_____

CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATICS: A STUDY OF APOLOGY SPEECH ACTS IN URDU LANGUAGE OF PAKISTAN

M. A. Saif[1], M. Asif[2] and M.S. Dogar[3]

[1]Govt. Sadiq College of Commerce, Bahawalpur, Pakistan
[2]Govt College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan
[3]Govt Postgraduate College, Sheikhupura, Pakistan
muzaffarsaif6019@gmail.com

_____

ABSTRACT

This study was carried out to identify, define and analyse the range of apology strategies used by the Urdu speakers of Pakistan. It is conducted in the background of Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Realization Patterns (CCSARP) research model of Blum-Kalka (1982). He used many western languages as a data for his research project and made a conclusion that apology speech acts were universal in character. The present study was designed to verify this claim by analyzing the apology techniques of Urdu speaking students at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. To extract the required data, a questionnaire called Data Collection Test (DCT) was used as the instrument of research. The study also aimed at revealing the degree of cultural refinement in the indigenous setting. This research effort is very important in the context of cross-cultural pragmatics. When the world is shrinking rapidly and the individuals belonging to different cultures are coming close to each other, a severe need is felt to have understanding of world cultures. This study is a spur to carry out further research that is helpful for understanding the pragmatic similarities and dissimilarities which exist among different cultures of the world.

_____

Introduction and Literature Review

Intercultural pragmatics emerged as a discipline after Second World War, when America launched a mega programme to rebuild Europe. Different people from different cultures came in contact with each other. A lot of difficulties were faced to understand the specificities of distant cultures. Hall, an American scholar, came forward to address the problem. With the help of his abilities, skills and practices, he made very serious efforts to promote the idea and concept of intercultural communication and cross-cultural pragmatics. But it is only in the 1980s that the researchers, after listening for a long time to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) that speech acts are universal in nature and Green's (1975) conflicting claim that speech acts are not universal in spirit, began to pay attention to the various assumptions and concepts of intercultural pragmatics. The real focus upon speech acts began with Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Realization Patterns (CCSARP) by Blum-Kalka (1982). He, along with his colleagues, took data of eight western languages for their project.

Their research findings concluded that in spite of belonging to different cultural backgrounds, the respondents made use of the similar apology speech acts. One of the recommendations of this study is a call for immediate research on speech acts on non-European languages. Following Blum-Kalka, different researches were conducted to verify CCSARP's claim that speech acts were universal in nature. Bergman and Kasper (1993) conducted research on Thai and American English. The purpose of this study was to investigate the ways in which contextual factors determine the selection of the patterns of speech acts. For this purpose they made use of Dialogue Construction (DC) questionnaire. The results showed that to express an explicit apology and to take on the responsibility of the offence were the main apology strategies used but to make an offer to repair/redress the loss was the minimum used speech act.

With the rapid globalization of the world, the occasions and opportunities for intercultural communication and contacts received momentum. Over the last thirty years, various studies and

projects were conducted on intercultural or pragmatic competence. Consequent to this phenomenon, the importance of studies on cross-cultural pragmatics increased a lot. These researches and studies are motivated by a purpose to analyse and point out the pragmatic rules that regulate the use of languages in different cultures. Their findings may be very useful to facilitate communication and interaction between individuals of different languages. The compelling importance of this phenomenon provided an inspiration to the present researcher to devise a research on apology speech acts in Urdu language in Pakistan.

Research Questions of the Study

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1) What are the apology strategies used in Urdu language in Pakistan?

2) Which of the apology strategies are dominant in Urdu in Pakistan?

3) What are the cultural standards/levels that these apology strategies refer to?

Definition of Apology

An apology is a social activity performed via language. This typical speech act is supposed to be realised through the communicative force of an utterance commonly known as illocutionary act and the suitable performative verb. The clever choice of a performative verb is conceived, in fact, to produce the desired perlocutionary effect upon the offended. This socially polite, diplomatically shrewd and culturally civilized verbal behaviour keeps many aspects. First, in its character, an apology act is a repair work. The addressor employs apologising language, as a redress move, for the harm that he imparted to the public face of the addressee. The objective that works behind this speech act is to decrease the addressee's feelings of being offended. Second, the remedial act for an offence is a negative politeness strategy because apology which tries to restore the offended addressee's public self-image is certainly a face threatening act to the maker of apology (Brown & Levinson, 1978. p 58). Third, Leech (1983) holds

that the face threatening acts always prove a bottleneck for smooth sailing of linguistic interactions and social processes of humans. Fourthly, apologies have to be a serious linguistics activity. The offender feels it obligatory to show his honest emotions of regret in a proper way for the offence he committed. Fifthly, the apology act operates, as Hudson (1980) holds, along the linguistic parameters that have become settled practices in a society.

