Exploring Interlanguage Pragmatic: Analyzing The Application Of Apology Strategies Among Pakistani Undergraduates

Saood Khan (Corresponding Author)[1] , Shahreena[2] , Taimur Aimal Khan[3] , Mehrosh Azeem[4]

[1]National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, saood.khan@numl.edu.pk
[2]Georg-August-Universität Gottingen, Shirin44hakimi@gmail.com
[3]University of Swat, taimuraimalkhan500@gmail.com
[4]National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad mehrosh.azeem@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

When speaking of learning a second language, they encounter two primary challenges. The first is related to linguistic competence, while the second pertains to pragmatic competence. Historically, much research has been dedicated to the former aspect. However, in the 21st century, a notable shift has occurred, with an increasing number of researchers directing their attention towards the latter. This shift has revealed that irrespective of linguistic competence, it is pragmatic competence that poses significant difficulties for learners. These challenges often stem from an inadequate grasp of sociolinguistic norms and conventions. In certain scenarios, L2 learners exhibit a high degree of proficiency in terms of grammatical structure and lexical competence. Nevertheless, their ability to engage in appropriate interactions is hindered due to their restricted familiarity with the nuances of the target language and its associated cultural context. This disparity can result in a situation where even though L2 speakers possess a solid foundation in linguistic aspects, their interactions lack decorum and effectiveness. This deficiency arises from an unnatural awareness of the intricacies that govern not only the language itself but also the social and cultural norms embedded within it. As a result, these individuals might struggle to navigate the intricate web of sociolinguistic expectations, leading to misinterpretations and

ineffective communication despite their sound linguistic abilities. The current study deals with one particular communicative act, viz. the act of apologizing, as realized in the speech of Pakistani Undergraduate Students. The study employed DCT (Discourse Completion Task) questionnaires in both Urdu and English to compare and analyze the responses. The study's outcomes indicated that participants approached interlanguage pragmatics, a phenomenon attributed to their limited acquaintance with the cultural nuances of the target language. Furthermore, the respondents displayed a tendency towards the overgeneralization of IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device), due to the lack of knowledge about the diverse apology strategies and their contextually appropriate utilization.

Keywords: Apology behavior, Interlanguage Pragmatic, DCT, Pakistani Undergraduates.

1. Introduction

Since 1970, there has been a shift in the approach to English language teaching and learning, marked by communicative language teaching. This new approach prioritized effective communication over a rigid focus on language as a system of interconnected rules encompassing grammar, phonology, and semantics. Linguists began to adopt a fresh perspective on language, considering it as a dynamic tool for meaningful interaction rather than a mere set of structural components. This paradigm shift led to a greater emphasis on developing students' ability to use language in real-life situations, fostering their communicative competence and fluency. Consequently, language teaching practices underwent significant transformations, with an increased focus on interactive and engaging classroom activities, authentic materials, and task-based learning. The communicative language teaching approach revolutionized the field of English language education, challenging traditional notions of language acquisition and promoting a learner-centered, communicative approach that resonated with the needs and goals of language learners in the modern era. According to Hymes (1972) Effective communication in language learning goes beyond a mere focus on grammar. While grammar forms an essential foundation, it is not the sole determining factor for successful communication. Recognizing this, many researchers have acknowledged that

effective communication involves various other elements such as pragmatics, discourse as well and sociological aspects.

In addition to grammar, learners need to know the target culture, norms, and sociological aspects of language as it influences appropriate language use and helps learners navigate various communicative situations. When individuals from various native languages and cultures use English, there is a chance that communication might not go smoothly. This could happen because people have different ways of expressing ideas, and these ways might not match across languages and cultures. Sometimes, what someone means to say might be understood in a different or even offensive way by others. This can occur because intentions in communication can be complex and can vary among different groups of people who speak different languages and come from different cultures (Bowe & Martin, 2014). Therefore, it is a must for the second/ foreign language to grasp the pragmatics of the target language, which involves understanding how language functions in different contexts, including appropriate speech acts, politeness conventions, and nonverbal cues. Interestingly it is noted that this situation does not only happen to people who are not very good at a language. Even those who become quite skilled in a foreign language like English can have difficulties. For instance, even when they know a lot about grammar and words, they might still struggle to say kind and appropriate apologies or other types of communication (Tamimi-Sa'd & Mohammadi, 2014). This challenge occurs because they might not fully understand how to use language in real-life situations, and that can cause issues (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991). Recognition that effective communication researchers have now focused on developing learners' communicative competence, which includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies. This comprehensive approach acknowledges the multifaceted nature of communication and equips learners with the skills and knowledge needed to communicate effectively in real-world contexts. In certain cases, researchers and language teachers have found that even proficient second language learners echoed pragmatic transfer in their language by applying pragmatic rules from their first language (L1) when producing speech in their second language (L2) (El-Samaty, 2005). As a result, there has been a strong emphasis on cultivating the pragmatic competence of L2 learners within language classrooms. Likewise, the study conducted by

Khan et al. (2022) involved a comprehensive examination of apology strategies employed by Pakistani undergraduate students in both English and Urdu languages. The findings indicated instances where direct apology strategies were employed alongside instances where participants demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding supplementary apology strategies.

