

# CRISIS MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE OF APOLOGY STRATEGIES IN URDU: A DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO MANAGE CRISIS AT WORKPLACE

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## Abstract

*Apology strategy helps to manage crises at workplace caused by an offence by filling the gap after dressing damaged social relations. It has two-fold effects upon apologizers because it not only protects their positive face wants but also damages it simultaneously. The present study aimed to clarify how apology strategies in Urdu help in crises management and how is it affected by contextual factors. This study investigated that how workplace affects the use of dangerous and less dangerous apology strategies, systematic and unsystematic apology strategies and the frequency of multiple apology strategies, intensifiers and address terms. An open-ended questionnaire was used to collect data from fifty participants. A crafted model of data analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The findings indicate that workplace affects the use of apology strategies. Its implications help the apologizers to bridge the gap among interlocutors.*

**Keywords:** Apology Strategies, Contextual Factors, Work Place, Intensifiers, Address Terms.

**JEL Classification:** M590

## Introduction

Fraser (1981) defines apology speech act as an act of taking liability for an infringement and expressing regret for the offense that has been committed. It is a social norm that acts as a bandage to cover damage to another social norm. Afghari (2007) asserts that apology strategies help to normalize and regularize social relationships among interlocutors who cannot live independently because humans are always bound to live in a society and depend upon others. They have expectations from other fellow beings. Adding on to this, the situation becomes more interesting when interlocutors have some special economic, social or official benefits and threats as a consequence. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) considered apology speech act as a social event because they believed that an apology is

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observed when social and ethical norms are defiled even if not fully but up to some extent. This event is an attempt by an offender to reshape damaged social norms. Bergman and Kasper (1993) explain that the purpose of an apology is to rebalance mutual relational agreement after an act of offense that may be intentional or unintentional. Holmes (1995) stated apology as a speech act that is anticipated to remedy the offense for which an apologizer considers him/herself responsible and with the help of apology speech acts tries to rebuild associations with his/her interlocutor or tries to reassure the affinity towards the other part. The thing that is common in all the above given definitions of apology speech act is that their purpose is always focused towards payment of the price of an offense in order to renormalize mutual social relations (Chang, 2018). The other thing that can be entailed from the discussion of apology is that it's social in nature which means it is performed in a society and also to serve social purpose of social appropriation due to some miss happening (Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016). In other words, an apology speech act is context dependent and varies according to the norms of each society and nature of mutual relationships between interlocutors.

Blum-Kulka and Kasper (1993) differentiate speech acts between conventional and unconventional forms and they mark apologizing and thanking as more conventional way than that of other speech acts. They categorized apology speech acts on different external factors such as the place of offense, and the object of offense and the relationship among the interlocutor. A speaker expresses his/her apology keeping in mind these factors and chooses different forms of apology to rebalance social relations. An apology may be in the form of explicit expression of an apology whereas sometime it may be in the form of confession of fault and acceptance of responsibility for an offense. Sometime a speaker gives explanation and states reasons of the committed mishap and at times he/she offers to pay for the loss. Moreover, sometime by expressing an apology a speaker determines to be careful in future. In all the above mentioned types of apology, an explicit expression of apology may accompany each category. Whatever is the form of apology, its purpose is to protect the speakers against severe reaction of a hearer. Goffman (1971) and Holmes (1995) elaborate that apology strategies are like a physician's prescription that helps to remedy the damage to speaker's positive face want, which is a speaker's desire to be approved of even after the offence. Holmes (1995) argues that apology strategies have positive effects both on a speaker and a hearer because these speech acts help a hearer to minimize the damage done by an offence to his/her face positive want and also guard a speaker against reaction from a hearer.

Holmes (1990) states, an apology may adopt any of these types: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Acknowledgment of Responsibility (RESP) (accepting the blame, expressing self-deficiency, recognizing hearer as entitled to an apology, expressing lack of intent and admission of fact), An Explanation or Account of the Situation (EXPL), offer of Repair (REPR) and A Promise of Forbearance (FORB).

