Arabic speakers' apology speech acts in Saudi Arabia. The latter used the framework of Blum-Kulka in order to analyse her findings. The data were collected quantitatively by randomly gathering 53 participants to apply the observation methodology to them since it provided real insight into apologising in natural communication. This study focused on 34 apology utterances, and the data came from 53 Qassimi Arabic speakers of various ages, all of whom were born and raised in the region. Qassimi realised his study over 43 days by taking in place the real-life settings that society used the most (social media, conversations in university, etc.). The results of this study showed that the participants executed seven different strategies of Blum-Kulka's framework, and the strategies that were used the most were the *explicit and implicit* ones. The other common strategies that were used the most were *taking responsibility* and *admitting responsibility* for the offence, while the least-used strategies were *offering repair* for the offence or damage and *denying responsibility*. This study permitted Alrshoudi to discover a new apology strategy that had not been considered in previous studies, where the author found out that the person who was offended actually apologised even though he was not the one who did anything wrong, and that was in many situations.

Slocum, Allan, & Allan (2020) used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach (Van Manen, 1990) to explore how lay people experienced and interpreted apologies offered to them, and the three authors chose this approach because it permitted researchers to develop a gestalt understanding of apology as conveyed by participants' descriptions of the occurrence of this phenomenon in their natural environment. The data were collected quantitatively by a sample that consisted of 23 Australian participants aged between 26 and 58 years from various educational and socio-economic backgrounds. All participants had been in an intimate relationship for at least two years prior to the incident occurring. Participants were recruited from community networks for a study on conflict resolution in intimate relationships. They were interviewed for about three hours, recorded, and encouraged to describe and elaborate on their experiences. The analysis followed a grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 2008). The first author sought to find consistencies in participants' descriptions to create general concepts and emerging categories that defined aspects of the studied phenomenon. The authors reached a conclusion that stated participants believed a good apology varied by person and situation, *required time, deep regret, and often face-to-face interaction* as they distinguished between "*regret*" (*self-focused*) and "*remorse*."

Sabilla and Jusmaya, (2020) identified and described the types of apology strategies used in The Ellen DeGeneres Show based on Trosborg's (1995) theory and analysed the types of offences that necessitated apologies in the show using Deutschmann's (2003) framework. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the researchers gathered spoken data from Season 17 of the talk show's recorded episodes, emphasised Ellen DeGeneres's conversations with her guests to pinpoint apology utterances, and examined the strategies she employed. According to the study, the most common strategy was *direct apology*, which included *expressing regret and directly acknowledging mistakes*. The researchers also found that the use of *indirect apologies*, which included *explanations or implicit acknowledgements of responsibility* and *remedial support strategies* to offer to repair the damage caused, was rare. The most common type of offence that prompted apologies was *talk offences*, particularly *slip-of-the-tongue mistakes*. These strategies were used in the show to maintain social harmony and protect public image.

Hassan (2020) examined in his study the different strategies of apologies in each situation by choosing 10 different situations to see the spontaneous reaction, the different ways of apologising, and the suggestion of the findings in terms of expressing apologies by the students for the English department students 4th stage at the College of Education/University of Garmian. The author introduced his work by talking about the importance of apologising to keep and rebuild a relationship with a person, and for that, he took advantage of the citations of some famous sociolinguists like Robinson and Goffman to prove his point. To realise his research, Sadullah Hassan used Olshtain and Cohen's strategies of apology framework. To conduct his analysis, he needed responses from 45 students based on the feedback from the questionnaires he emailed. The report of his research revealed some interesting results, like finding out that Kurdish EFL learners nearly used all types of apology strategies with different variations. *Illocutionary Force Indicating Device* was used as routinized and conventionalised forms of apology, and the use of apologies served to assume responsibility for the wrongdoing. Most of the participants used the phrases "*I am sorry*," "*I apologise*," or "*I beg your pardon*" to show their regrets.

Farenkia (2022) investigated French interlanguage pragmatics in Canada by comparing the pragmatic and linguistic choices of first-language speakers of French (FL1) and second-language learners of French (FL2) when apologising in three specific situations. Data for the study came from a DCT that 16 University Montréal native speakers and 16 Cape Breton University L2 French learners completed. The study found that native French speakers (L1) and French learners (L2) employed significantly distinct apology strategies. Both groups predominantly employed *complex apology utterances*, but L1 speakers showed greater cultural and linguistic nuance in their

apologies, favouring *direct strategies* such as *expressions of regret*, and using *supportive acts* more frequently. Additionally, they used a wider variety of interjections to express emotional reactions, adapting their answers to the social context and relationships. In contrast, L2 learners depended more on *indirect strategies*, especially *offers of explanations* and *repairs*. The L2 learners showed linguistic transfer and limited adaptability in formal situations, leading to simpler, less idiomatic expressions. Both groups showed contextual adaptability, but L1 speakers were more perceptive of social dynamics, particularly in formal settings.

Ngo (2022) analysed the strategies of apology and how frequently both direct and indirect apology techniques were used in English. The data were collected from 282 apology letters written by students from four EFL classes at the University of Danang during the COVID pandemic and were analysed with a descriptive qualitative method combined with a quantitative method to identify the strategies used, following the taxonomy proposed by Trosborg (2011) and Searle's (1975) direct and indirect speech act framework. According to the study, indirect apology strategies were employed more frequently than direct ones. *Offering an apology* was the most often used *direct strategy*, whereas *providing an explanation or account* was the most often used *indirect strategy*. Conversely, *evasive strategies* were rarely used, and *opting-out strategies* were not used at all. Many letters featured a combination of direct and indirect strategies, with common sequences including *expressions of regret*, *explanations*, and *remedial support*. Students frequently gave justifications for their actions and *admitted responsibility*, either explicitly or implicitly.

Song (2024) explored the pragmatic strategies in influencers' apologies, focusing on Jenna Marbles' apology video to understand how these strategies enhance sincerity and rebuild public trust in the context of digital media. This study took Jenna Marbles' video on YouTube as a case study and adopted a qualitative approach by using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) framework of apology strategies. The study found that implicit apologies without the Illocutionary *Force Indicating Device* (IFID) were more common than explicit ones (with IFID), with the former focusing on the five core strategies: *acknowledging responsibility*, *account of cause*, *offer of repair*, *promise for forbearance*. *Taking responsibility* was the most common strategy, effectively conveying sincerity, signalling guilt, and rebuilding trust. She used strategies such as *account of cause*, *offer of repair*, and *promise of forbearance* to provide explanations for her past actions, to offer emotional repair, and to promise to change by stopping her YouTube channel. These strategies helped restore public trust by demonstrating reflection and commitment to avoid future harm. The promise intensification and empathetic statements conveyed deeper remorse, empathy, and sincerity, enhancing the effectiveness of the apology.

Dahmani and Al Khalaf (2024) explored the apology strategies used by native Kabyle speakers in Bejaia, Algeria, focusing on how social status affects these strategies. The study was based on the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) framework. Data were collected quantitatively by selecting thirty participants (15 males and 15 females, aged 22–65) who responded to a written discourse completion task (WDCT) consisting of nine hypothetical scenarios. According to the study, Kabyle speakers mostly used explicit apologies *Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)*, which include offers of apology, requests for forgiveness, and expressions of regret. Additionally, they rarely used *forbearance promises* or demonstrated *concern for the hearer*; they occasionally offered explanations. New Kabyle cultural tactics were also identified by the study, including *asking for patience*, *urging the hearer to remain calm*, and *quoting proverbs*. The research showed that apology strategies vary depending on the social status of the interlocutor: *explanations and promises of forbearance* are more frequent in interactions with higher-status individuals, while fewer strategies are used with lower-status interlocutors. *Responsibility acknowledgement* and *offers to repair* are more common in equal-status scenarios.

Conclusion

The present chapter, entitled "Theoretical Background," is organized into four main sections. The first section introduces pragmatics, how speakers perform various speech acts such as apologies. This section covers key concepts, including the definition of speech acts, the different levels of speech acts. The second section examines the speech act of apology, detailing its definition, the various types of apologies, and the strategies commonly employed when apologizing. The third section explores politeness theory, politeness in apologizing, strategies of politeness, and the influence of social status and gender on the use of apology strategies. Finally, the fourth section provides a literature review, summarizing previous studies relevant to the act of apology.

**Chapter two: Research methods, Analysis and
Interpretation, Discussion of the Major
Findings, Limitations of the Study, and
Suggestions for Further Research**

2.1. Section one: Research methodology

Introduction:

As demonstrated in the chapter that proceeded, we have given a theoretical background on the speech act of apology. The accessible literature gave us a deeper comprehension of the subject under study. The understanding we gained from the theoretical background clearly guided the way we designed our research methods. By emphasizing the role of social variables and the diversity of apology strategies, the literature supported the use of a Written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) as a suitable tool to explore how Algerian EFL learners vary their apologies according to different contexts. It also guided the construction of the scenarios and the analytical framework, ensuring that our approach was rooted in relevant pragmatic theories.