Therefore, language and society exert reciprocal influences on each other, establishing a two-way relationship. Sociolinguistics explores the impact of language on society, examining how language use, variation, and attitudes shape social interactions, power structures, and cultural norms. It recognizes that language reflects and perpetuates social inequalities, identities, and ideologies (Auer & Hinskens, 1996). On the other hand, the sociology of language examines how societal factors, such as social structures, cultural practices, and power dynamics, shape language use, variation, and change (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). It recognizes that language is influenced by social norms, values, and institutions. Thus, both fields highlight the intricate interdependence between language and society, recognizing that language both reflects and shapes social realities and society, in turn, influences linguistic practices and structures (Hudson, 1980). As far as the utilization of language is concerned specific contexts fall under the domain of pragmatics, which delves into the intricate workings and deeper meanings of language in real-life situations. Pragmatics goes beyond the surface-level understanding of grammar and semantics to explore how language is used in social interactions, taking into account factors such as context, speaker intentions, and the interpretation of meaning by the listener. It examines the role of context, non-verbal cues, implicatures, and speech acts in communication, highlighting the dynamic nature of language use and the importance of context in shaping interpretation. Pragmatics provides insights into how individuals navigate the complexities of language in social settings, considering not only the literal meaning of words but also the pragmatic inferences, intentions, and social conventions that underlie effective communication. Similarly, Cutting (2008) defines pragmatics as the discipline of linguistics that investigates language and language distinctions according to how they are discovered. The culturing context in which language is used is a significant aspect of language. The primary aim of this present study is to investigate the realm of interlanguage pragmatics concerning the

utilization of apology strategies. An additional objective is to determine the extent of awareness among Pakistani undergraduates regarding supplementary apology strategies.

1.1. Research Questions

1. Does the selection of apology strategies by Pakistani undergraduates exposit interlanguage pragmatics?
2. How aware are Pakistani undergraduates of additional apology strategies?
3. How do Pakistani undergraduates perceive the role of various apology strategies in cross-cultural interaction?

2. Literature Review

Prospectively, a recent shift from the linguistics domain to communicative skills and pragmatic ability in the process of language teaching and learning, a very interesting area among the researchers in the domain of sociolinguistics and more specifically is the speech act theory and cross-cultural assessment of speech act theory in various languages. With the specific recognition of pragmatic skills as a component of conversational ability (Bachman & Palmer 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980) many researchers have conducted research works on the development of pragmatic features in the second language (L2). Pragmatic development refers to the capacity to correctly perform conversational applications in social contexts (Saleem, 2014). Speech acts have emerged as a particularly captivating domain within the realm of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). This is clear because a lot of research focuses on speech acts in ILP, while other things like how conversations are organized and implied meanings in conversations are not studied as much. Researchers from around the world have looked closely at speech acts to understand how people from one culture (their native language) use language when they are speaking another language. They want to help learners become better at using language naturally. One important type of speech act is apologizing. Saying sorry is different depending on the language and culture. Different groups of people might have different ways of saying sorry or use special ways of apologizing that are unique to their language and culture. Different groups of people might think about when it's right to apologize differently and use different ways of saying sorry depending on the situation (Stalnaker, 1972, as cited in Bardovi-Harlig, 2010). Among the

various speech acts that carry considerable importance midst language users, the act of apologizing emerges as particularly notable. Apologizing, considered a form of speech act, demonstrates notable variations across different languages and cultures (Kalisz, 1993; Kachru, 1998; Chakrani, 2007; Meier, 2010), and it serves as a frequently employed communicative practice in human interactions (Salehi, 2014).

Appropriateness is expressed at many stages in L2 pragmatic development. It demonstrates the awareness of group communication structures, and also linguistics, and skills that enable learners to interact effectively in L2. Many researchers have reached pragmatic competence and they concluded that the problem non-native speakers of English face other than fluency was pragmatic competence due to which they transferred their L1 knowledge to L2 processing. Many research studies suggest that even though learners have mastered the syntax of the target language and structure, even then, on many occasions they start facing many problems regarding societal and cultural constraints that restrict target language usage. During interaction with native speakers, the learners prefer to transfer their existing societal and cultural values into the target language which leads them toward interlanguage pragmatics. Prospectively, it is surprising that it is not the only factor in the process of English language teaching and learning in Pakistan (Saleem, 2014). Even though regional variation in the usage of language has prompted scholars, students, and teachers to challenge instructional strategies and language skills, the grammatical, syntactic, and semantic capability would just not be enough for effective communication. Pragmatics competence, which refers to the aptitude for effective communication in the context of language usage, has driven the attention of researchers and teachers. The essence of pragmatics competence can be clarified within the framework of language. For instance, in China, India, and Japan saying, "I am sorry" in certain cases, an apology may be enough. Similarly, in many other societies for instance Jordan an explanation of something might be required for the wrongdoing (Bataineh, 2008). Attaining the knowledge and experience of a language framework might not indicate that communication can be used effectively. To be able to acquire greater conversational or pragmatic abilities, the identification of the chosen community and the type of language usage in that group is essential.