Methodology

Approaches to Apology Strategies

There is a wide range of approaches to apology strategies. Some approaches are simple and others are complex; sometimes these models overlap each other. Nine apology strategies are included in the list that Fraser (1981) prepared. In this detailed study, sometimes the apology acts overlap each other. The list that Olshatain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kalka (1984) provide us consists of five apology strategies. This model of Blum- Kalka and Olshatain is the most popular in the field of apology strategies. The present researcher is also to use it for this research.

Participants

Fifteen Urdu speaking Pakistani male students, between twenty and twenty four years in age, from different disciplines of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur were included for the sake of data gathering process through Discourse Completion Test (DCT) which is an adapted version of DCT used in CCSARP project(Blum-Kalka, 1982). To make the findings and results of this research study more valid and more precise, the concept of triangulation was adopted. For this purpose along with open questionnaire commonly called DCT (Discourse Completion Test), the semi-structured interview was also included in this research. In this semi-structured interview, four Urdu speaking Pakistani male students from different disciplines The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, between twenty and twenty four years in age, were included.

Situations

Six situations are included in the Discourse Completion Test; these are common social occurrences in the daily interactions of the students of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. These situations were chosen for their being significant in different aspects. First, each situation consists of the offence committed and the addressee's social dominance and social distance. This aspect of the situations is important because social distance and social dominance of the addressee certainly influences the apologetic behaviour of the speaker. Second, two types of power relationships: student- student (equal) and student-professor (unequal) are also included in the questionnaire because this aspect is also very important to influence the verbal behaviour of the offender in his apology act. Third, two types of social distance: familiar (close friends are with – D) and less familiar (strangers are with+ D) are kept in mind while preparing the questionnaire as the linguistic behaviour of apology is supposed to be different in familiar and less familiar context.

The situations are basically relevant to the students at the university. Slight modifications were made in the Blum- Kalka model so that it might be made relevant to the culturally and linguistically different atmosphere that exists at The Islamia University of Bahawalpur.Firsttwo questions where the hearer is with dominant position are: Professor-student (late submission of assignment) and the university authority- student (late submission of hostel accommodation form). The text of these questions reads thus: "You were required to submit an assignment to your teacher at a fixed time but due to your sudden illness you could not do so. What would you say to your teacher now?" and "You were expected to fill up and submit the hostel accommodation form in the office of the Provost of your university at a given time but you got late. What would you say while returning the filled up form to the relevant staff? ". These situations were chosen to test respondents' reactions to time offence in unequal power relation in Pakistani culture. Thirdand fourth questions "While taking tea at your university cafeteria, you

accidentally spill your cup on the student sitting next to you at the table. What would you say?" and "The university bus is crowded and you are standing in it. Suddenly, the driver applies brakes to make you lose your balance and you step over a student next to you. What would say to the student?" are designed to test the apology strategies used by astudent to a stranger student. Here though no power relation exists but there is distance (+ D) between the interlocutors. Fifth and sixthquestions take into account the intimate relations between student friend-student friend with no distance (-D). The text of the fifth and sixth questions runs thus "You have been supposed to meet your close friend at the university cafeteria for a cup of tea and some academic discussion and you get there an hour late and find your friend still waiting. What would you say to your friend as you see him?" and "You have borrowed your friend's notes and because of the rain yesterday, some of the notes have been damaged. What would you say, when will you return the notes".

Apologies Used in the Study

According to CCSARP model, the act of apology may be realized in any of the five types:

(The apology text is given in the Urdu version also.)

(i) Use of IFID e.g. I am sorry. *Muazratchahtahoun.*

As an expression of regret, this apology aims at seeking forgiveness. The Urdu speaking community in Pakistan makes a frequent use of this form of apology in their daily life. Its realization is found in the most ritualized expression; it shows, on the part of the speaker, the adequate seriousness and sufficient honesty of purpose. This illocutionary act registers a strong threat to the public face of the addressee.

(ii) An acknowledgement of responsibility e.g. Mine was at fault. *Qasoormairatha.*

This apology is a proof of the honest and open admission of the offence that has been performed

by the offender. It also admits, on the part of the speaker, the damage imparted to the addressee. To restore the public self-image of the offended addressee, this is perhaps the strongest apology. This strategy poses threat to the face of the speaker and at the same time adequately tries to do face saving for the offended.