The present chapter provides a methodological overview and data analysis to this study. It is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the methodological framework by presenting key elements such as the study design, data collection tool, population and sampling, which serve as a starting point of the section that follows. The second section focuses on the analysis and interpretation of the findings. The third section presents a discussion of the main findings, sets a comparison with previous results and offer answers to the research questions. It also outlines the study's limitations and provides suggestions for future research.

2.1.1. Methods and Study Design:

The present study provides descriptive statistics; mainly frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data and identify patterns in the use of apology strategies and describes how EFL learners at Bejaia University perform the apology speech act when addressing people of different social status and different gender. Descriptive research design utilizes quantitative data to collect information in an organized way that identifies and describes characteristics in a target population or phenomenon. Descriptive research design enables researchers to identify, examine, and describe characteristics in a population and provides definite insights that facilitate informed decision-making without affecting variables (Qualtrics, 2024). This type of design is appropriate for exploring how Algerian EFL learners use language to perform the speech act of apology across different social variables. In order to reach our goal, we opted for a quantitative analysis of data through the use of a written DCT as a research tool, with scenarios specifically created for this research and validated by the supervisor to ensure clarity and relevance. According to

Creswell (2009), quantitative research involves collecting numeric data and analyzing it statistically to measure variables and test objective theories.

2.1.2. Population

The population of this study consists of Master two linguistics students of English, studying at Bejaia University. All students are native speakers of Kabyle and use English as a foreign language. The population was chosen with assumption that they Master the English language, and are more likely to have developed clear writing and oral strategies, making them suitable participants for our research. That is, they are assumed to be competent enough to know how to apologize properly and use the appropriate terms.

2.1.3. Data Collection Instruments

The current study examines the use of apology strategies by EFL students. To collect data, a Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) was handled to 32 Master two students. WDCT which is a tool used in pragmatics to explore how people perform speech act like apologies. It presents participants with hypothetical social situations and asks them to write how they would respond, allowing researches to analyze language in a controlled way.

2.1.3.1. Students' DCT

A Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) has been selected as the main instrument for this study. It was first introduced by Blum-Kulka (1982) in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, it is considered a reliable tool because it allows researchers to collect data from a large number of participants in a relatively short time while controlling and limiting the types of responses required. The majority of earlier studies on the apology speech act used a DCT to collect their data. It is used to elicit particular speech acts. It consists of situations to which respondents are asked to respond as they would do in everyday life.

There are several reasons why we have selected this instrument. First of all, it provides an appropriate environment for the performance of all apology strategies. Second, the participants are free to express themselves without any influence of someone. Finally, it makes it possible for the researchers to quickly and effectively gather data.

In the present study, the Discourse Completion Task (DCT) were self-developed and contains six scenarios eliciting the apology speech act. The scenarios varied by the three social statuses (higher, equal, and lower) of the interlocutor which were mainly based on academic context, the scenarios also varied by the gender of the interlocutor. In other words, the participants had to address a male and female higher in status, equal in status, and lower in status.

2.1.4. Data Analysis Procedures

The data gathered through the Written Discourse Completion Task (WDCT) were treated quantitatively, relying on tables including frequencies and percentages, analyzed using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain' (1984) classification of apology strategies.

Each participant's response was coded manually by the researcher. The analysis involved reading each response carefully and identifying the apology strategy used. These strategies were marked in the margins of the printed responses, following the framework proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) see page (12,13,14). This model outlines five major apology strategies, some of which contain sub-strategies.

Once each strategy was identified, occurrences were counted manually and categorized in tables containing the strategies of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) framework . The results were then organized into tables for descriptive analysis and comparison. The categorization aimed to highlight the patterns of strategy use according to the social variables in question.

Although the analysis was guided by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) model, it was observed that participants occasionally employed apology strategies, that are not originally included in the framework. These additional strategies were recorded and discussed to reflect the natural and authentic language use of the participants.

2.2. Section Two: Analysis and Interpretation of the Findings

This section represents the most significant part of this thesis. The Discourse Completion Task (DCT) responses were analyzed quantitatively through a manual process. Each response was carefully examined and categorized according to the Blumkulka and Olshtain's (1984) Framework. The frequencies of each category were then calculated manually using a calculator. This method allowed for an accurate quantification of the data, including the calculation of percentages to show the distribution of responses across different categories.

2.2.1. Analysis and Interpretation of the DCT

This part presents quantitative analysis of the data collected by the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). Overall, the data were analyzed using semantic formulas and categorised according to Blumkulka and Olshtain's (1984) classification of apology strategies.

Part one: Personal Information

Table 1 : Participants Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	2	6.25
Female	30	93.75
Total	32	100

The above table shows the gender of the participants (Master two linguistics) from the department of English at Bejaia University. The sample includes 2 males constituting 6.25 % of the whole participants and 30 females considering 93.7 % of the whole sample, indicating that most of the participants are females.

Table 2 : Participants' Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
From 19-21	3	9.38
From 22-24	28	87.5
From 25-30	0	0
More than 30	1	3.12
Total	32	100

Table 02 shows that the students' age ranged from 19 to 30 years old, and hence divided into three groups. The first group ranges from 19 to 21 years old representing 9.38% of the total number of the participants. The second group ranges from 22 to 24 years old considering 87.5 % of the whole participants. However, there were no participants in the third group aged 25 to

30 years old. The fourth group aged over 30 years old, represents 3.12% of the whole sample. This indicates that the majority of the participants are aged from 22-24 years old.

Part two: Apology Strategies Used by the Participants

Table 3 : Apology Strategies used by the Participants

Strategies		Frequency	Percentage
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID):		301	30.01
Taking on Responsibility.	• Explicit self-blame.	58	5.78
	• Denial of fault.	35	3.50
	• Expresses trait of self-deficiency.	6	0.60
Sum:		99	9.88
Explanation or Account of cause.	• Explicit.	101	10.07
	• Implicit.	49	4.89
Sum:		150	14.96
Offer of repair.	• Specified.	155	15.46
	• Unspecified.	22	2.20
Sum:		177	17.66
Promise of forbearance.		75	7.48
Intensification:	• Intensification adverbials.	96	9.57
	• Concern for the Hearer.	25	2.49
Sum:		121	12.06
Softening the offense.		31	3.09
Reassurance.		24	2.39
Expressing regret.		3	0.30
Lying.		2	0.19
Not apologizing.		18	1.79

Swearing.	2	0.19
Total:	1003	100

Table 3 above represents the whole strategies used by the participants, As shown in the table, the analysis of the collected data revealed that the participants employed a diverse range of apology strategies, with a total of 1003 occurrences. Notably, some students used apology strategies that were not identified in the framework. Additionally, it was observed that a single response could incorporate more than one strategy.

The table indicates that the most commonly used strategy is *illocutionary force-indicating devices* (IFIDs), such as; "I'm sorry," which registered 301 instances, making up 30.01% of all the strategies used, demonstrating a strong preference for simple and standard expressions of regret. This is followed by *offer or repair* with 177 cases, considering 17.66% of all strategies employed, highlighting a strong inclination toward remedial action. This strategy includes two sub-strategies; *specified offers* (e.g., "I will buy you another one") with 155 instances, totalling 15.46%, clearly higher than *unspecified offers* (e.g., "what can I do for it") with 22 cases, amounting to 2.20% of all strategies used.

Another notable strategy is *explanation or account of cause*, with 150 occurrences occupying 14.96% of all the strategies used, indicating a willingness to give precise clarifications and exhibiting an ability to explain and defend the offence, with *explicit* explanations (e.g., "I have been disturbed lately; that's why I forgot the date of our meeting") result 101 instances, which equalled 10.07% being more prevalent than *implicit* ones (e.g., "I will tell you later"), with 49 instances considering 4.89%.

To enhance sincerity *Intensification* registered 121 cases, constituting 12.06% of all the strategies used, suggesting an effort to emphasize sincerity. Within this category, *intensification adverbials* (e.g., "I am really sorry") appeared more frequently, with 96 instances corresponding to 9.57%, than *concern for the hearer* (e.g., "Have you been waiting long?"), with 25 instances totalling 2.49%.

Additionally, *taking on responsibility* recorded 99 cases, considering 9.88% of all the strategies used. This implies the importance of individual responsibility in the apology process. *Explicit self-blame* (e.g., "I understand it upset you, and it was wrong of me") was the dominant sub-strategy, presenting 58 instances result 5.78%, followed by *denial of fault* (e.g., "I didn't

mean to step on your toy and break it"), with 35 instances amounting for 3.50%, and *expressing a trait of self-deficiency* (e.g., "It was careless of me," presenting 6 cases result 0.60%.

Furthermore, the *promise of forbearance* (e.g., "I'll make sure it does not happen again"), represents 75 instances, accounting for 7.48% of the total strategies used, reinforcing the speaker's commitment to avoiding similar offences in the future. Mitigating strategies were less frequently employed, such as *softening the offence* (e.g., "just take it easy, girl"), result 31 instances constituting 3.09% of all the strategies used; *reassurance* (e.g., "don't worry"), presenting 24 cases totalling 2.39% of all the strategies used that minimise the severity of the offence; and *non-apologies* strategies (e.g., "not apologising to him), representing 18 instances with 1.79% of all the strategies used.