The chief objective of language teaching is to be receptive to effective communication, because of the specific cultural norms and values, therefore the importance of recognizing the discrepancies between Pakistani and English cultural norms and as well as the output of Pakistani students is of significant importance. It can be misleading to make conclusions based on the pragmatic standards of another society. For achievement in teaching and learning language practices, the cross-cultural analysis of Pakistani and English pragmatic norms may play an important role in enhancing pragmatic awareness of these two different cultures. It may also play a major role not only in understanding the linguistic features of the target language but also in paralinguistic features.

2.1 The Execution of Apology Strategies in Various Cultures

part to the fact that English is the dominant language learned in the world as a second or foreign language, several scholars have concentrated on the comparison of English with other languages. The very portion of this research study investigates the comparison of multiple languages to English in sequence to come up with any hypotheses to clarify the differences in apologies among different languages. Bataineh (2008) compared the tactics used by American English speakers and Jordanian Arabic speakers. They have also investigated the gender gaps between the two speakers. The participants were told to identify conditions where they felt the necessity of apology. Subsequently, the researcher created a questionnaire based on 15 typical scenarios. The analysis of the research study revealed that there were variations, for instance, Jordanian non-native speakers of English were more noticeable than American speakers suggesting that Jordanian Arabic speakers were using a combination of a variety of strategies. The data correspondingly showed that the variance between English native females and males was smaller than the difference between Jordanian males and females.

Kasanga & Lwanga-Lumu (2007) conducted a comparative study of apology strategies, in Setswana, a nativized variety of English, and the English language utilizing recorded video and a Direct Completion Task (DCT) for Setswana and two native varieties of English. In the determined two varieties of English language, one variety is spoken as a first language by White South Africans, and the other variety is spoken as a second language by Black South Africans. Deutschman (2006) compared two languages contrasted

with English. As per the reports, the two studies native speakers of Persian and Arabic both speakers of these two languages were more explicit in their apologies. Instead of using one strategy, they tended to choose the use of more strategic variations, while the ethnic speakers in the United Kingdom and the United States frequently did. It could be predicted that Turkish speakers would use a higher combination of apology strategies in comparison with English native speakers. In the same line of reasoning, Researchers have conducted research studies and attempted to identify universal apology strategies and their taxonomies in many languages (Olshatin, 1991; Chamani & Zareipur, 2010; Holmes, 1990; Dalmau & Gotor, 2007).

The purpose behind the cross-cultural apology strategies of these research studies was to identify whether non-native speakers knew different apology strategies or not. Additionally, to explore the socio-pragmatic norms they adopted while apologizing to someone. Furthermore, by comparing the use of apologetic tactics in different languages, scholars have sought to improve pragmatic competence or language teaching by analyzing the use of apology approaches by language learners and proposing potential teaching consequences.

2.2 Interlanguage Pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) emerges as a convergence of pragmatic analysis and the exploration of second language acquisition. Positioned within the realm of research on second language acquisition, the term 'interlanguage' summarizes the evolving and partially unstable grasp of a target language (L2) by second language learners (Selinker, 1972 & Selinker 2014). This developmental stage includes elements from both the L2, the learner's native language (L1), or any other languages within their repertoire (Ln), as well as self-originating features that are absent in both L1 and L2. The inception of interlanguage theory initially revolved around learners' formal linguistic comprehension. In contemporary times, researchers have paid more attention to the realm of interlanguage pragmatics on second language acquisition (SLA). This elevated attention stems from the recognition that individuals acquiring a second language (L2), including those who attain a high level of proficiency, frequently exhibit communicative errors attributable to their limited grasp of pragmatic competencies. These pragmatic oversights underscore the

significance of pragmatic knowledge, as they underscore a lack of awareness regarding the sociolinguistic and sociocultural nuances that govern effective communication within specific contexts.