(iii) An explanation or account of the situation e.g. I am sorry, the university bus got punctured.

Afsos hay, university ki bus puncture ho gait thi.

This strategy presents the offender as a character that humbly explains the cause of his violation of the face want of the offended. This is an appropriate way to decrease the bitterness level of the addressee.

(iv) An offer of repair e.g.I am ready to pay for the lost encyclopedia

Maingum gaeencyclopediakiqeematdainainkotayyarhoun.

This strategy makes the offender go with an offer of a repair to the damage that his offence caused to the addressee's public self-image. This offer is usually put forward in an explicit manner.

(v) A promise of forbearance e.g. It would not be repeated. *Aaindaaisanaheenhoga.*

In this strategy, the offender is sufficiently conscious of the unpleasant effects of his offence. That is why he makes a promise not to repeat his present offence in future. It is not possible that the speaker is able to opt for this strategy in all the situations he faces. As far as its positioning is concerned, this is perhaps the last possible verbal effort on the part of the offender/speaker for restoring the public self-image of the addressee.

Data Analysis

The analysis in this section is carried out with the assumption that each situation in the DCT closely relates to the real situation in life. Table 01 displays the number of valid responses for each situation. Anyhow, it is necessary to point out that invalid responses procured have been omitted from the analysis. These invalid responses were either due to situations misunderstood by the

respondents or those answers which could not be counted as under some strategy like 'it depends' or '*leave yar*' etc. The remaining responses were found valid where the respondents understood the situations and gave logical responses. Hence, the table can be consulted for the valid responses against each situation. Twenty two students were given the DCT and only twenty returned the DCT. From among the twenty to be considered certain responses as stated above were excluded from consideration. Hence, the total corpus obtained consists of 113 valid responses as shown in the table. Each of the valid response is analyzed to identify the type of strategy used. The main aim is to find the frequency of each strategy in each situation.

Table: 01 Statistics of Valid responses

situation	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Valid responses	20	19	20	18	18	18

Data were collected and categorized on the basis of various strategies according to the illocutionary force of the expression. These five strategies have been taken from the research project conducted by Blum-Kulka (1984) in CCSARP. They consist of illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), explanation, taking responsibility, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance.

IFIDs

IFID is the explicit form of apologizing that means 'sorry or to forgive me'. The words 'mazaratchatahoon' or 'muafkejeaga' are substitutes for IFIDs in Urdu. Table 02 gives us the statistical configuration of the IFIDs in all six situations with frequency ranging from 05% to 90 %. A high frequency of 90% and 72.2 % is noted in S3 (tea spilling in cafeteria) and S4 (overstepping in university bus) where a distant relation with no power relation is noted. The least number of frequency is noted in S1 (late submission of assignment) which is 5% and in S2 (late submission of hostel form) which is 10.5 %. Here we note distance and power relations

_____

between the speaker and the listener. This can be explained by the assertion that a serious offence where the power relation and distance exist cannot be compensated by IFIDs. It can cover relatively small offences where no power relations occur. Anyhow second highest frequency IFIDs is noted in close relation of the friends where no power relation exists S5=33.3 % S6=27.7 %).

IFIDs: Table: 02

situation	S1 F %	S2 F %	S3 F %	S4 F %	S5 F %	S6 F %
IFIDs	01 05%	02 10.5%	18 90%	13 72.2%	06 33.3%	05 27.7%

Explanations

Explanation gives an account of the cause of the offence. The speaker explains the damage that happened due to him. Highest frequency of this strategy occurs in S1 (late submission of assignment) which is 95 % and S2 (late form submission) that is 84.2 % where power relation along with distance between the speaker and hearer exist. This high frequency is showing the same trend as has been exhibited by IFIDs in S4 and S5 in last table 02.So unequal power relation situations with distance demand explanation from the view of respondents when a severe offence is committed. Another aspect of this trend shows that respondents find themselves obliged to explain themselves in such situations. We note lowest frequency of the strategy in S3 (spilling of tea) as 5 % and in S4 (overstepping in a crowded university bus) as 27.7 %. Hence, distant relations with no unequal power relations do not make the respondent oblige to explain them for mistake. It is discovered that power relations contribute to the maximum occurrence of this strategy. Situations in equal power relations with no distance also exhibits some medium range of frequency i.e. S5 (getting late to the promised place) as 66.6 % and S6 (damaging friend's notes0 as 55.5 %). Look at table three.