It is though true that all of the apology strategies affect the offender's positive face want in one way or the other. But the degree of their influence is different as some are more dangerous for speaker's

positive face wants than the others. IFIDs (Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices and Explanation) moves are less dangerous while the other three moves (Responsibility, Repair and Forbearance) are taken as more dangerous for speaker's positive face want. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) also consider IFIDs as the formulaic structure of apologies and the other four are non-formulaic forms of apology strategies. There are different ways to measure these apology strategies. These measures are directly related with the speaker or the addressee or both of a speech act. The social distance, sex, power, social status, age and situation of a speech act also play their respective roles in expressing apologies and have an effect on the strength and meaning of the apology. Blum-Kulka and Kasper (1993) are of the view that apology speech acts are resulted as a consequence from a situation when a person commits any mistake or nonsense which breaks or imbalances the social norms and may damage the social relationship. In order to normalize social relations with the affected, the offender expresses to others who may have different kinds of relationship with the speakers and the relationships may vary from most formal to most informal. They may also have diverse social temperaments and power dynamics. Therefore apologies may/may not differ according to the contextual factors from highly apologetic, formulaic or dangerous to least apologetic, un-formulaic or less dangerous depending upon situation, nature of offence and interlocutors (Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016). Moreover, they may/may not differ with reference to the intensity and type of mistake or mishap. For assessing and evaluating apologies, different parameters have been projected by different linguists in the Western countries (Cedar, 2017). These frameworks and parameters position apology speech acts in different categories. Recently Asians and Middle Eastern scholars have also started to examine the fields of apologies and politeness (Ugla & Abidin, 2016). Recent times have witnessed many studies that aimed to investigate apology speech acts in Eastern languages particularly Arabic and Persian. The primary hypothesis of these studies is to draw pragmatic rules that administer the use of speech acts in dissimilar socio-cultural contexts.

Kargar et al. (2012) claim that Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) instigated in 1982 by Blum Kulka and Olshtain was an endeavor to analyze apologies with unique aim to foresee their possible pragmatic features and their characteristics across various cultures. That project was designed to explore apologies and requests in several languages including Spanish, English, French, German and Hebrew. In the East, Afghari (2007) and Shariati and Chamani (2010) worked to prove whether Persian apology strategies are formulaic like English or not. Both studies affirmed that Persian apology speech acts are as formulaic in pragmatic structures as in English language. Afghari (2007) also argues that factors like social distance and social dominance considerably affect the frequency of intensifiers in different situations. Shahrokhi and Jan (2012) concluded their study proposing that speakers of western languages, in Persian, male speakers perform their apologies most often in systematic form (IFID) which is the most frequent apology strategy. Moreover, taking on Responsibility, as the second most repeated strategy after IFIDs, as has also been reported in other languages. Majeed and Janjua (2013) analyzed the structures of apology strategies of English, Urdu and Punjabi language in Pakistani community that is multilingual (Brown, 2016). They revealed that prestigious language or language of dominant group affects the structures of apology speech acts in

a multilingual community (Banikalef, Maros, Aladdi, & Al-Natour, 2015). It is also evident from the results of their study that contextual factors affect the occurrence of apology strategies in the three languages. Majeed and Janjua's (2014) study shows, how gender affects the use of apology strategies in Urdu language. Different genders react differently in different social settings after an act of offense. Majeed and Janjua (2013) devised model of apology strategies in Urdu language with the help of Holmes' (1990) parameters of apology speech acts. IFIDs are formulaic, direct and explicit expressions of apology and these are implied with the help of performative verbs. In Urdu like in English IFIDs may adopt following three types.

- i. *Main ma'azrat chahta hon*, (An offer of apology)
- ii. *Mujhe afsos hi* (expression of regret)
- iii. *Mujhe muaf kr do* (request for forgiveness)

For the acknowledgment of responsibility of an offence, a speaker may choose any of these strategies.

- i. *Mere ghalti hi* (Explicit self-blame) Urdu
- ii. *Mujhe pata ni tha* (Lack of intent)
- iii. *Aapka koi qasor ni* (Justifying the hearer)
- iv. *Mujhe samijh ni i* (Expression of self-deficiency)
- v. *Umeed hi ap ne bura ni mana hoga* (Concern for the hearer)

The third category is an explanation of the situation of speech event i.e. *mujhe afsos hai, mere cell ki battery khatam ho gi, is ley main rabta na kr ska* in Urdu. In an offer of repair move, a speaker offers to pay the price of a loss e.g. *main nai kitab le kar don ga*. In promise of forbearance a speaker shows his/her assertion not to repeat the offence e.g. *main ainda ahtiyat kroon ga*.