Research has been conducted that indicates that within the context of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), errors committed by second language (L2) learners in pragmatic realms tend to be evaluated as more objectionable by their conversational counterparts in the target language. In comparison to errors of a strictly linguistic nature, these pragmatic missteps are accorded a higher degree of unacceptability (Blum-Kulka et al., 1993). Inter-language pragmatics is a mechanism that acts as an interface between learners L1 and L2. When a learner is approaching the target language, he/she creates his/her own set of rules that do not adhere to the rules of either the learner's L1 or L2. For instance, it is a system of a third language having its own sentence form, vocabulary, word use, grammar, pragmatics, and its own way of approaching the target language Corder (1981). In certain ways, it functions as a lingua franca. Key aspects of ILP studies include.

2.2.1   Interlanguage Variation
Learners often exhibit pragmatic behaviors that differ from both their native language (L1) and the target language (L2) community norms. These variations, referred to as interlanguage pragmatics, are shaped by learners' exposure to both their L1 and the L2, as well as their individual experiences.

2.2.2   Transference and Transfer
Learners frequently bring pragmatic norms and strategies from their L1 to their L2. This can lead to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns if the pragmatic conventions differ between the two languages.

2.2.3   Politeness and Speech Acts
Interlanguage pragmatic studies explore how learners comprehend and use politeness strategies, as well as how they perform speech acts (such as requests, apologies, and refusals) in the L2. Different cultures and languages may have distinct norms for politeness and speech acts.

2.2.4   Socio-pragmatic and Sociocultural Competence

Interlanguage pragmatic research delves into socio-pragmatic competence, which involves understanding and appropriately using language within specific social contexts. It also encompasses sociocultural competence, where learners navigate cultural nuances and norms in communication.

2.2.5   Pragmatic Awareness and Instruction

Interlanguage pragmatic studies investigate whether explicit instruction in pragmatics can enhance learners' pragmatic awareness and effectiveness in L2 communication. This involves teaching learners about cultural norms, speech acts, and appropriate language use.

2.3 Pragmatic Competence

Knowing how to use language appropriately in different situations is very important when learning a new language (L2). This is called pragmatic competence. To use language well, you need to understand not only the words but also the cultural rules and norms of the place where that language is spoken. In simple words, each language is connected to the values and customs of the community that uses it. This means that people from different cultures might use language in slightly different ways, following their own rules. Because of this, it's necessary to learn not just the words and grammar of a language, but also how to communicate effectively within that culture. Hymes (1964) states that EFL learners must have pragmatic knowledge in addition to effective communication. In some cases, EFL learners do have competency in a language but they cannot perform in it. Pragmatic competence understanding helps you express your thoughts and intentions properly when using the language. However, these ways of communication can be different from one culture to another. Therefore, researchers emphasized that a great deal of focus should be given to the pragmatic usage of a language more specifically in the case of undergraduate students so that they understand how to use a language in the target culture. So, only when you have a good grasp of how language works within a specific culture can you communicate well in that language. Pragmatic competence means being able to use language well to achieve a particular goal and to understand language in different situations. For example, Thomas (1983) said it's about using language effectively for specific purposes and understanding how

language fits into the situation. Schauer (2009) also talked about it as knowing the right way to talk based on where you are and to whom you are talking. Similarly, (Lee, 2008) the knowledge should not be limited to syntax, morphology, or any other branch of linguistics so that the learners enhance their cross-cultural-intercultural communication skills in English. The case of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) also involves a comparison of L1 and L2 pragmatics. Consequently, Research scholars have aimed to examine various languages and cultures to get to know how the pragmatic use of language is learned by second language learners.

2.3 Speech Acts

Speech acts have often been the main focus of interlanguage pragmatics studies. Speech acts are actions done through speaking (Yule, 2006). Austin adds that all spoken words not only convey meanings but also do specific things or actions (Levinson, 1983). They carry the speaker's intention to get a particular response from the listener. In simpler words, it's the action behind what someone says. Austin breaks down speech acts into three kinds of actions: the actual words said (locutionary act), the intention behind saying those words (illocutionary act), and the effect those words have on the listener (perlocutionary act) (Oishi, 2006; O'Keeffe, Clancy & Adolphs, 2011). For example, if someone says "It's getting late" when invited somewhere, it might mean they're refusing the invitation, not just telling the time. Here, saying the words is the locutionary act, the refusal is the illocutionary act, and the listener's reaction, like feeling disappointed or nodding, is the perlocutionary act.

   Searle (1965) focuses on the intention behind speech acts, saying that all spoken actions need a specific purpose. Searle suggests there are five main things we do when we speak, using five types of sentences (Levinson, 1983). They are representatives (committing to what we say), directives (directing), commissives (committing to future actions), expressives (expressing emotions), and declarations (causing immediate changes in the institutional state of affairs).

