

PATTERNS OF APOLOGETIC UTTERANCES EXPRESSED BY ENGLISH STUDENTS AND NON-ENGLISH STUDENTS

(A Case Study in S1 Program of English Department and Biology
Department)

Faiza Hawa, Rahmawati Sukmaningrum
English Education Department of University of PGRI Semarang
faizahawa@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study aimed at finding out the patterns of apologetic utterance expressed by English department students and non-English department students. The participants of this study were 20 students of English department and 20 students of Biology department students. The data were taken from Discourse Completion Task serving 5 different situations. The responses of the situations were categorized into different patterns of apology offered by Olshtains (1983). The result showed that English students and Biology students have different characteristics in uttering apology. The English students tend to be straight to the point in uttering apology followed by a bit of explanation, while Biology students like to have long apology with more detail explanation. There is no significant difference in the realization of apology speech act uttered by the students. No factor influences the difference in the way they convey apology. Both applies similar various strategies to apologize. Direct apology and Direct Apology followed by Explanation are mostly chosen by the students as the strategies in conveying apology.

Key words: *apology, speech acts, English, non-English*

Introduction

People express their feelings through language. Language is so definitely related to its culture and there are some obstacles in gathering the nuances that are culturally-tied. People have different way in expressing the language. Sometimes, they find difficulties in finding the right way for expressing it, especially after making or doing something wrong. Uttering apology is an

ordinary thing to do since their social interaction cannot avoid something wrong. Apologizing is considered as one of the highly complex speech act and often prone misunderstanding. Apology is used as a means to break misunderstanding between speakers. A person who has expressed language and it causes offence to others has tricks to eliminate offence. Olshtain's (1983) proposes five semantic formulas for apologies

such as direct apology, explanation of why the speaker did what he/she did, acceptance of responsibility, offer of repair and promise of forbearance. Students in University, as an adult learner, have greater responsibility in conveying polite apology. They are demanded to be able to express apology in polite manner in whatever circumstances they are in, and to whom they talk to people from various social level.

Speech Acts of Apology

Austin (1962) defines a speech act as an utterance that performs a certain act. Searle (1969) stated that speech act can be classified into certain groups according to the function of the act. Speech act communicates certain attitude, and the type of speech act being performed corresponds to the attitude being expressed like apology expresses regret, a request expresses desire, etc. Apologies are considered expressive speech acts. The utterance of the apology is, however, necessary. Performative utterance plays an important role in delivering apology. It achieves their meaning only with certain background conditions in place. Act of apology requires an

action or utterance which is intended to set things right (Trosborg, 1994:373).

Apology is used to omit problems. Apology always brings the will to be forgiven. Leech (1983: 104-105) defined apologies as a convivial speech acts with a social goal of maintaining harmony between speaker and hearer. The act is expected to happen when social norms have been violated (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983). These statements are intended to speaker and hearer, the guilty and the offended, to be more conscious in breaking down the offence by apologizing. This is in line with Holmes (1990:159) that apology is addressed to the hearer's face need and intends to remedy an offence for which the speaker takes responsibility, and thus to restore the equilibrium between speaker and hearer, where the speaker is the apologizer, and the hearer is the person offended. When we apologize, we are saying sorry for making mistakes. Here, the offended should be more kind-hearted to give forgiveness. An apology is a promise as much as it is a supplication to correct an error. The aim is to restore

the relationship through the acknowledgement of wrongdoing. For Olshtain and Cohen (1983:20) the acts of apologizing require an action or an utterance which is intended to set things right. There are a number of linguistics strategies for expressing apologies based on Olshtain's (1983).

There are five semantics formulas for uttering apology.

1. Direct Apology (e.g., I'm sorry, or I apologize)
2. Explanation of why the speaker (the one who apologizes) did what he/she did
3. Acceptance of responsibility (e.g., It's my fault)
4. Offer of repair (e.g., let me pay for it)
5. Promise of forbearance (e.g., It'll never happen again)

Research Methodology

Respondent

The aim of this study is to find out the pattern of expressing apology in given situation expressed by both the

English students from English department and non-English students from Biology department who are enrolling English class. They are 20 students from English department and 20 students from Biology department.

Data

The data was taken from the Discourse Completion Task. DCT is a controlled elicitation instrument in which subjects are asked to read and then write their reactions to situations. The DCT used as the source of data here is adapted from Cohen and Olshtain (1983) and Tuncel (1999). The DCT used in this study consisted 5 different situations written in the questionnaire which the students from both departments have to response the situations by using the expressions of apology. Then, the questionnaire were collected, tabulated, and analyzed to know the most common pattern of apologizing used by the students from both English department and non-English department.