Conversely, *expressing regret* (e.g., "I truly regret what I've done") with 3 cases occupying 0.30% of all the strategies used are the least frequently used. The strategies less frequently used includes *lying* (e.g., "I will give him a reason, but I will lie"), presenting 2 instances at 0.19% of all the strategies used, and *swearing* (e.g., "I will buy you another, I swear), with 2 instances considering 0.19% of all the total. These strategies were very uncommon, which reflects the strong social expectation that people should apologize and offer a clear apology in most situations. Being rare occurrences, highlighting the social expectation that one should apologise in most situations.

Table 4 : Apology Strategies when Addressing Higher Social Status Interlocutors

Strategies		High status	
		F	%
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID):		119	32.69
Taking on responsibility :	• Explicit self-blame.	24	6.59
	• Denial of fault.	10	2.75
	• Expresses trait of self-deficiency.	6	1.65
	Sum	40	10.99
Explanation or account of cause	• explicit	58	15.93
	• implicit	13	3.57
Sum		71	19.5

Offer of repair	• specified	55	15.11
	• unspecified	6	1.65
Sum		61	16.76
Promise of forbearance		15	4.12
Intensification	• Intensification adverbials	45	12.36
	• Concern for the Hearer	5	1.37
Sum		50	13.73
Softening the offense		3	0.83
Reassurance		1	0.28
Expressing regret		2	0.55
Lying		2	0.55
Not apologizing		0	0
Swearing		0	0
Total		364	100

Table 4 above represents the strategies used by the participants, when addressing interlocutors of (higher social status. The findings indicated that the participants employed a diverse range of apology strategies with a total of 364 strategies, showcasing various ways to express apologies.

Apology Strategies Used towards High-Status Individuals show The most used strategy when apologizing to high-status individuals is *the illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)* (119 instances), such as “please forgive me” or “I’m sorry,” which accounts, comprising 32.69% of all strategies used. This highlights the participants' preference for a direct and conventional approach when addressing someone of higher status, likely driven by the need to maintain respect and avoid further conflict. Subsequently, *Explanation or account of cause*, emerged as the second most utilised strategy, appearing in 71 cases (19.5%). *Explicit explanations*, such as "My planning was a little bit charged, so that's why I got the date wrong," occurred in 58 instances (15.93%), providing clear and detailed reasons for the mistake. On the other hand, *implicit explanations*, like "I was caught up with another urgent matter", is less common, occurring in 13 instances (3.57%), offering a more general but still apologetic response. In addition, *Offer of Repair* is frequently employed, appearing in 61 cases (16.76%). *Specified offers*, such as "I will reimburse it as soon as I can," are dominant within this

category, occurring in 55 instances (15.11%), demonstrating a clear commitment to rectifying the situation. *Unspecified offers*, like "What can I do for it?" appear less frequently, with only 6 instances (1.65%), showing willingness to make amends without detailing how.

Moreover, *Taking on responsibility* is another widely used strategy, appearing in 40 instances (10.99%). *Explicit self-blame*, such as "I made a great mistake," is employed in 24 instances (6.59%), reflecting a willingness to acknowledge fault directly. *Denial of fault*, as in "I did not mean it," occurred in 10 instances (2.75%), which may serve to mitigate blame while still expressing remorse. *Expressing a trait of self-deficiency*, like "I truly apologize for my clumsiness," is the least used within this category, appearing in only 6 cases (1.65%), possibly because it could be perceived as less sincere or effective in high-stakes interactions.

Furthermore, *intensification* is used in 50 instances (13.73%), with *adverbials* like "I'm really sorry" occurring in 45 instances (12.36%). This emphasizes the sincerity of the apology and helps mitigate the offense effectively. *Concern for the hearer*, such as "Have you been waiting for long?" is less common, appearing in just 5 cases (1.37%), possibly because it shifts focus from the apology itself to the listener's experience. Additionally, *Promise of Forbearance* appears in 15 instances (4.12%), reinforcing the speaker's commitment to avoiding similar offenses in the future. Other strategies include *softening the offense*, which is used occasionally in 3 instances (0.83%). *Expressing regret* and *lying* appear rarely in only 2 cases (0.55%). *Reassurance* is also infrequent strategies, each occurring in just 1 case (0.28%).

Finally, not apologizing and swearing were not used at all when addressing high-status individuals. This absence reflects a strong social norm to maintain respect and decorum during interactions with individuals of higher status.

Table 5 : Apology Strategies when Addressing Equal Social Status Interlocutors

Strategies		Equal status	
		F	%
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID):		87	29.10
Taking on responsibility :	• Explicit self-blame.	12	4.02
	• Denial of fault.	14	4.68
	• Expresses trait of self-deficiency.	0	0
Sum		26	8.70

Explanation or account of cause	• explicit	14	4.68
	• implicit	33	11.04
Sum		47	15.72
Offer of repair	• specified	10	3.34
	• unspecified	5	1.67
Sum		15	5.01
Promise of forbearance		48	16.05
Intensification	• Intensification adverbials	24	8.03
	• Concern for the Hearer	14	4.68
Sum		38	12.71
Softening the offense		13	4.36
Reassurance		5	1.67
Expressing regret		1	0.33
Lying		0	0
Not apologizing		18	6.02
Swearing		1	0.33
Total		299	100

Table 5 shows that when apologizing to equals, the most frequently used strategy is the *Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)*, such as "I'm sorry," which appears in 87 instances, comprising 29.10% of all strategies used. This suggests that participants prefer a straightforward and conventional approach when interacting with peers, likely due to the desire for simplicity and mutual understanding. In addition, *Promise of Forbearance* is another highly used strategy, with 48 instances (16.05%). This involves statements like "I will make an effort to ensure this does not happen in the future," which reinforces the speaker's commitment to avoiding similar offenses, fostering trust and reliability in peer relationships. Furthermore, *Explanation or account of cause* is also prevalent, appearing in 47 cases (15.72%). *Explicit explanations*, such as "The elevator was blocked and I was inside with no network," occur in 14 instances (4.68%), providing clear reasons for the mistake. *Implicit explanations*, like "something came up and I got delayed," are more common, with 33 cases (11.04%), offering a less detailed but still apologetic response. Meanwhile,

Intensification is used in 38 instances (12.71%), with *adverbials* like "I am so sorry" appearing in 24 instances (8.03%). This emphasizes the sincerity of the apology and may help to mitigate the offense. *Concern for the hearer*, such as "I really appreciate all the effort you are putting in," occurs in 14 instances (4.68%), showing empathy and appreciation for the other person's perspective.

However, *Taking on Responsibility* is less frequently used, appearing in 26 instances (8.70%). *Explicit self-blame*, like "I feel terrible about it," occurs in 12 cases (4.02%), while *denial of fault*, such as "It wasn't my fault," is used in 14 instances (4.68%). This balance suggests that participants are cautious about accepting blame when interacting with equals, possibly to maintain mutual respect. Moreover, *not apologizing* is surprisingly common, appearing in 18 cases (6.02%). This might reflect situations where participants felt less obligated to apologize due to the peer relationship dynamics. In contrast, *Offer of Repair* is less common, with 15 instances (5.01%). *Specified offers*, such as "I'll buy you a new one," occur in 10 cases (3.34%), demonstrating a clear commitment to rectify the situation. *Unspecified offers*, like "I'll make it up to you," occur in 5 instances (1.67%). Additionally, *Reassurance*, such as "Don't worry," is used in 5 cases (1.67%). *Expressing regret* and *swearing* are the least used strategies, each appearing in only 1 case (0.33%). This rarity suggests that participants generally prefer more direct and sincere forms of apology when interacting with equals. *Expresses trait of self-deficiency*, and *lying* are the two strategies not used while apologising in equal status it means that peers value sincerity and mutual respect.