2.4 Apology

An apology is a way of acknowledging that a social rule has been broken. It is a way for someone to express their emotions or show that they genuinely mean what they say (Searle, 1975). Apologies

are used to restore harmony, trust, and resolve conflicts (Goffman, 1971; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). They can also make up for mistakes (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) and keep a good relationship between the person apologizing and the one receiving the apology (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Just like other common ways of speaking, how apologies are done can vary between cultures and languages. Different languages and cultures might have their special ways of apologizing. That is why many researchers have tried to find different forms of apologies and come up with ways to understand how they work in specific languages and cultures. They've created frameworks to help understand how to apologize in different situations and cultures, like the work of Fraser (1981), Olshtain & Cohen (1983), Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), House (1988), Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (1989), and Holmes (1990, 1989).

3. Methodology

Apology studies, both in Western and Eastern languages, have mainly concentrated on how apologies are made, including the ways people use to express their intentions and the factors that shape these choices. This emphasis makes sense, as the other type of research depends on understanding how people perceive these speech acts. To explore how listeners react to various apology strategies within a particular culture, you first need to know the kinds of strategies that are used in apologies in that cultural context. That is why this innovative study focuses on how apologies are created, specifically looking at the kinds and frequency of apology strategies used.

3.1 Participants

The participants for the present study are Pakistani undergraduates who use Urdu as either their primary or secondary language and have English as their second language. The research involves 100 participants from the English department who are doing their Bachelor's in English linguistics and literature. The participants, with an equal number of males and females. The reason for involving undergraduate students in this study is because they represent the upcoming generation that will shape the social and cultural landscape. To facilitate a comprehensive comparison regarding the diversities in apology strategies between English and Urdu responses, the investigators gathered

participants' responses in both English and Urdu languages. The objective behind this was to gain insights into the distinct manners through which participants employ apology strategies across different scenarios within the same contexts of both Urdu and English languages. Additionally, the researchers compared the responses in both languages to see if the participants applied the principles of interlanguage pragmatics when forming their apology strategies.

3.2 Instrumentation

The current study employed a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) model initially introduced by Blum-Kulka (1982). The primary objective of this model is to outline the apology strategies employed across different contextual settings and in response to varying types of offenses, both in English and Urdu languages. This DCT framework was previously utilized by Thijittang (2010) to analyze apologies from Thai undergraduate students in English. Thijittang's adaptation of the DCT drew inspiration from earlier works by Olshtain & Cohen (1983), Cohen, Olshtain, & Rosenstein (1986), and Bergman & Kasper (1993).

The selection of the DCT is underpinned by its ability to encompass sociolinguistic nuances related to factors such as social status, social distance, and the severity of the offense. These factors are intricately aligned with the objectives of this study, rendering the DCT a judicious choice. Thus, the employed elicitation procedure is considered suitable for effectively capturing the required data within the scope of this investigation. The

3.3 Procedure

The responses have been gathered from Pakistani undergraduates through the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). In this test, participants have to react to certain situations by imagining themselves in that position. DCT can be written or oral. The one that is used in this research study has been the written discourse completion test (WDCT). The WDCT comprised eight different scenarios where participants were required to assume the role of an offender who had committed a mistake and then offer an apology for his/her action. The participants were told about the intent of the study and asked to answer questions about the given situation.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

In this study, the researchers used the apology strategy framework created by Olshtain & Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka, and House & Kasper (1989). This framework includes six main ways of apologizing and nine more specific ways of apologizing within those six categories.

1. Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) (e.g., I'm sorry, I apologize, Forgive me)
2. Explanation of Account (e.g., I wasn't feeling well)
3. Taking on Responsibility
    3.1 Explicit Self-blame (e.g., It is my fault)
    3.2 Lack of Intent (e.g., I didn't mean it)
    3.3 Expression of Self-deficiency (e.g., I was confused)
    3.4 Expression of Embarrassment (e.g., I feel bad about it)
    3.5 Self-dispraise (e.g., You know I'm very smart)
    3.6 Justify Hearer (e.g., You're right to be annoyed)
    3.7 Refusal to Admit Guilt
        3.7.1 Denial of Responsibility (e.g., It wasn't my bad)
        3.7.2 Blame the Hearer (e.g., you're the one at fault)
        3.7.3 Pretend to be Offended (e.g., I'm the one who's hurt)
4. Concern for the Hearer (e.g., Are you okay?)
5. Offer of Repair (e.g., I'll cover the cost of the damage)
6. Promise of Forbearance (e.g., I won't let this happen again)

Source: Olshtain & Cohen (1983), Blum-Kulka, and House & Kasper (1989) cited in Bowe, Martin, & Manns, (2014).

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis operates under the assumption that the given response closely resembles what the participant would say in a comparable circumstance. The investigation examines the outcomes within the outlined situational contexts. The responses of participants have been conducted in both their native or second language, Urdu, as well as in English, a secondary language, and then compared and analyzed to ascertain their linguistic and pragmatic competence. The primary approaches utilized by each group are explicitly outlined in Table 1, accompanied by comprehensive explanations for each presented scenario. The following table provides a visual representation of the study's outcomes.