Instrument and Data Collection

The DCT (Discourse Completion Task) were used as the instrument of

this research. The task was divided into five different situations in which the students have to give their oral utterance written in the sheet by using expression of apologizing. Then, the data was analyzed by using five patterns of apology which belongs to Olshtain (1983). They are as follows:

1. Direct Apology (e.g., I'm sorry, or I apologize)
2. Explanation of why the speaker (the one who apologizes) did what he/she did
3. Acceptance of responsibility (e.g., It's my fault)
4. Offer of repair (e.g., let me pay for it)
5. Promise of forbearance (e.g., It'll never happen again)

The responses of 40 subjects were counted and categorized based on the patterns mentioned above. The subjects give response or their oral utterance to each of the situation which is set as if it is real situation they pose. The frequency of appearance of each response was counted.

Analytical Procedure

Having determined the semantic formulas for apologizing, the realization of each of the 40 subjects were counted and tabulated. A coding table was developed for each situation and the responses given from each subject were then classified under the suitable categories. The categories were set by Cohen and Olshtain (1983).

Findings and Discussions

As it was mentioned in the previous discussion, the aim of this research is to find out the patterns of apologetic utterances in given situation uttered by English students and non-English students. The data were taken from the questionnaire delivered to 20 non-English students and 20 English students to gain responses of apologetic from the given situation. The responses from the respondents were gathered and then analyzed. The responses were calculated and their frequencies were taken to get the comparison of the patterns of apologetic expressions used by both English department students and non-English department students. The question of this research will be

answered below, in the finding. The table 1 and 2 presented below shows the occurrence of the type of patterns used by the non-English department students with the total number of 100 utterances.

Table 1

Total responses of the apologies produced by non-English department students

Category	Occurrences
Direct Apology (DaP)	35
Explanation (E)	0
Acceptance (A)	0
Offer of Repair (O)	0
Promise (P)	0
Dap – E	33
Dap – A	3
Dap – O	13
Dap – P	6
Dap – P – A – P	1
Dap - E – P	2
Dap – A – O	1
Dap – E – O	1
Dap – A – E	1
Dap – A – P	1
Other sets	3
Total	100

Table 2

Total responses of the apologies produced by English department students

Category	Occurrences
Direct Apology (Dap)	54
Explanation (E)	0
Acceptance (A)	0
Offer of Repair (O)	0
Promise (P)	0
Dap – P	15
Dap – O	12
Dap – A	4
Dap – E	11
Dap – A- P	3
Dap – O – P	1
Dap – E – O	0
Total	100

The table above contained occurrences from semantic formulas and the overall calculation of sets of formulas from all responses in all five situations. The tables are just summaries of the students's way from both departments in expressing apology. The best description will be best achieved by looking at each of the presented situation. The emphasis will be emphasized in all five

situations to see the impressions of the performance of the speakers in delivering apology to the hearer. For this paper, the discussion is limited only on impression produced by the speakers in apologizing to the hearers without finding its effect to the sociopragmatic issue.

Below is the analysis of situations in which the distribution of the strategies is presented in a table for each situation as follows.

Table 3

Frequency of the use of apologizing strategies by English students and non-English students in situation 1.

Strategies	Biology Dept. Students		English Dept. Students	
	Occurences	Percentage	Occurences	Percentage
Dap – E	19	95%	5	25%
Dap	1	5%	15	75%
Total	20	100	20	100

Situation 1 is about being late. It can be seen that the most common pattern used in situation 1 is dominated by Dap – E and Dap. Dap – E is mostly uttered by biology department students. 19 out of 20

students put Dap – E as their first rank in uttering apology. They say, *“Maaf bu, saya datang terlambat. Diluar hujan deras sekali, tadi saya menunggu sebentar agar hujan sedikit reda, supaya saya bisa sampai ke kampus meski telat. Boleh saya mengikuti perkuliahan?”* while Dap is uttered like this *“Maaf buw, saya terlambat”*. In contrast, Dap is mostly used by the students of English department. 15 out of 20 (75%) students chose Dap as their favorit utterance. *Im sorry, Im late* is the example. The second one is Dap – E. It reaches only 5% in the first situation. This is the example: *Sorry mam, Im late. I have to wait for the*

Frequency of the use of apologizing strategies by English students and non-English students in situation 2

Strategies	Biology Dept. Students		English Dept. Students	
	Occurences	Percentage	Occurences	Percentage
Dap – O	10	50%	4	20%
Dap	6	30%	10	50%
Dap – P	1	5%	1	5%
Dap – A	1	5%	2	10%
Dap – A O	1	5%	0	0
Dap – A – E – O	1	5%	0	0

Dap – O – P	0	0	1	5%
Dap – E	0	0	2	10%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