Table 6 : Apology Strategies when Addressing Lower Social Status Interlocutors

Strategies		Low status	
		F	%
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID):		95	27.95
Taking on responsibility	• Explicit self-blame.	22	6.47
	• Denial of fault.	11	3.23
	• Expresses trait of self-deficiency.	0	0
Sum		33	9.7
Explanation or account cause	• explicit	29	8.52
	• implicit	3	0.88
Sum		32	9.4
Offer of repair	• specified	90	26.47
	• unspecified	11	3.24
Sum		101	29.71

Promise of forbearance		12	3.53
Intensification	• Intensification adverbials	27	7.95
	• Concern for the Hearer	6	1.76
Sum		33	9.71
Softening the offense		15	4.41
Reassurance		18	5.29
Expressing regret		0	0
Lying		0	0
Not apologizing		0	0
Swearing		1	0.30
Total		340	100

Table 6 indicates that when apologizing to low-status individuals, the most frequently used strategy is the *Offer of repair*, appearing in 101 instances, which accounts for 29.71% of all strategies used. This includes *specified offers*, such as "I'll buy you a new one," with 90 cases (26.47%), and *unspecified offers*, like "I'll try to fix it," with 11 instances (3.24%). The frequent use of repair offers indicates that participants prioritize fixing mistakes and maintaining harmony in interactions with those of lower status, likely to preserve a positive relationship, as they are also emotionally influenced possibly influenced by emotional factors such as guilt or empathy. In addition, the *Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)*, such as "I'm sorry," is the second most used strategy, with 95 cases (27.95%). This indicates a preference for direct and conventional expressions of regret when interacting with low-status individuals, likely due to the desire for clarity and simplicity. Furthermore, *taking on responsibility* and *intensification* are used at a similar frequency, each appearing in 33 instances (9.7%). *Explicit self-blame*, like "I am sorry for breaking it," occurs in 22 cases (6.47%), while *denial of fault*, such as "I didn't mean to," occurs in 11 instances (3.23%). For *intensification, adverbials* like "I am very sorry" appear in 27 cases (7.95%), more frequently than *concern for the hearer*, such as "please, don't be mad," which occurs in 6 instances (1.76%). This suggests that participants focus on emphasizing their regret rather than empathizing with the hearer's feelings in these interactions.

Meanwhile, *explanation or account of cause* is less frequent, appearing in 32 cases (9.4%). *Explicit explanations*, like "I seem to have misplaced your work," occur in 29 instances (8.52%),

while *implicit explanations*, such as "It was an accident," are the least used, appearing in 3 cases (0.88%). This indicates that participants tend to provide clear reasons for their actions when apologizing to low-status individuals, possibly that their response's are emotionally influenced and dominated. Additionally, reassurance, such as "Don't be afraid," is used in 18 instances (5.29%), and *softening the offense*, like "calm down," occurs in 15 cases (4.41%). *Swearing*, such as "I will buy you another, I swear," is the least used strategy, appearing in only one case (0.30%). Notably, *Expresses trait of self-deficiency*, *not apologizing* and *lying* were not used at all when interacting with low-status individuals, reflecting a strong social norm to maintain respect and honesty in these interactions.

Table 7 : Apology Strategies Used by the Participants when Addressing Male Interlocutors

Strategies		Males	
		Frequency	Percentage
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID):		167	32.18
Taking on Responsibility.	• Explicit self-blame.	25	4.82
	• Denial of fault.	20	3.85
	• Expresses trait of self-deficiency	3	0.58
Sum		48	9.25
Explanation or account cause	• Explicit.	52	10.02
	• Implicit.	26	5.01
Sum		78	15.03
Offer of repair.	• Specified.	80	15.42
	• Unspecified.	9	1.73
Sum:		89	17.15
Promise of forbearance.		40	7.71
Intensification:	• Intensification adverbials.	49	9.44
	• Concern for the Hearer.	13	2.50

Sum:	62	11.94
Softening the offense.	13	2.50
Expressing regret.	0	0
Lying.	1	0.19
Not apologizing.	10	1.93
Swearing.	0	0
Total:	519	100

When addressing male participants, the most frequently employed strategy was the use of *IFID*, result 32.18% of all the strategies used (167 instances). This dominant choice highlights a strong preference for conventional expressions of apology, such as “I’m sorry” or “I apologize,” indicating a direct and explicit acknowledgement of the offence. Some female participants may feel a sense of pride or discomfort in apologizing to male interlocutors, especially if there is no close relationship, leading them to choose the most neutral and socially expected form of apology.

The second most common strategy was the *offer of repair*, which registered 89 cases, making up 17.15% of all the strategies used, specifically *the specified offer of repair*, for example, "I will look for it or give you a mark according to your previous works," representing 15.42% of all the strategies (80 instances), this shows a strong and concrete intention to correct the mistake. The *unspecified offer of repair*, "We will catch up later," was used far less frequently, making up only 1.73% of the strategies (8 cases). While this still reflects a willingness to make amends, the unspecified nature of the offer suggests a more general intent to repair the damage without providing precise details of the action to be taken.

Following that, participants used *the explanation or account or cause* strategy, with 78 occurrences occupying 15.03% of all the strategies used, with *the explicit sub-strategy* “I’m sorry for missing our meeting; I mixed up the date” appearing in 52 instances, which equalled 10.02%, showing a significant tendency among males to justify or clarify the reasons behind their actions. *The implicit sub-strategy* ‘Sorry, bro, I had some stuff’ was used in 26 cases totalling 5.01%, offering a more indirect way of contextualising the transgression.

Closely linked is the use of *intensification*, which registered 62 instances, constituting 11.94% of all the strategies used, particularly *intensification adverbials*, ‘I’m very sorry’, which were

found in 9.44% of the strategies (49 cases), emphasising the speaker's sincerity or emotional involvement. The sub-strategy *concern for the hearer*, 'I didn't mean to upset you', appeared in 2.50% of the strategies (13 instances), revealing empathy toward the offended party.

In terms of *taking on responsibility*, *responsibility* recorded 48 cases, considering 9.24% of all the strategies used. *The explicit self-blame* 'I took it carefully, but it dropped' was used in 4.82% of all the strategies (25 instances), followed by *denial of fault* 'I don't think so; all the data has been done by me' at 3.85% (20 cases), and finally *expressing traits of self-deficiency* 'I was clumsy, and I dropped it', which appeared in only 0.58% (3 instances). This indicates a nuanced approach to responsibility-sometimes acknowledging fault directly, sometimes deflecting it, and rarely using self-deprecating explanations.

After that, *the promise of forbearance*, 'I will try my best', was employed in 40 cases, considering 7.71% of the strategies used, reflecting a commitment to avoid repeating the offence. *Softening the offence*, 'it is just a toy, okay,' appeared in a percentage of 2.50% with 13 instances of all the strategies used. *Reassurance*, 'don't worry, I'll try my best' it aimed at calming or comforting the hearer post-offence, appeared in 11 instances, constituting 2.12% of all the strategies used. *Not apologising* 'is no reason to apologize' was present in 1.90% of all the strategies used (10 instances), suggesting that in a small portion of situations, males opted to avoid the apology altogether. At the very bottom of the list, *lying* 'I will give him a reason, but I will lie,' was employed in just 0.19% of all the strategies (1 instance). Finally, *expressing regret* and *swearing* were not used at all (0%).

Table 8 : Apology Strategies Used by the Participants when Addressing Female Interlocutors

Strategies		Females	
		Frequency	percentage
Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID):		134	27.68
Taking on Responsibility.	• Explicit self-blame.	33	6.82
	• Denial of fault.	15	3.10
	• Expresses trait of self-deficiency.	3	0.62
Sum		51	10.54

Explanation or account cause.	•Explicit.	49	10.12
	•Implicit.	23	4.75
Sum:		72	14.87
Offer of repair.	• Specified.	75	15.50
	• Unspecified.	13	2.69
Sum:		88	18.19
Promise of forbearance.		35	7.23
Intensification:	• Intensification adverbials.	47	9.71
	• Concern for the Hearer.	12	2.48
Sum:		59	12.19
Softening the offense.		18	3.72
Reassurance.		13	2.69
Expressing regret.		3	0.62
Lying.		1	0.21
Not apologizing.		8	1.65
Swearing.		2	0.41
Total:		484	100

Similarly, when addressing female participants, the most frequently employed strategy was the *IFID*, result 27.68% of all the strategies used (134 cases). This indicates a marked tendency toward clear and socially accepted forms of expressing an apology, such as “I apologise”.

The second most common strategy was the *offer of repair*, with 88 instances, representing 18.19% of all strategies employed, particularly *the specified offer of repair*, ‘I will take care of replacing it or covering these costs’, used in 15.50% of the whole strategies (75 instances), showing a tendency among females to provide concrete solutions and compensatory actions. Since females often prefer direct and clear forms of repair, their natural curiosity and desire for clarity may push them to express the exact form of repair rather than leaving it vague or open-ended. In contrast, *the unspecified offer of repair*, ‘I will try to fix it, was used far less

frequently, appearing in 2.69% of the strategies (13 instances), suggesting that female participants tended to avoid vague promises and preferred more concrete ways to make amends.

Next, participants employed *the explanation or account or cause* in 72 instances, totalling 14.87% of all strategies employed, with *the explicit explanation*, 'I got a high fever and a stomach-ache; that's why I didn't inform you,' used in 10.12% of the strategies (49 cases), reflecting a strong tendency to justify or clarify their actions. *The implicit explanation* 'I had a personal problem' was used in 4.75% of the strategies (23 instances), offering a more indirect way to contextualise the transgression.

The strategy of intensification was also prevalent in 59 instances, considering 12.19% of all the strategies used, particularly through the use of *intensification adverbials*, 'I am really sorry', which appeared in 9.71% of the strategies (47 cases), emphasising the speaker's sincerity or emotional intensity. *The concern for the hearer*, the 'I know you are so close to it' sub-strategy, was used less frequently, result 2.48% of the strategies (12 instances), indicating empathetic attention toward the offended party.