The present study focuses upon the influence of contextual factors such as work place, age and social status upon apology speech acts in Urdu language. It is aimed to trace the differences that occur in the expressions of apology speech acts by the same offender in different social contexts.

## Methodology of the Study

### *Objectives of the Study*

The present study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To highlight the influence of context on apologizers while apologizing in Urdu language
- To compare and contrast the influence on apologizers at work place and domestic context.

### *Research Questions*

The present study revolves around the following research question:

- How the context of an offence (work place or domestic background) affects the offender in the choice of apology strategies in Urdu language?

### *The Research Participants*

Fifty students from the post graduate department of English from a public sector university in Islamabad have been selected as research participants with the help of random sampling technique. The respondents speak Urdu as their national language and are supposed to have equal command over Urdu as they have equal academic qualification. The participants range from 20 years to 28 years of age with an average age of 23 years. University graduates were preferred for the study because they were considered mature enough to make apposite preference of available lexicon for the use to refill the gap occurred after an act of offense. Moreover, they were also believed to possess equal level of emotional and attitudinal reaction in their acts of offence and expression of apologies accordingly. Moreover, they are also supposed to have the same weightage for relations with their addressees. They are also supposed to be mature enough to realize the importance of work place and domestic settings. The participants are supposed to have balanced features than any other group of participants. The following table can best illustrate the sample of the study:

Table 1  
*Research Participants*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male (1)</b>	<b>Female (2)</b>	<b>Total sum of 1 &amp; 2</b>
Average Age	23.5 years	22.5 years	23 years
Qualification	Post graduate	Post graduate	Post graduate
Sample Number	25	25	50

### *The Research Tool*

An open ended questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection for the present study. This questionnaire includes briefly described nine situations in which speaker have committed an offence. The participants were put into these situations through simulations and were asked to express their reactions in the form of apology after each act of offense. Here is the English version of one situation from each context in which the offender has to apologize in this study:

#### *Work Place*

*In first situation the participant has been asked that he/she was getting late for the lecture and hurriedly ran towards his/her classroom. While getting upstairs you colluded with an officer from university administration branch. How would you regulate and normalize the situation?*

#### *Domestic Setting*

In domestic setting, the participants have been asked how to apologize to their siblings when they failed to abide by their promise to go to park with them because some of their friends suddenly came to meet them.

#### *Social Variables of the Study*

The three social contextual factors that may manipulate the expression of apology are age, social setting and social distance. The interlocutors may have age difference or there may be a difference of social setting or interlocutors may/may not have social among interlocutors. The situations explained in the questionnaire have one or the other difference in these contextual variables. How these variables affect the expression of apology speech acts is the main question of the present study. These variables can be explained with the help of the following table. Table 2 shows three situations out of which one is work place where is a formal setting and in the other two there is informal relations among interlocutors. Moreover, in first situation the affected person is older than the offender and there is also a social distance between them. While in the second and third setting there is no social distance between the interlocutors but there is a difference of age in the second situation where the offender is older than the affected while in the third situation both have almost the same age. A key is also given below the table to help understand the variables of the study.

Table 2  
*Social Variables*

Setting	Age	Distance	Situation
Work Place	+ H.Age	+ Dis	Formal
Home	+S.Age	-Dis	Informal
Public Place	=Age	-Dis	Informal

Keys:

- + H.Age = There is age gap and hearer is older
- +S.Age = There is also age gap but here speaker is older
- =Age = no difference in the age of interlocutors
- Dis = both interlocutors have equal social status
- + Dis = Interlocutors vary in social status

### *Analysis of the Data*

The collected data was analyzed with the help of Majeed and Janjua's (2013) devised model that is based on the coding scheme provided by Holmes (1990). Before moving on to the analysis of data a few terms should be inculcated because these help to assist understanding and interpretation of the analyzed data. Address Term is the name or the title of an affected person, Head Act is the first apology speech act and Adjunct is a next or second speech act in case of multiple apology speech acts. Intensifier is the word used to exaggerate the apology strategies. For example: 'Sir, I am extremely sorry, I forgot to call you' is an adjunct to head act. In this example, Sir is an address term, I am extremely sorry is a head act, I forgot to call you is adjunct and extremely is an intensifier.