(5%), Dap – A – E – O (5%), Dap – O – P (5%), and Dap – E (10%)

Situation 2 is about losing someone’s wallet. It can be seen that the most common pattern used in situation 2 is dominated by Dap – O and Dap. Another patterns occurred in situation 2 are Dap – P, Dap – A, Dap – A- O, Dap –A – E – O, Dap – O- P, and Dap – E. Dap – O is mostly uttered by Biology department students. 10 out of 20 students put Dap – O as their first rank in uttering apology. They say, *“Maaf teman, aku telah menghilangkan dompet kesayanganmu. Sebagai bentuk tanggung jawabku, aku akan menggantinya dengan yang baru meski tidak sama persis”*, while Dap is uttered like this *“Im really sorry”*. In contrast, Dap is mostly used by the students of English department. 10 out of 20 (50%) students chose Dap as their favorit utterance. *Im sorry* is the example. The second one is Dap – O. It reaches only 4% in the first situation. This is the example: *Im sorry for losing your wallet, I’ll change it soon*. Another patterns occurred in situation 2 are Dap (5%), Dap- A (5%), Dap – A – O

Table 5

Frequency of the use of apologizing strategies by English students and non-English students in situation 3

Strategies	Biology Dept. Students		English Dept. Students	
	Occurences	Percentage	Occurences	Percentage
Dap – P	5	25%	11	55%
Dap – P – A – P	1	5%	0	0
Dap	4	20%	7	35%
Dap – E	3	15%	1	5%
Dap – A	3	15%	0	0
Dap – A – P	1	5%	1	5%
Dap – E – P	2	10%	0	0
Dap – O	10	50%	0	0

Dap – E – O	1	5%	0	0
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Situation 3 is about taking money without permission. In situation 3, the situation is described when a person faces a problem with someone whose age and status is higher than the person him/herself. Here, the level of politeness in uttering apology is emphasized. Dap – P dominated the strategies in situation 3 used by both students from English department and non-English department. 25% students from non-English department chose Dap-P as the strategy in conveying apology. Dap is a level below. It gets 20% of the total number of the non-English department students. Next position is placed by Dap-E and Dap-A and followed by Dap –E – P. Other strategies include Dap- P-A-P, Dap-A-P, and Dap-E-O which each gets 5%. Here, both of the students from two departments dominate their apology expression by using strategy Dap-P. It shows that they have reached the level of politeness. They do direct apologising as well as

making promise not to do the same thing in the future. Some also admit and accept the mistake they make. The expressions like “ *Maaf ibu, saya menyesal telah mengambil uang ibu tanpa memberi tahu. Saya salah buw, mohon saya dimaafkan, saya berjanji tidak akan mengulanginya lagi, dan mengganti uang ibu dengan uang jajan saya*”, “ *I took your money mom, sorry I didn't tell you. This is my mistake, and I know I was wrong. So sorry, Mom*’ show that the students do appreciate the older one or the person whose level of status or age is higher than them. It is a norm in Indonesian culture. It has been embedded in every Indonesian since their early age that they have to apologize everytime they make mistakes in order to break misunderstanding or even problem and to respect the older one. This value is lasted on to their adult life and evidently is transferred to the situation in English language.

Table 6

Frequency of the use of apologizing strategies by English students and non-English students in situation 4

Strategies	Biology Dept. Students		English Dept. Students	
	Occurences	Percentage	Occurences	Percentage
Dap – P	12	60%	11	55%
Dap – E	7	35%	3	15%
Dap – P	1	5%	3	15%
Dap – O	0	0	3	15%
Dap – A	0	0	0	0
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Situation 4 is about breaking promise to someone. Both students from two different departments chose Dap-P to apologize. They seem do not want to talk longer and pointless. The students like to do straight to the point apologising. Both chose Dap-P

to convey the apology. More than half of the total number of the students from both departments chose this strategy. It is 60% for non-English department students and 55% for English students. Rarely, *Im sorry for breaking my promise* and *teman aku tidak menepati janji* are two example of direct apology expressions used in this situation.

35% students like to give explanation in their direct apology. This is the example, “*Maaf sob, aku tidak bisa datang karna ada urusan mendadak yang harus ak urus, maaf ya*,” “*Im so sorry to keep you waiting for a long time. Sorry I couldn’t make it. My mom called me when I was on the*

to meet you. She asked me to go to hospital bbecause my grandfather was hospitalized. Sorry, for not confirming’. This was done by non-English students. There are only 3 English students (15%) like to give explanation following their direct apology. Others took Dap –P for 5%.

Dap-O and Dap-A for 15%.