After that, the *taking-on-responsibility strategy*, with 51 instances considering 10.54% of all the strategies used, and *explicit self-blame* 'I am responsible for this and I will find it' was notably higher among females, used in 6.82% of the strategies (33 instances). *Denial of fault*, 'I didn't do it on purpose,' appeared in 3.10% of the strategies (15 cases). *Expressing traits of self-deficiency*, 'I apologise for my clumsiness', was rarely used, appearing in only 0.62% of the strategies (3 instances), involving statements that reflect negatively on the speaker's abilities.

The promise of forbearance, 'I will be serious from now on'', was employed in 7.23% of all the strategies used (35 instances), indicating a willingness to avoid future offenses. *The softening of the offence* strategy was used in 18 cases, result 3.72% of all the strategies used, for example, 'Please stop crying,' representing a method of downplaying the severity of the transgression. *Reassurance*, aimed at comforting the hearer, was used in 2.69% of all the strategies used (13 instances), for instance, 'But don't worry; I will find it as soon as possible.'

Furthermore, *not apologizing* appeared in 1.65% of the strategies (8 instances), suggesting rare but present instances of apology avoidance, such as 'there is no reason to apologize'. Less frequently, participants employed the expression of *regret*, 'I truly regret causing you any inconvenience,' used in 0.62% of all the strategies used (3 instances), indicating a minimal tendency to either show emotional remorse or attribute the offense to personal flaws. *Swearing*, used as a form of emotional intensification, was found in 2 cases representing 0.41% of all the strategies used, for example, 'I will buy you another, I swear.'

At the very bottom of the list, *lying* was employed only once ‘I will give her a reason, but I will lie’ accounting for 0.21% of all strategies used, making it the least utilized strategy among female participants.

2.3. Section Three: Discussion of the Major Results, Limitations of the Study, and Suggestion for further Research

2.3.1. Discussion

2.3.1.1. Apology Strategy Used by the Participants

This sub-section summarizes the study’s major results obtained through the used research instrument Discourse Completion Task (DCT) and thus provides answers to our research questions. The primary goal of the current study is to explore the apology strategies employed by Algerian EFL students taking into consideration two social variables: social status and the gender of the interlocutor.

Regarding the first research question on the apology strategies used by Master 2 students, the results showed that participants gave clear apologies and explained their mistakes using a variety of strategies. These included all those outlined by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), such as *IFIDs*, *offers of repair*, *explanations*, *taking responsibility*, *promises of forbearance*, and *intensification*.

Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the participants used strategies not mentioned in the framework, such as *softening the offence*, *reassurance*, *not apologizing*, *expressing regret and swearing*, and *lying*.

The *IFID* strategy recorded the highest frequency (301 occurrences), result 30.01% of the whole strategies used; this shows that the learners prefer clear and direct apologies, likely because they are easy to use and socially effective. Based on this, we can say that Master 2 EFL students of Algeria tend to always use the *IFID*, as it is also reported in Dendenne’s (2017) findings, similarly employed by Saudi EFL teachers (Alsulayyi, 2016). The participants in our research used the *offer of repair* strategy with 17.66% of all the strategies used, which presented the second most frequent strategy; it shows a desire to correct the issue and take steps to make up for the error. Contrastingly, the strategy of *offering repair* for an offence or damage is not commonly used by Qassimi Arabic speakers; they do not always offer to repair their offence, due to the belief that not all offences can or needs to be significantly corrected (Alroushdi, 2020). Sincere apologies, particularly when followed by explanations, are frequently seen as sufficient to restore social balance (Alroushdi, 2020).

After that, with 14.96%, the *explanation or account of cause* strategy indicates that many participants provide reasons or justifications for their behaviour. This result goes hand in hand with Dendenne's (2017) and Alroushdi's (2020) results, where they found that Algerian Arabic speakers and Qassimi Arabic speakers usually give clear explanations instead of just apologizing. On the other hand, it is not used by Saudi EFL teachers who do not give explanations for their behaviour (Alsulayyi, 2016).

Intensification strategies, result 12.06% of occurrences, function to emphasize the sincerity of the apology and occupy the fourth position in our classification of apology strategies, mirroring Dendenne's (2017) finding that expressing concern for the hearer also ranks fourth. Contrasting to Yeifi's (2024) analysis of Jenna Marbles' YouTube video places intensification strategies in the fifth position. Moreover, intensification strategies are not employed by Qasmi speakers, Jordanian EFL learners, or Saudi EFL teachers (Alroushdi, 2020; Al-Sallal & Ahmed, 2020; and Alsulayyi, 2016).

The results of this study align with Al-Sallal and Ahmed's results (2020), who also reported that acknowledgement of responsibility is infrequent: this is observed in only 9.88% of the responses and 13% of the Jordanian data. In contrast, it is the most frequently used strategy among Qasimi Arabic speakers (Alroushdi, 2020) and in Yifei's (2024) analysis of Jenna Marbles' YouTube video. These differences likely reflect cultural or individual variation in face-saving concerns.

Less frequent strategies, such as *promising forbearance* (7.48%), show a promise not to repeat the mistake. In accordance with this, the Jordanian Arabic speakers produced this strategy on very few occasions since they may believe that it would threaten their positive face (Al-Sallal & Ahmed 2020). In the context of apology, politeness is often maintained by managing the speaker's and hearer's face needs particularly by minimizing the imposition and showing respect. Promising forbearance, though sincere, may highlight the offence and create pressure on the speaker, making it a potential threat to their positive face. "Expressions of forbearance threaten positive face and are therefore avoided" (Nureddeen, 2008, p. 291).

Softening the offense was found in 3.09% of all strategies used, which is to minimize the severity of the offense; this strategy also appeared under another nomination, which is "*downgrading response*" in the Saudi Arabic speakers as reported by Alsulayyi (2016).

2.3.1.2 .Apology Strategies Used by the Participants with Regards to the Social Status of the Interlocutor

Regarding the second research question, which discusses whether or not the social status affects Master two students' use of apologetic strategies, the study's findings revealed that the social status of the interlocutor has an effect on the participants' use of strategies. They used a variety of strategies in addition to new *as softening the offence, reassurance, not apologizing, expressing regret and swearing, and lying*''.

a. Apologizing to Higher Status Interlocutors

When apologizing to interlocutors of higher status, the participants demonstrated a high degree of formality and deference, predominantly using the *IFID*, which accounted for 32.69% of the strategies employed. This result goes hand in hand with Dahmani and Al Khalaf's (2024) results who found that *IFID* in their research was the most frequently used with 43.71% occurrences. This preference for direct and clear expressions of regret reflects an awareness of the importance of showing respect and avoiding politeness. The second most frequent strategy was providing an *explanation or account of cause* (19.50%), indicating a need to justify the offense and demonstrate accountability. This reflects to the Kabyle speaker participants who use explanation in their apology as the most frequent strategy when addressing higher status interlocutors because it aligns with the idea that people tend to provide reasons or justifications when they are apologizing to someone who holds power or authority (Dahmani & Al Khalaf, 2024).

Despite the importance of showing responsibility, the strategies of *Taking on Responsibility* and *Promise of Forbearance* are less frequently used when addressing high-status interlocutors, accounting for only 10.99% and 4.12% respectively. In hierarchical interactions, speakers must maintain a careful balance between showing responsibility and maintaining their social standing, which is reflected in this limited use. In contrast, Balikpapan students use taking on responsibility frequently in a second position after the *IFID* strategy in order to conform to social norms that demand respect for superiors and elders. This shows humility, and they avoid excessive explanations or justifications to prevent coming across as defensive (Retnowaty & Maulid, 2019).

Similarly, *promises of forbearance*, which is used in 4.12%, may be perceived as unnecessary and could be viewed as superfluous or unimportant, particularly if the speaker has already expressed regret and provided an explanation or remedy, in the same case Saudi speakers who don't use promise for forbearance while apologizing, as reported in Alsulayyi's work (2016).

In contrast, strategies like *lying* and *reassurance* were used less frequently. *Reassurance*, aimed at emotional consolation, is often irrelevant in high-status interactions, where the focus is on

accountability than comfort. As for *lying*, it was rarely used and only in a few instances, likely because participants either did not have a convincing excuse or did not feel comfortable providing the real reason to someone of higher status. In such situations, lying may be seen as too risky or inappropriate, as it can damage the speaker's credibility if discovered, especially when the interlocutor holds more power. This result are in line with the findings reported by Dahmani and Al Khalaf (2024) in the sense that the participants of our research and Kabyle native speakers use the lying strategy only for the high status due to the fear of their interlocutor's reaction.

b. Apologizing to Equal Status Interlocutors

As for when apologizing to peers, the students mostly use *IFIDs* which accounts for 29.10% of the strategies used, reflecting a preference for straightforward and direct communication, similarly to Saudi speakers (Alsulayyi, 2016). *Promise of Forbearance* is also notably prominent at 16.05%, highlighting a concern for maintaining mutual trust and repairing future interactions among equals.