Table 1: The frequency of apology strategies used by the respondents

Apology Strategies	No. Students 100 Apology Strategy in English		No. Students 100 Apology Strategy in Urdu	
	No	%	No	%
IFID	49	49%	43	43.8%
Explanation	12	12.6%	19	19.9%
Repairing	19	19%	15	15%
Responsibility	8	8.3%	10	10.8%
Forbearance	20	20.1%	13	13%
Mixed Apologies	23	23.1%	27	27%

As indicated in Table 1, there are both similarities and variations observed among Pakistan undergraduates' responses which reflect diverse levels of proficiency in the English language concerning their application of the apology strategy speech act. Among the respondents using the English language, the dominant strategy was IFID at a rate of 49%. Conversely, in Urdu, this strategy was observed at a lower percentage of 43%, potentially due to the participants' proficiency in linguistic and pragmatic understanding. This disparity highlights the phenomenon of overgeneralization of a particular apology strategy stemming from a limited awareness of alternative strategies. This, in turn, leads to challenges in effective cross-cultural communication due to pragmatic failure (For a comprehensive discussion see, Khan, 2022). The second strategy, which involves offering an explanation strategy reflects a huge divergence as the strategy is utilized at a rate of 12.6% in English and 19.9% in Urdu. The observed deviation in strategy employment underscores linguistic competence, a facet distinct from pragmatic competence. Notably, a considerable portion of participants displayed unfamiliarity with this specific strategy, indicating a dual impact on both linguistic and pragmatic competency enhancement. Likewise, the utilization of the "repairing" strategy is evident, accounting for 19% in the English language context, in contrast to its occurrence at 15% in the Urdu language context. This discrepancy implies that respondents have

approached interlanguage pragmatics. In such instances, individuals endeavor to apply strategies based on their comprehension, without being well-versed in the cultural norms and conventions of the target language. The rules and strategies they employ in these contexts are not anchored in either their native language (L1) or their second language (L2).

The participants' implementation of the responsibility strategy as a form of apology strategy depicted divergence, with its deployment establishing 8.3% in English and 10.8% in Urdu. This variance can be attributed to the participants' limited familiarity with this particular strategy. Regarding the Forbearance apology strategy, participants once more exhibited engagement with interlanguage pragmatics. Notably, the application of this strategy stands at 20.1% in the English context, in stark contrast to its utilization of merely 13% within the Urdu language scenario, thus underscoring a significant divergence. The observed disparity underscores pragmatic competence, which in turn contributes to instances of pragmatic breakdown. Lastly, the utilization of mixed apology strategies stands at 23.1% in the English language, while it reaches 27% in the Urdu context. This notable discrepancy reflects a substantial percentage variance, stemming from participants' limited familiarity with the application of mixed apology strategies. In instances where mixed apology strategies were needed to be employed, the participants predominantly resorted to IFIDs, illustrating their lack of knowledge of the cultural norms and conventions of the target language.

5. Conclusion

The current investigation was conducted with the objective to find the gap in Pakistani undergraduate students' understanding of the cognitive intricacies concerning apology strategies. The researcher thoroughly scrutinized the students' choice of apology strategies, unveiled the fundamental reasons that steer these choices, and established the contextual factors that impact the utilization of relevant apology strategies. After analysis of the data, a major outcome was that the participants approached interlanguage pragmatics where they devised their unique approaches to apologizing, deviating from the conventional norms of both the English and Urdu languages. These individualized approaches often resulted in an ineffective utilization of apology strategies, stemming from the participants' limited familiarity with the

cultural norms associated with the target language. In addition, there exists a tendency towards overgeneralization of a singular strategy, IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device). This inclination could potentially stem from the circumstance wherein respondents might have inadvertently adopted this strategy due to overheard instances. In situations like these, when dealing with interlanguage pragmatics or relying predominantly on a single apology strategy, a significant consequence could be the inadvertent use of language that is perceived as overly polite or, conversely, impolite. This delicate balance can be easily disrupted, potentially leading to the unintentional misinterpretation of intentions or emotions. The outcome might involve the recipients misunderstanding the speaker's true purpose or even interpreting it in an entirely different manner, thus highlighting the vulnerability of effective usage of apology strategies in these scenarios.