Table: 03: Explanation

Situation	S1 F %	S2 F %	S3 F %	S4 F %	S5 F %	S6 F %
Explanation	19 95%	16 84.2 %	01 05.0 %	05 27.7 %	12 66.6 %	10 55.5 %

Taking Responsibility

This term means to accept and admit the responsibility of the offence committed by a person. In some studies, the definition includes expressions of an offer of repair or of denial of the offence (Blum-Kulka 1984). Anyhow here this strategy is taken as taking responsibility explicitly for the offence such as accepting the blame and expressing self-deficiency. Taking responsibility is the most explicit and the most direct and strongest apology strategy. Taking a view of the table, it is very surprising that in none of the situations except in S3 the respondents accept responsibility for the offence committed. It has very strong cultural connotation in Pakistani cultural context. It provides for a sharp clue of the cultural orientation of this apology strategy. The frequency of responsibility in Situation three (spilling of tea in cafeteria) registers a marked low frequency which is 5.0 %. The hearer and speaker have distant relation in S3 though without power relation. We note a zero frequency of this strategy in S1, S2, S4, S5 and S6.

Table 04 Responsibility:

situation	S1 F %	S2 F %	S3 F %	S4 F %	S5 F %	S6 F %
Responsibility	- --	-- --	01 5.0%	- --	-- --	-- --

Offer of Repair

It is the compensation offered for the damage caused by the offence doer. Usually this offer is expressed explicitly for the loss caused. The given table shows that none of the respondents opts for

_____

repair strategy except in situation S6 (returning damaged notes to friend) where the offence involves loss of material thing. The offence seems a bit severe in the context of student but the frequency is low. This low frequency may be attributed to the closer distance and absence of unequal power relation. S5 (late arrival against the promise) is based on the same variables as S6 but here the speaker does not opt for the repair. It may be attributed to the cultural implications in Pakistani context. Late arrival may be considered as minor offence in Pakistani context which does not oblige the speakers for repair strategies. S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5 register zero frequency of repair.

Table: 05 Offer of repair

situation	S1 F %	S2 F %	S3 F %	S4 F %	S5 F %	S6 F %
repair	- --	- --	- --	- --	- --	03 16.6 %

Promise of Forbearance

In this study, the promise of forbearance is taken as the pledge, not to repeat the offence in future. Hence, promise for forbearance reflects the confession of being responsible and not repeating the same offence in future. It is used for saving the positive face of the speaker. We note a very low frequency of this strategy opted by the respondents which is 5.2 % in situation two (late submission of the form) while the rest of the situations (S1, S3, S4, S5, S6) display a zero frequency. This fact demonstrates the cultural orientation which can be discerned in the lack of tendency of the respondents to promise not to repeat the same offence. Other interpretation might be the understanding of given offences as less severe. Anyhow, the table shows a trend of zero frequency in all situations except in S2 (late submission of the form in provost office) where speaker is in unequal power relation between the interlocutors.

Table: 06 Promise of forbearance

situation	S1 F %	S2 F %	S3 F %	S4 F %	S5 F %	S6 F %
Forbearance	- --	01 5.2%	- --	- --	-- --	-- ---

The Overall Use of Strategies

The two strategies used most frequently to realize apology are giving explanation (55.67 %) and IFIDs (39.78%), respectively. Offer of repair holds third place in order of frequency which is just 2.76 %. Taking on responsibility and promise of forbearance are far less frequent to touch hardly 0.83 % and 0.86 respectively of overall apology strategies. Observing the overall picture from the table, the performance of the informants provides evidence for the universality of speech acts of apology. But the fact that needs attention is that the number of frequency of each strategy in Pakistani context gives a contrasting trend to that presented by the research results in West. Hence, in our case the pattern of the behaviour of the overall strategies gives an ample evidence for culturally determined character of the strategies.

Table: 07Total frequencies and mean of percentage of the use of each apology strategy:

Strategy	FIDs	Explanation	Taking Responsibility	Offer of repair	Promise of forbearance
Frequency	45	63	01	03	01
Mean %	39.78	55.67	0.83	2.76	0.86

_____

Data Analysis of Interview

To make this study more valid, the present researcher took help from the concept of triangulation: besides DCT a semi-structured interview was also conducted. Four Urdu speaking Pakistani male students, between twenty and twenty four year in age, from different disciplines of The Islamia University of Bahawalpur took part. The said interviewees were interviewed separately, at different occasions at the hostel as well as at the campus. The interview was a type of discussion in which the present researcher quite cleverly stole some occasions to get their verbal reactions with references to all the five strategies of speech act of apology. The participants quite honestly put themselves in various situations, cleverly devised by the interviewer, regarding apology act and they responded naturally. The researcher in his supplement questions also asked the respondents why they had opted for a particular choice from a range of choices. The subjects told the reason behind their specific linguistic reactions against the specific situation. Their opinions were noted in the form of notes. The data gathered through interview affirms the findings, discussed above, that followed the data analysis of DCT. Their opinions were mostly in favor of the IFIDs and explanation. Their explanation contributed to the reason that their preferences for the given strategies were due to avoidance of face damaging strategies. Their responses showed that their preferences were motivated by evasion of self-blame which is cultural oriented. Hence other strategies of forbearance, offer of repair and taking of responsibility got negligible preference.