It is interesting to note that the new strategy of *not-apologising* is used more frequently than the *offer of repair* stated in the Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) framework. A quite high percentage of people who don't apologise (6.02%) suggests to a more balanced power dynamic in peer relationships, where students feel less pressure to offer repairs or believe that small offenses do not require formal apologies. The *offer of repair* strategy is used less frequently (5.01%), probably as a result of relationships between peers being informal and open. In such contexts, speakers tend to rely on mutual understanding and trust, making it unnecessary to apologize and offer to repair unless the offense is considered serious. This finding is consistent with Alsulayyi' 2016 findings that Saudi speakers did not use the *offer of repair* apology with the peers.

Both *expressing regret* and *swearing* are rare in peer apologies. *Expressing regret* (0.33%) may be perceived as overly intense or dramatic in casual peer communication, contrary to Iraqi students who frequently use the expressing of regret strategy because they are well aware of using appropriate apology forms to satisfy the demands of particular relationships and circumstances (Ugla & Abidin, 2016). While *swearing* (0.33%) is avoided due to its impoliteness and possibility of diminishing the apology's sincerity. *Swearing* rarity also reflects cultural norms, with another nomination, “lack of intent,” for Saudi speakers admitting lack of intent still threatens the speaker's image (Alsulayyi, 2016). The near absence of *self-deficiency expressions* and *lying* further indicates that learners prioritize sincerity and mutual respect in peer interactions, supporting Holmes' (1990) findings that equal-status relationships emphasize solidarity and shared norms over formality.

c. Apologizing to Lower Status Interlocutors

In their apologies to lower-status interlocutors interactions, where the speaker holds higher status, the most frequently apology strategy used is the *offer of repair* (29.71%), indicating a preference for concrete actions to restore harmony and demonstrate responsibility. This strategy may also be emotionally influenced as the speaker may feel a sense of guilt and responsibility especially when addressing people of low status when the person seems more vulnerable. Our finding goes hand in hand with the findings of Dahmani and Al Khalaf (2024), where they found that native Kabyle speakers offer to repair their mistakes frequently, with 24.32% of occurrences. This approach helps maintain positive relationships and social order. Then, *IFID* is also frequently used (27.95%), reflecting the importance of clear, conventional expressions that acknowledge the offense and meet social expectations for politeness.

Less frequently strategies used are, *explanations or account of cause* (9.4%), suggesting that speakers want to maintain transparency and to be equitable when speaking to people of lower status. Giving an explanation helps to preserve the hearer's dignity by demonstrating respect and a sense of duty. Similarly, giving explanations is not really used with Balikpapan students; it was used in 18% of cases, besides the explicitly apologizing and acknowledging responsibility' strategy (Retnowaty & Maulid, 2019).

Softening the Offense (4.41%) is also used moderately, suggesting that speakers make an effort to reduce the emotional impact of their offense. Despite the hierarchical difference, it shows that they care about how their actions impact the hearer. Inversely, Alsulayyi (2016) found that *softening the offense*, or *downgrading responsibility*, is only used with equal or lower status than the hearer the interlocutor. *Promise of Forbearance* (3.53%) was less common, maybe—because speakers in higher positions might not feel forced to promise future behaviour when speaking to someone of lower status especially in academic setting They could value giving a solution more than making an effort to change their behaviour because their authority could minimise the social impact of the offense. This corresponds to the results of Dahmani and Al Khalaf (2024) and Retnowaty and Maulid (2019) where this strategy is not used by Kabyles students and Balikpapan students respectively.

Swearing is also rare (0.30%) because it may be seen as inappropriate due to its informal nature, especially in academic, formal communication and settings. The very low usage suggests that learners prefer to maintain a controlled and polite tone, even when they are in a dominant position. Likewise, Uгла and Abdin (2016) reported that sometimes Iraqi students avoid responsibility for certain situations, so they use swearing in situations in which they express a lack of intent.

Notably, *self-deficiency expressions*, and *lying* are not used with low status, highlighting strong social norms that emphasize honesty, respect, and authority maintenance in interactions with lower-status individuals.

Importantly, the results of this study indicate that social status has an impact on apology strategies. Social hierarchy and deeply ingrained cultural values are the foundation of Speakers. Respect for authority and elder is of the greatest importance in Algerian society, which explains the preference for formal and polite language when speaking with higher-status individuals. Using IFIDs and explanations in these contexts not only conveys politeness but also reinforces social norms and recognizes the interlocutor's superior position. In contrast, interactions with peers are characterized by a sense of equality and camaraderie; apologies may be minimized or neglected in order to maintain mutual trust, enabling more direct and less ritualized communication, and avoiding unnecessary face-threatening acts. When dealing with lower-status individuals, speakers emphasize clear apologies and reparative measures to preserve social harmony and show moral responsibility, reflecting the communal nature of Algerian culture, which places a high value on preserving a sense of community. These differences in apologetic strategies also help to maintain polite and respectful relationships across social status, reduce conflict, and effectively manage power dynamics.

2.3.1.3 Apology Strategies Used by the Participants when addressing Male/Female Interlocutors

Regarding the third research question, which examines how the interlocutor's gender influences the participants' use of apologetic strategies, the results of the study showed that the participants employed a range of strategies in addition to new ones like: *lying*, *expressing regret* and *swearing*, *softening the offence*, *reassurance*, and *not apologising*.

a. Apology Strategies Used to Address Male Interlocutors

The analysis reveals that when addressing male interlocutors, the participants mostly favour *illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)*, which constitutes 32.18% of all strategies. Similarly to the Qari's (2019) findings, where the strategy mostly used by both Saudi and British addressing to males is the *IFID*. This preference for direct expressions highlights a tendency to prioritize clear acknowledgement of wrongdoing in interactions with men. The next most common strategy is the *offer of repair* (15.42%), considering a concrete, preventative approach for correcting wrongdoing. Such clarity and an emphasis on solutions correspond with research showing that apology to male interlocutors is frequently prioritise action and resolution over emotional detail. As reported by Qari (2019), for Saudi speakers addressing male hearer, where the strategy offer of repair is used at 40%

of all strategies, offering repair is seen as more appropriate and respectful among men avoiding excessive emotional gestures that might seem unnecessary or weak.

In contrast, strategies such as *taking on responsibility* (9.24%) and *promise of forbearance* (7.71%) are used less frequently, demonstrating unwillingness to focus on one's own fault or make promises for the future when apologizing to men. This may reflect that people desire to save their faces; thus, openly admitting their fault or promising to behave better in the future may be interpreted as showing weakness or a lack of dignity. In parallel, both Saudi and British speakers use the promise of forbearance strategy infrequently when apologizing to male. For Saudi males, this can be linked to cultural norms that prioritize saving face and avoiding direct admission of fault. British male speakers tend to favour minimally face-threatening strategies, and making a strong personal promise may be seen as too direct, overly personal, or unnecessary. (Qari 2019)

Additionally, some new strategies are not a part of those mentioned in the Blumkulka and Olshtain framework, such as *softening the offence* (2.50%) and *reassurance* (2.12%), which serve to minimize the severity of the offence or comfort the hearer. Even less prevalent are avoidance strategies, such as *lying* (0.19%) and *not apologising* (1.90%), which imply that speakers may use indirect or dishonest methods to deal with acts that affect their face-threatening acts. The action of not apologizing is similarly used in the Qari's works (2019), because Saudi feared their hearer reaction.

Notably, neither *expressing regret* nor *swearing* appeared in apologies to male interlocutors, indicating an avoidance of emotionally charged or informal language in these interactions.

a. Apology Strategies Used to Address Female Interlocutors

Similarly, when apologizing to female interlocutors, *illocutionary force indicating device* (*IFID*) is the most preferred strategy by the female participants (27.68%), which reflect alignment with conventional forms of politeness and social expectations, especially in formal or emotionally sensitive interactions. This is comparable to the results of Qari's (2019) study, which indicated that the *IFID* is the most commonly employed approach by Saudi and British women speakers addressing women. After that, there is an offer of repair (18.19%) that also dominates. The prominence of specified *offers of repair* (15.50%) suggests that speakers are attentive to providing clear, precise, possible repairs, maybe as a result of beliefs that female listeners value relationship repair and explicit efforts to make apologies. This illustrates a belief that women are more sensitive to emotions and receptive to sincerity expressed through concrete actions. But it is used only in a small percentage for Saudi females because offering of "repair" might be seen as too assertive or inappropriate (Qari, 2019).

Taking on responsibility (10.54%) and *promise of forbearance* (7.23%) remain among the least used strategies, though explicit self-blame is somewhat higher with females (6.82%) than with males. This indicates that openly admitting wrongdoing or making promises may be interpreted as showing weakness; this is probably due to pride and face-saving. These findings contrast with Saudi females, where *taking on responsibility* is highly used because it can be seen as a way to show concern, especially if the female hearer was emotionally hurt or embarrassed. However, regarding the *promise of forbearance*, it is also rarely used for Saudi and British females since apologizing is about the current offence, not future promises (Qari, 2019).