Hence, in order to attain proficiency in a second language (L2) and comprehend the pragmatic usage of language, being exposed to the culture related to that language is of paramount importance for learners to become adept communicators in the English language. Among these factors, exposure seemed to have the most impact on how learners apologized: even those who were not very skilled in the language benefited significantly from cultural exposure, which greatly expanded their range of apology strategies, surpassing those who did not have such exposure. When exposure and improved language proficiency are combined, this combination helps learners broaden their set of ways to apologize and adjust them according to different situations, making their usage more in line with native speaker norms. It is crucial to possess both linguistic and pragmatic competence in the desired language, as having a strong command of the language alone aids in expanding the array of apology strategies that learners employ. However, it is pragmatic competence that enables learners to completely embrace the linguistic patterns of native speakers. In essence, both higher language proficiency and exposure to cultural contexts were pivotal in learners' development of appropriate language use in English. Exposure, especially when coupled with increased proficiency, led to the most significant advancements in learners' ability to diversify their range of apology strategies and use them contextually, moving them closer to the norms observed among native speakers. It has been observed that once a student

is exposed to the target culture s/he rapidly begins to acquire pragmatic competence (Rintell, 1979; and Shardakova, 2005).

Furthermore, an additional potential approach involves introducing real-life instances. Such as pragmatics instruction can center on specific instances of language use and its comprehension, making language classrooms particularly advantageous to these objectives. To enhance input, English language teachers can create recordings or videos featuring brief, genuine dialogues where native speakers deliver apologies (or other target speech acts). These dialogues should mirror potential real-life scenarios that learners might encounter, encompassing diverse social aspects like the relationship between interlocutors, power dynamics, and gender dynamics. Additionally, these dialogues should encompass various degrees of offense severity. Following the presentation of these dialogues, the teachers move on to activities focused on comprehension and production. During the comprehension phase, the teacher directs learners' attention toward both the social context of the interaction and its linguistic execution, spotlighting areas that pose challenges. Subsequently, after learners have engaged with a range of authentic apology scenarios and have engaged in discussions about them, they are tasked with practicing and pretending their apologies in pairs. By engaging in this kind of practice, English language teachers will begin to grasp students' thought processes the experiences they might have, and how they handle them. This approach will also aid students in becoming proficient not only in the language itself but also in its appropriate application within specific situations.

References

1. Auer, P. and Hinskens, F. (1996) The convergence and divergence of dialects in Europe. New and not so new developments in an old area. Sociolinguistica 10: 1–30.
2. Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). Language testing in practice: Designing and developing useful language tests. Oxford New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
3. Bataineh, R. F., & Bataineh, R. F. (2008). A cross-cultural comparison of apologies by native speakers of American English and Jordanian Arabic. Journal of pragmatics, 40(4), 792-821.
4. Bardovi-Harlig, K., Hartford, B. A., Mahan-Taylor, R., Morgan, M. J., & Reynolds, D. W. (1991). Developing pragmatic awareness: Closing the conversation. ELT Journal, 45(1), 4-15.

5. Bergman, M. L., & Kasper, G. (1993). Perception and performance in native and non-native apology. Interlanguage pragmatics, 4(1), 82-107.

6. Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and Apologies. New York, NY: Ablex Publishing.

7. Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). Applied linguistics, 5(3), 196-213.

8. Blum-Kulka, S. (1980). Learning to Say What You Mean in a Second Language; a Study of the Speech Act Performance of Learners of Hebrew as a Second Language.

9. Bowe, H., Martin, K., & Manns, H. (2014). Communication across cultures: Mutual understanding in a global world (2nd ed.). Port Melbourne, Victora, Australia: Cambridge University Press.

10. Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978). Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

11. Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. Applied linguistics, 1(1), 1-47.

12. Chakrani, B. (2007). Cultural Context and Speech Act Theory: A Socio-pragmatic Analysis of Bargaining Exchanges in Morocco. Texas Linguistics Forum, 51, 43-53.

13. Chamani, F., & Zareipur, P. (2010). A cross-cultural study of apologies in British English and Persian. Concentric: Studies in linguistics, 36(1), 133-153.

14. Cohen, D. Andrew D., Olstain, E. and Rosentein, D. S. (1986). Advanced EFL apologies: what remains to be learned? School of Education, Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

15. Corder, S. P. 1981. Error Analysis and Interlanguage. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

16. Cutting, J. (2005). Pragmatics and discourse: A resource book for students. London, UK & New York, NY: Routledge.

17. Dalmau, M. S. I., & Gotor, H. C. I. (2007). From "Sorry very much" to "I'm ever so sorry": Acquisitional patterns in L2 apologies by Catalan learners of English. 4, (2), 287-315. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1515/IP.2007.014

18. Deutschmann, Mats, 2006. Social variation in the use of apology formulae in the British National Corpus. In: Renouf, A., Kehoe A. (Ed.), The Changing Face of Corpus Linguistics, Amsterdam-New York, pp. 205-222.

19. Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (2013). Language and gender. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

20. El-Samaty, M. (2005). Helping foreign language learners become pragmatically competent. In Proceedings of the 10th TESOL Arabia Conference Vol. 9. 341-351.