### *Analysis of Apology Speech Acts Based on Work Place*

There are three different contexts in the questionnaire and in each context there are three different situations in which the offenders are expected to apologize. Fifty participants took part in the study. So there are 150 possible speech act moves which cover different types of apology strategies. The following table classifies the 150 apology speech act moves which were uttered at work place by the fifty participants.

Table 3  
*Analysis of Apology Speech Acts Based on Work Place*

Total Move	IFID	EXPL	RESP	REPR	FORB	N.R	M.L	Intensifiers	Ad. Term
150	9=6%	52=34.66%	3=2%	10=6.66%	3=2%	2=1.33%	71=47.33%	19=12.66%	109=72.66%

The above given table shows that in 150 situations the respondents were made to express their apologies after committing an offense in each situation. The next five columns show the five types of apologies given by Holmes (1990) and explained in the introduction that an apologizer may choose after committing an offense. N.R means when an apologizer shows no response before an affected person. The Next column shows multilingual strategies i.e. when an apologizer uses two or more languages to express an apology. Intensifiers are the adjectives that an apologizer includes in apology speech acts to enhance the effects of apology speech acts. The last column shows address terms or titles that an apologizer uses for his/her addressee.

The table shows that at working places the apologizers used IFID move in 9 (6%) situations, explanation move in 52 (34.66%) situations, responsibility move in 3 (2%) situations, repair move in 10 (6.66%) situations and forbearance move in 3 (2%) situations. In two situations the respondents showed no reaction after their offense. In 71 (47.33%) situations the respondents used multilingual strategies. They used 19 (12.66%) intensifiers and 109 (72.66%) address terms in 150 situations.

Table 4

*Analysis of Apology Speech Acts Based on Home Setting*

Total Moves	IFID	EXPL	RESP	REPR	FORB	N.R	M.L	Intensifiers	Ad. Term
150	5=3%	23=15.33%	---	71=47.33%	2=1.33%	2=1.33%	47=31.33%	37=24.66%	44=29.33%

The table shows that in domestic settings the apologizers used IFID move in 5 (3%) situations, explanation move in 23 (15.33%) situations, no responsibility move, repair move in 71 (47.33%) situations and forbearance move in 2 (1.33%) situations. In two situations the respondents showed no reaction after their offense. In 47 (31.33%) situations the respondents used multilingual strategies to express their apologies. They used 37 (24.66%) intensifiers and 44 (29.33%) address terms in 150 situations while expressing apologies after committing offenses in domestic setting.

Table 5

*Analysis of Apology Speech Acts Based on Public Place*

Total Moves	IFID	EXPL	RESP	REPR	FORB	N.R	M.L	Intensifiers	Ad. Term
150	2=1.33%	76=50.66%	---	8=5.33%	6=4%	6=4%	41=27.33%	11=7.33%	41=27.33%

This table shows that in public place settings while interacting with friends the apologizers used IFID move in 2 (1.33%) situations, explanation move in 76 (50.66%) situations, no responsibility move on public place, repair move in 8 (5.33%) situations and forbearance move in 6 (4%) situations. In 6 (4%) situations the respondents showed no reaction after their offense. In 41 (27.33%) situations the respondents used multilingual strategies. They used 11 (7.33%) intensifiers to enhance the effects of their apologies and 41 (27.33%) address terms in 150 situations in expressing apologies to their friends.



### *Comparative Analysis of Apology Strategies in the Three Given Situations*

It has been explained earlier in the introduction that some apology strategies are more dangerous than the others. Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFID) and Explanation strategies are considered comparatively safe while for speaker's positive face wants whereas the other three apology strategies (Responsibility, Repair and Forbearance) are labeled as dangerous. Moreover, sometime the apologizers use intensifiers and address terms for better results. All these techniques are context affected. Following table shows the influence of the context on the apologizers in the choice of these techniques while apologizing.