Participants also employed new strategies while addressing female hearers, namely softening (3.72%) and *reassurance* (2.69%), which highlight an increased awareness of the emotional dimension of apologies. These strategies aim to minimize the perceived severity of the offence and comfort the interlocutor, reflecting a nuanced approach to maintaining social and emotional balance. Though rare, strategies such as *not apologizing* (1.65%) and *lying* (0.21%) also appear in interactions with female hearers. The speaker may be seeking to keep his or her face, maintain control, or manipulate social power dynamics by refusing to apologise. Similarly, *lying* may be an intentional choice to keep peace or prevent confrontation or maintain harmony, even if it means compromising honesty. As claimed by Qari (2019) for Saudi speakers in some contexts when addressing to females, silence is considered more respectful; then they used the opting-out strategy more often, contrary to our research findings.

Uniquely, *expressing regret* (0.62%) and *swearing* (0.41%) appear only in apologies to female interlocutors and are absent when addressing males. Considering that it conforms to norms of society, this implies that speakers are more emotionally expressive when they apologise to women. In many cultures, social norms encourage showing more emotional sensitivity and care in interactions with women, especially in situations involving conflict or repair. In this instance, *swearing* highlights sincerity and demonstrates a greater desire to fix the relationship.

The interlocutor's gender significantly influences participants' choice of apology strategies. Despite the fact that the general pattern of strategy use was the same for both male and female interlocutors, significant variations in frequency and intensity were observed. Participants showed slightly higher emotional involvement when apologising to females, including explicit offers of repair, stronger self-blame statements, and more intense strategies that displayed empathy and sincerity. Conversely, when addressing males, participants tended to rely more on conventional illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) and explanations or accounts of the cause, favouring direct and straightforward expressions of apology.

These results suggest that, as modern Algerian speakers, they were sensitive to cultural expectations and gender norms, adapting their apology strategies to convey a greater sense of responsibility and empathy for female interlocutors. It is interesting to note that choosing not to apologise was slightly more common when speaking to men than women. This suggests a stronger social expectation to show politeness and emotional sensitivity toward women, while pride and lack of closeness may make women less inclined to apologise to men. It reflects a well established societal belief that when women receive an apology, they need more emotional support and reassurance.

2.3.2. Limitations of the Study

Undoubtedly, any researcher may encounter different obstacles during the investigation process, as was the case for the present study. Despite yielding interesting results that directly respond to our research questions, we faced several problems while conducting this research.

The first significant challenge we faced was the university library's lack of resources. Adding to that the limited or no open access sources available online, it was somehow challenging to find the suitable references easily, as data collection demands the use of various sources, including books, articles, documents, theses, and dissertations.

Secondly, the sample was restricted to Master 2 EFL students from a specific university and region (Bejaia), which may limit the generalizability of the results to the broader population of EFL learners in Algeria. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be applied to students at different levels, at other universities in Algeria, or even to students from different countries. The majority of participants are Kabyle participants, which might have affected how they apologised. The results might therefore not apply to students from different first-language (L1) backgrounds.

Next, the study relied exclusively on written Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to gather data. While DCTs are useful for eliciting specific speech acts, their written structure could limit spontaneity and fail to accurately convey how participants spontaneously produce apologies in real-life oral exchanges. Moreover, the study was carried out in an academic context; it might not accurately represent apologetic strategies employed in casual or professional settings.

Finally, this study focused on the hearer's gender and social standing, ignoring other potentially significant variables like age, power relationships, and emotional context, which are also known to have an impact on pragmatic behaviour

2.3.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Several suggestions can be made for the present study:

- Conducting similar studies in different regions across Algeria can uncover potential regional pragmatic variations in the use of apology strategies. To compare how the apologetic speech act is realized in English and the participants' native tongues, such as Arabic and Kabyle. By doing this, researchers will be able to find out which strategies both languages use, whether language affects how an apology is produced, and whether there are any expressions that are shared across the two languages.

- This study should be replicated with a larger population and a more varied sample drawn from linguistics as well as other fields like literature, civilization, and didactics. More generalized results could be obtained by conducting this study at several levels (Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral), representing English as a Foreign Language students at levels other than Master 2.

- The gender of the interlocutor and social status were the main focus of the current investigation. Future researchers are encouraged to explore additional social factors that can have a big impact on the selection and application of apology strategies, like age, the emotional intensity of the circumstance, social power, and academic hierarchy.

- While the current study used written DCTs. Future studies could benefit from using a mixed-method approach that combines quantitative tools (like role-playing and observations) with qualitative tools (like interviews and audio/video recordings). These methods are more likely to record real, spontaneous speech and provide a deeper understanding of how people communicate and realize apology strategies in everyday situations.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the apology strategies employed by Master 2 EFL students from the Department of English at Bejaia University, Algeria. The main goal of this study is to shed light on the different apology strategies employed by EFL students. Moreover, it aims to find out whether the social status (of the interlocutor) and gender (of the interlocutor) affect the use and choice of apology strategy type. This is addressed by answering three main research questions: 1)- What are the apology strategies used by Master EFL learners at University of Bejaia? 2)- Does the social status of the interlocutor affect EFL students' use of apology strategies? 3)- Does the gender of the interlocutor affect the participants' use of apology strategies?

The thesis was organized into two main chapters. The first chapter provided a comprehensive theoretical background and explanation of the different aspects related to our subject of investigation, namely pragmatics, speech act theory, politeness strategies, apology, social status, gender, and finally, a review of relevant literature. Chapter two is divided into three sections. Section one explains the research method, which was quantitative via a written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) administered to 32 students. It offers explanation and full description of the sample, data collection procedures, and instruments. Section two presents analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the principal findings of the study. Finally, the third part presents study limitations and suggestions for future study.

The findings revealed that the participants used a wide range of apology strategies when realizing the speech act of apology. Consistent with Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) framework, the main strategies identified included the IFID, taking on responsibility, explanation or account of cause, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. The findings indicated that IFID recorded the highest frequency, implying that the participants preferred the use of direct and conventional strategies when performing an apology. Additionally, new strategies emerged from the data, such as intensification, softening the offence, expressing regret, reassurance, not apologizing, swearing, and lying. Importantly, participants tended to use mixed strategies, combining IFID with other strategies like taking responsibility or offering repair, promise of forbearance, softening the offence, expressing regret and reassurance, rather than relying solely on independent strategies.

Concerning the second research question, which seeks to find out whether the social status of the interlocutor affects the participants' use of apology strategies, the study found that participants adjusted their apology strategies according to the interlocutor's status, indicating that the social status of the interlocutor has an effect on the participants' use and choice of apology

strategy. When addressing higher-status individuals, participants favoured formal and respectful strategies, primarily IFID and explanations. Apologies to peers were generally less formal, with some participants tending to minimize their apologies or even opting not to apologize. For lower-status interlocutors, the offer of repair was more prominent, reflecting a desire to maintain social harmony and demonstrate responsibility.

With regard to the third research question, which explores whether or not the gender of the interlocutor affects the participant's choice of apology strategy, the results showed that the participants used similar apology strategies with both male and female interlocutors, with IFID being dominant in both cases. However, apologies to female interlocutors involved slightly more emotional involvement, as indicated by the increased use of offers of repair, explicit self-blame, and intensification, while they favoured more straightforward and conventional strategies like IFID when addressing males. Therefore, according to the results of the strategies used when realizing the apology speech act, it is concluded that the gender of the interlocutor has an effect on the participants' choice and use of apology strategies.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Bejaia University's EFL students are sensitive to and aware of the importance of social and cultural norms surrounding apology. They show awareness of social status differences and adjust their strategies accordingly, yet their behaviour is primarily guided by moral and emotional considerations rather than rigid social hierarchies or gender distinctions. This reflects the dominance of social solidarity and equality principles in their communicative practices.

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Appendices

Appendix 01

Students' DCT

Dear Students,

We are conducting a study for our thesis at the English Department of Bejaia University, focusing on the **realization of apology strategies by Algerian EFL learners**. We would greatly appreciate your participation by reacting to the following scenarios. Please respond with whatever you would naturally say in each situation. You are welcome to write as much or as little as you feel appropriate

Your responses will contribute valuable data for our research. Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

The researchers

Part one: General Information

Gender:	Male	Female
Age:	19-21 years old	22-24 years old
	25-30 years old	More than 30

Part Two: Higher-Status Interlocutor

1. You missed an important academic meeting with your supervisor because you mixed up the date.

➤ How would you apology to a male teacher?

You:.....

.....

➤ How would you apology to a female teacher?

You:.....

.....

2. You borrowed a data-show and its materials from the department for your presentation. Unfortunately, you dropped it, and it broke.

➤ How would you apologize if your head of department was a male?

You:.....

.....

How would you apologize if your head of department was a female?

You:.....

.....

Equal-Status Interlocutor

1. You are working on your thesis, and your partner tells you that you are not working seriously and that she/he is doing more effort than you.