Findings and Conclusion

Of course, the present study is conducted within The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan. That is why its findings cannot be generalized to all the Urdu speakers in Pakistan. However, it provides an indicator on the general stance held by the people about the politeness pragmatics in the community. These results have significance in another way. This research was carried in a cultural context that is widely different from that of the west. Hence, this study carries important implications in terms of intercultural communication. It is evident from the results that the apology strategies used in Urdu language in Pakistan are IFIDs, giving explanation, taking responsibility, offer of repair and promise of forbearance. The most frequently used apology strategies are explanation and IFIDs with an average percentage of 55.67 and 39.78, respectively. Other strategies of offer, of repair, taking responsibility and promise of forbearance are used less frequently with an average percentage of 2.76, 0.83 and 0.86, respectively. This marked difference in the frequency can be explained by the claim that the societal members tend towards either positive or negative politeness (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001). Hence, the pattern of the strategies' result suggests that the respondents' orientation is towards positive politeness. The respondents in this study attempt not to damage their positive face by avoiding the face damaging strategies like taking responsibility, promise of forbearance and offer of repair. This trend of the strategy explains the culturally determined value of these strategies. The respondents have relied on strategies which are less dangerous for their face like IFIDS and giving explanation. IFIDs are considered ritualistic while explanations carry no direct signal of apology and may, therefore, be used by the respondent as an excuse and avoidance of self-blame (Goffman, 1971). This trait is highly cultural specific in the context of Pakistan. It is a common observation that no one admits and owns one's mistake so easily in this society. The highest frequency of IFIDs in S3 and S4 situations testifies that the informants used this ritualistic strategy when there were in equal power relations with distance. While explanatory strategies were used either in close equal social relations (S5, S6) or unequal relation with distance (S1, S2). S1 and S2 registered the highest frequency of explanation in unequal and distant relation.

While comparing the results of this study with those of Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) project, a sharp contrast (at least to the extent of one apology strategy) in terms of preference for the apology strategies has

been noted. That study showed preference for the strategy of taking responsibility, while this study shows this strategy at the lowest rank. Anyhow, the common ground is the preference for IFIDs in both cases. It is to be kept in mind that this study was carried out on a small sample of students in the environment of university. An enormous need is felt to conduct a mega study which incorporates many respondents and various social groups. At the end, it may be suggested that further research is imperative to obtain a comprehensive picture of the speech act of apology in the Pakistani context.

References

Austin, J. (1962). *How to do things with words.* Howard: Howard University Press.

Bergman, M., Kasper, G. (1993). Perception and performance in native and nonnative

apology. In G. Kasper, S. Blum-Kulka (Eds.) *Interlanguage Change.*82-117. NY: Oxford University Press.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1982). Learning how to say what you mean in a second language: A study of the speech act performance of learners of Hebrew as a second language. *Applied Linguistics*. 3. 29- 49.

Blum-Kulka, S., Olshtan, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP).*Applied Linguistics* 5 (3), 196–213.

Fraser, B. (1981). Conversational mitigation. *Journal of Linguistics* 4, 341-350.

Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in public*.New York: Harper Colophon Books.

Green, G. (1975). How to get people to do things with words. In Peter Cole and Jerry L.Morgan (eds.), *Syntax and Semantics* 3. New York : Academic Press.

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. New York: Longman.

Lakoff, G. (1973). Some thoughts on transderivational constraints, in B. B. Kachru et al.(eds.), *Issues in Linguistics*, 442–452, University of Illinois Press.

Hudson, R. (1980). *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Levinson, S. (1997). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lorenzo-Dus, N. (2001). Compliment responses among British and Spanish university students: A contrastive study. *Journal of Pragmatics 33*, 107-127.

Olshtain, E., Cohen, A. (1983). Apology: speechact set. In Wolfson, N, Judd, E (Eds.),*Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*. Rowley: Newbury House.

Searle, J. (1969). *Speech acts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Richard, H. (1980). *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press.