Table 6

#### *Comparative Analysis of Apology Strategies in the Three Given Situations*

Type of Apology	Less Dangerous	Dangerous	Multilingual Moves	IFID as Head Act	Others as Head Acts	Intensifiers	Ad. Terms
Work place	61=40.66%	16=10.66%	71=47.33%	63=88.73%	8=11.26%	19=12.66%	109=72.66%
Home	28=18.66%	75=50%	47=31.33%	40=85.1%	7=14.90%	37=24.66%	44=29.33%
Public Place	78=52%	20=13.33%	52=34.66%	46=88.46%	6=11.53%	11=7.33%	41=27.33%

The above table shows comparative results of the findings in the three settings where the participants were asked to express their apologies after their acts of offense. The first column includes the three settings, second shows the comparative results of less dangerous apology strategies. Less dangerous apology strategies are those strategies which exert less negative effects upon speakers' positive face wants. The third column explains comparative results of dangerous apology speech acts that are opposite to less dangerous strategies. The next column presents multilingual apology strategies in which speakers use more than one language. The second last column includes strategies where IFIDs act as head acts. It means this column presents comparative results of the most systematic and formulaic forms of apology strategies. Comparative results show that the Urdu speaking participants use less dangerous apology strategies in public places with friends and working place respectively. It means that they are very conscious of protecting their face wants against threats from friends and work place officials. They use dangerous apology strategies while apologizing with their siblings as compared to friends and officials. It shows that they are quite casual in defending their face wants from their blood relatives. It can be inferred that Urdu speakers feel more secure with blood relatives than other relations and their use of apology strategies is affected by the contextual factor of social distance. The use of dangerous strategies in the three settings i.e. work place, home and public place is 16 times (10.66%), 75 times (50%) and 20 times (13.33%) respectively.

As to the issue of multilingual apology speech acts, the participants used such strategies more frequently at work place. They used multilingual strategies in 71 (47.33%) situations at work place whereas 47 (31.33%) and 52 (34.66%) apology strategies in home and public place setting respectively. It shows that the contextual factor of place of interaction (formal/informal) affects the

use of apology strategies.

The use of systematic and formulaic forms of apology strategies as head acts shows no variation by the participants. The use of IFIDs as head acts in the three settings i.e. work place, home and public place is 63 (88.73%), 40 (85.1%) and 46 (88.46%) respectively. It shows that contextual factors do not affect the choice of formulaic and non-formulaic forms of apology.

The use of intensifiers in apology speech acts is more frequent in home setting as compared to the other two settings. It is 12.66% at working place, 24.66% in home setting and 7.33% in public place setting. It also shows that the participants gave more importance to blood relations than the other relations because they used dangerous apology strategies while apologizing from siblings and also used intensifiers with their apologies.

There is also a difference in the use of address term before apology strategies by the participants in the three settings. The participants used address terms more frequently at the work place than the other two settings. The use of address terms at work place is 109 (72.66%) times out of 150 situations. It is 44 (29.33%) times in home setting and 41 (27.33%) in public place settings. It shows that there is not much difference in the use of address terms in home setting and public place setting according to this study.

### **Findings, Conclusions, Limitation and Suggestion**

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that contextual factors affect the use of Urdu apology strategies. Comparative analysis shows that work place and domestic context affect the use of apology strategies in terms of dangerous and less dangerous apology strategies because there is a difference among such strategies at work place and the other two settings. There is also much difference in the use of intensifiers at the work place and the other two settings. Again the use of address terms shows variation in the three given situations. It is more frequent at work place than the other two settings. However contextual factors don't seem to affect upon the use systematic and formulaic form of apology strategies in this study because the findings show no distinct variations in the use of such strategies. The findings of the study have many implications for the people of all walks of life. These help them not only to avoid harm to the social relations but also to dress the relations damaged by some accidental mishap. These also help them to keep in mind the importance of contextual factors while bridging the gap caused by an offence. With the help of apology strategies keeping in mind the importance of contextual factors help them safeguard their positive face wants in the face of damage caused by offence.

The choice of homogeneous and well-educated sample was the main limitation of the present study. The data was collected from a public sector university of Islamabad which has high literacy rate. The use of such sample confines the prospects to generalize the findings to the population that

are more dissimilar in terms of locality, education, gender and age. Future studies need to focus on countrywide data, so that generalizability of the findings of this type of study may be improved.

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