➤ How would you apologize if he is a male?

You:.....

.....

➤ How would you apologize if she is a female?

You:.....

-
2. You are in exam period and you planned to go to take the exam with your friend. However, you faced a minor setback that caused a delay, and you could not inform your friend about it, which made him/her mad and upset.

➤ How would apologize to your male friend?

You:.....

.....

➤ How would apologize to your female friend?

You:.....

.....

Lower-Status Interlocutor

1. You accidentally stepped on your sister/brother's toy and broke it.

➤ How would you apologize to your brother?

You:.....

.....

➤ How would you apologize to your sister?

You:.....

-
2. As a teacher, you misplaced your student's work and could not find it. This caused the student inconvenience. How would you react and apologize to him/her?

➤ How would you apologize to your male student

You:.....

.....

➤ How would you apologize to your female student?

You:.....

.....

Thank you for your help☺

Appendix 02

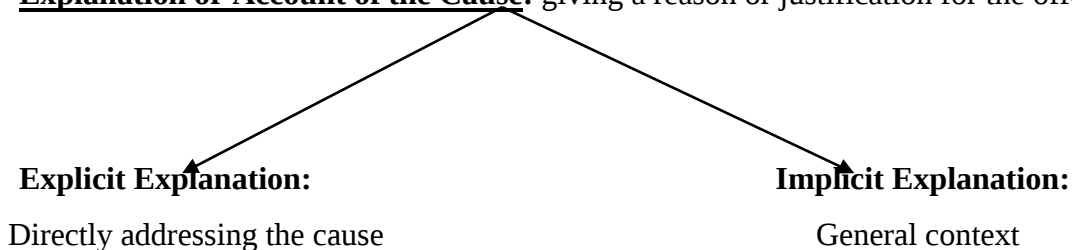
The Blum-Kulka and Olshtain' (1984) Framework.

Requests and Apologies: A Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP)

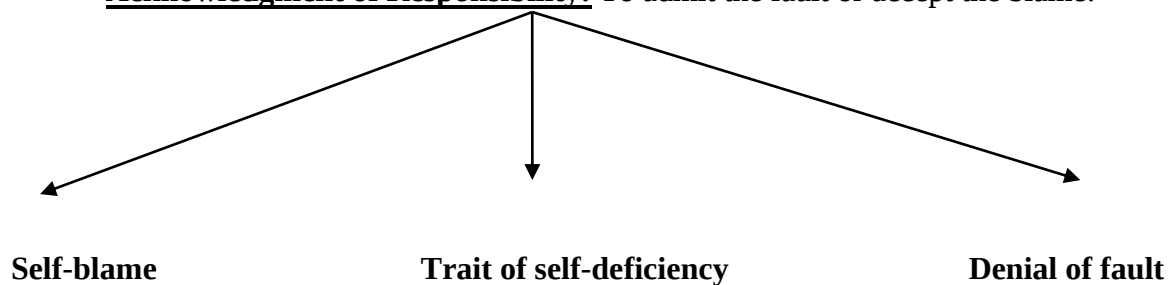
Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID): direct realization of an apology through explicit and routinized, expressions such as:

- Sorry, Excuse, Apologize, pardon, forgive, regret.

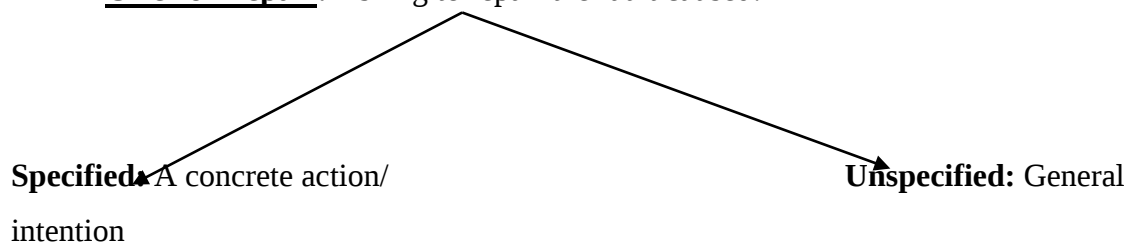
Explanation or Account of the Cause: giving a reason or justification for the offense:



Acknowledgment of Responsibility: To admit the fault or accept the blame:



Offer of Repair: Asking to repair the fault caused:



Promise of Forbearance: promising to not do the same mistake in the future.

Apology Intensification: it is used to enhance the sincerity or effectiveness of an apology

- **Intensification within IFIDs:** is usually expressed via an intensifier, as seen in the following:
 - adverbials: I'm *very* ... sorry
 - repetition (or double intensifier): (I'm terribly, terribly sorry
- **Concern for the Hearer:**
 - Expressing explicit concern to mitigate the offense (Have you been waiting long?).
- **Use of Multiple Strategies:**
 - Using multiple strategies (IFIDs and any one or more of the four other strategies).

These three methods of intensifying an apology can be used together and are not limited to being applied individually.

Résumé

L'un des plus grands actes illocutoire/de parole pour restaurer/rétablir l'harmonie sociale est l'acte du pardon. Cette étude exploratoire examine les stratégies d'excuses utilisées par des étudiants algériens en anglais langue étrangère à l'université Abderrahmane Mira de Béjaïa. Elle vise à explorer comment ces deux variables sociales, le statut social et le sexe de l'interlocuteur, influencent le choix et l'usage des stratégies d'excuse par les apprenants. L'étude a impliqué 32 étudiants de deuxième année de Master, comprenant à la fois des participants masculins et féminins. Les données ont été recueillies à travers une tâche de complétion de discours écrite composée de huit scénarios sociaux représentant différents statuts sociaux (statut social supérieur, égal, et inférieur). Les réponses ont été analysées quantitativement en utilisant le cadre théorique proposé par Blum-Kulka et Olshtain (1984). Les résultats ont indiqué que les participants utilisaient une variété de stratégies d'excuse lors de la réalisation de l'acte d'excuse. De nouvelles stratégies ont été observées, telles que: atténuer l'offense, rassurer l'interlocuteur, ou même choisir de ne pas s'excuser, ce qui est plus commun lorsque c'est un interlocuteur masculin du statut égal. Les résultats ont révélé que les participants adoptent les stratégies selon le statut de l'interlocuteur. La stratégie plus formelle et respectueuse était utilisée pour les statuts supérieurs, tandis que les excuses adressées aux pairs ont tendance à être plus simples. Quant au sexe, les résultats indiquent que les types de stratégies générales étaient les mêmes pour les interlocuteurs masculins et féminins. Les étudiants étaient plus émotionnellement expressifs lorsqu'ils s'adressaient aux interlocutrices.

Mots clés: actes illocutoire, stratégie du pardon, statut social, sexe de l'interlocuteur, Pragmatisme

Agzul

Igi ameqqran iḡef tbedd tigawt s taywalt -acte illocutoire- iwakken ad yili umtawa inmetti, d asuref (smah) gar yimdanen. Iswi n umahil-a d azerrew n tsuddsin (stratégies) n usuref i semrasen yinelmaden n Lezzayer n Master 2, yeyḡaren tagnizit di tesdawit n Bgayet. S umahil-a nra ad nḡer amek tiwtilin-a : aḡayer inmetti akked tuzzuft n umselyu, lant tazrirt ḡef yinelmaden deg wayen yerzan afran n tsuddusin n usuref. Inefkan negmer-iten-d s yimseqsiyen s ttawil n uḡeṡṡa (internet) i deg imsulḡa ad d-rren ḡef yiseqsiyen n tsastant-nney. Aneggaru-ya yebḡa ḡef 8 n yisinyaru inemttiyeḡ, yellan d igensas n yizuyar inmettiyeḡ. Syin nessemres tasleḡt tasmmaktant anda i nesseqdec tiḡri i d-yessumer Blum-Kulka et Olshtain (1984). Igmaḡ iḡer nessawed segzayen-d dakken imsulḡa smenyifen aseqdec n tenfaliyeḡin tusridin n usuref. tisuddsin-nniḡen llant dayen, akka am : asemḡi n wawal, tukksa n unezgum i umselyu neḡ llan wid yessemnyifen ur suturen ara maḡi asuref. Annect-a yerza ladya iwetman n yiwen n uḡayer. Tannayt tesken-d dayen asemres n tisuddsin-a yettili ilmend n uḡayer n yimsulḡa. Tisuddest tunsibt n leqder tettwaseqdec d yimdanen ilan aḡayer unnig. Tisuddsin timagnuyin ttwasemrasent gar wid yemtawan aḡayer. Ma d ayen yerzan tuzzuft, nessukkes-d d tisuddsin timatutin i yettwaseqdacen gar yimsulḡa ama d iwetman ama d tiwetmin. Inelmaden sexdamen tisuddsin yeḡḡuren d iḡulfan mi ara ilin zdat n temsulḡa.

Awalen-tisura: Aḡayer inmetti, inelmaden n tutlayt tagnizit, tasuddest n usuref, tuzzuft n umeselya, pragmatisme.