21. Hudson, Richard, 1980. Sociolinguistics. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

22. Fraser, B. (1981). On apologizing. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), Conversational routine: Explorations in standardized communication situations and patterned speech. The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton Publishers.

23. Goffman, E. (1971). Relations in Public: The Microstudies of Public Order. New York, NY: University of California Press.

24. Holmes, J. (1990). Apologies in New Zealand English. Language in Society, 19(2), 155–199.

25. Holmes, J. (1989). Sex differences and apologies: One aspect of communicative competence. Applied linguistics, 10(2), 194-213.

26. House, J. (1988). Oh, excuse me please…”: Apologizing in a foreign language. English also Zweitsprache, 303-327.

27. Hymes, D. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In JB Pride and J. Holmes (eds.), Sociolinguistics. Selected Readings. Harmondsworth.

28. Hymes, D. (1964). Language in culture and society; a reader in linguistics and anthropology. New York, NY: Harper & Row Press.

29. Kachru, Y. (1998). Culture and speech acts: Evidence from Indian and Singaporean English. Studies in the Linguistic Sciences, 28(1), 79-98.

30. Kalisz, R. (1993). Different cultures, different languages, and different speech acts revisited. Papers and Studies in Contrastive Linguistics, 27, 107-118.

31. Kasanga, L. A., & Lwanga-Lumu, J. C. (2007). "Cross-cultural linguistic realization of politeness: A study of apologies in English and Setswana", 3, (1). 65-92.

32. Kasper, G. Blum-Kulka, S. (1993). Interlanguage pragmatics. New York, NY: Oxford university press.

33. Khan, S. Khan. T. A. Azeem, M. Khalid. (2022). Apology Behavior in Intercultural Communication: A Socio-Pragmatic Perceptions of Pakistani Undergraduate Students. 6, (11), 3513-3526.

34. Lee, B. D. (2008). A Pragmatic Phenomenalist Account of Knowledge. Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review / Revue Canadienne De Philosophie, 47(3-4), 565–582.

35. Levinson, S. C. (1983). Pragmatics. Cambridge, United Kingdom, UK: Cambridge University Press.

36. Meier, A. J. (2010). Culture and its effect on speech act performance. Speech act performance: Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues, 75-90.

37. O'Keeffe, A., Clancy, B., & Adolphs, S. (2011). Introducing Pragmatics in Use. London: Routledge.

38. Oishi, E. (2006). Austin's speech act theory and the speech situation. situation. EserciziFilosofici, 1 (2006), 1-14.

39. Olshtain, E. (1991). Apologies across languages. Papers in Applied Linguistics, 20-30.

40. Olshtain, E., & Cohen, D. (1983). Apology: a speech act set. In Wolfson, N. & Judd, E. (Eds.), Sociolinguistics and language acquisition. Rowley: Newbury House.

41. Rintell, E. (1981). "Sociolinguistic variation and pragmatic ability: a look at learners". 27. (1) I-34

42. Salehi, R. (2014). A comparative analysis of apology strategy: Iranian EFL learners and native English speakers. Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 98, 1658-1665. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.03.590

43. Searle, J. (1975). A taxonomy of illocutionary acts. In: Searle, J. R. (Ed.), Experience and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

44. Searle, J. (1965). What is a Speech Act? In S. Davis (Ed.), Pragmatics. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

45. Selinker, L. (2014). Interlanguage 40 years on. Three themes from here. In Z. Han and E. Tarone. Interlanguage forty years later. Language Learning & Language Teaching, 39 (221-246) Amsterdam: John Benjamins

46. Selinker, L. (1972). Interlanguage. International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 10(3), 219-231.

47. Schauer, G. A. (2009). Interlanguage Pragmatic Development: The Study Abroad Context. London: Continuum Publishers.

48. Shardakova, M. (2005). Intercultural pragmatics in the speech of American L2 learners of Russian: Apologies offered by Americans in Russian.

49. Shardakova, Maria. (2005). Intercultural pragmatics in the speech of American L2 learners of Russian: Apologies offered by Americans in Russian, 2, (4), 423-451.

50. Stalnaker, R. (1972). Pragmatics. D. Davidson and G. Harman, Semantics of Natural Language(2nd ed). United States of America, USA: Reidel Publishing Company

51. Tamimi Sa'd, S. H., & Mohammadi, M. (2014). A cross-sectional study of Iranian EFL learners' polite and impolite apologies. Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies, 10(1), 119-136.

52. Thijittang, S. (2010). A study of pragmatic strategies of English of Thai university students: apology speech acts. University Of Tasmania. Thesis. https://doi.org/10.25959/23210264.v1.

53. Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure. Applied linguistics, 4(2), 91-112

54. Yule, G. (2022). The Study of Language (8th ed). United Kingdom, UK: Cambridge University Press.