Table 7

Frequency of the use of apologizing strategies by English students and non-English students in situation 5

Strategies	Biology Dept. Students		English Dept. Students	
	Occurences	Percentage	Occurences	Percentage
Dap – O	3	15%	5	25%
Dap – P	12	60%	12	60%
Dap – E	4	20%	0	0
Dap – A – O	1	5%	0	0
Dap – A – P	0	0	1	5%
Dap – E – O	0	0	1	5%
Dap – A	0	0	1	5%
Total	20	100%	20	100%

Situation 5 is about spilling a glass of juice on someone’s clothes. In this situation, the use of Dap is so dominant for both students from two different departments. Some expressions like “*Im sorry, I didn’t mean it, Maaf, ak nggak sengaja*” are used in this situation. Second position is placed by Dap-E (20%).

Others are placed by Dap –A-O, Dap – A – P, Dap- E- O, and Dap-A.

Discussion

The aim of this study is to reveal the tendency of the use of strategy of apology expressed by English students and non – English students. In this case, the non – English students is focused on students of Biology Department. The findings show that those both students apply similar strategy in delivering apology utterance. Direct Apology and Direct Apology with explanation are dominated the strategy. Others strategies are also applied.

Generally the students from both departments mostly apply DaP, DaP – E, and DaP – P in all situation. In situation 1 – 5, both students apply Dap and Dap – E with high percentage. In situation 1 and 4, both students only apply 2 categories and 5 categories. In situation 1, there were only Dap and DaP – E. Dap – E mostly dominated the strategi used by the Biology students. 19 out of 20 students (95%) chose Dap – E to utter apology. Only one student left to chose Dap. While for English students, they mostly chose Dap in

situation 1. 75% or 15 students chose DaP to express apology, and 5 students chose DaP- E. From the finding in situation1, it can be seen that the students of Biology tend to use long apology. It is proven that they use explanation in the expression to lessen their guilty feeling toward the offended. While the students of english tend to be more expressive. They tend to use straight to the point utterances.

DaP – A occurred in situation 2, 3, 4, 5. Dap – O occurred in situation 2, 4, and 5. They make acceptance to their mistake they make and promise not to do the same thing in the future. For example in situation 2, DaP – O reached the point of 50% in non-english side. They make offer to fix the bad situation they created. While for English students, it reached only 20%. They stayed in DaP.

Dap – P is dominantly occurred in situation 3. It is also occurred in situation 2 and 4 combined with the categories such as Dap – A – P, DaP – O – P, and Dap – P – A – P. Eventhough Dap – P occurred in 3 different situation, but they occurred with different frequency in each situation. English students apply

55% of Dap – P in situation 3. While the Biology students only apply it for 25%. It shows that English students are more concerned with inconvenience caused by damaging someone's possession. DaP – P strategy is used as the form of responsibility to fix the damage, e.g : *"Im sorry mom, I took your money without permission. I promise to change it soon. You can take my pocket money to pay this"*.

DaP is also mostly occurred in situation 4 and 5. Direct apology uttered by both students from two department as the expression of regret for breaking promise with somebody. They utters the expression directly, e.g ; *"Maaf sob, aku nggak bisa datang kemaren"*, *"Sorry, I couldn't make my promise to you"*. Others expressions occurred in situation 4 are the combination Dap – E, DaP – p, Dap – O, and DaP – A. In situation 5, it is described the condition when someone accidentally spilled out a glass of juice to someone else's clothes. DaP is mostly used here. Other expressions are Dap –O and DaP – E. Offering help and Explanation are used here to decrease the offence

cause by the trouble the speaker made.

Conclusion

This paper comes up to the following conclusions:

- There are many apology strategies expressed by the students in uttering apology.
- Students of English are more expressive than Biology students. They are more straight forward in conveying something. Biology students tend to be more conscious in apologising by embedding explanation in their expressions.
- Both students use ordinary words or expressions when they speak with higher and equal persons or relatives. The lecturer should teach more about politeness to both students, so that they can differ how to do right apology to people from equal or higher level.
- The responses still lacks of intensifiers. Intensifiers is only used once in the responses. It seems that they

students still do not understand about the use of intensifiers in uttering apology. Intensifiers should be used when they utter apology in more formal situation and to higher-level persons.

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Appendix

The 5 situations offered

1. You come late to the class due to hard raining. You'd like to ask your lecturer's permission to join the class. What will you say to your lecturer?
her clothes. What will you say to her?
2. You accidentally lose your pal's wallet. You are so sorry for this. What will you say to your friend?
3. You take some money from your mom's wallet without permission. You use the money for buying new clothes. Your mom finally know about it and get mad to you. What will you say to your mom?
4. You intentionally break your promise to your friend. You don't give any confirmation to your friend. What will you say to your friend?
5. You walk fast pass your sister, and accidentally, you spill a glass of orange juice to