

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Every year, thousands of international students enrol in Malaysian universities. These students come from various countries and represent a diverse range of cultures and languages. In Malaysia, to communicate with their peers, their professors, their other international or Malaysian friends, as well as with Malaysians off campus, they need to use the English language. The University of Malaya (UM hereafter), as the leading higher educational institute in Malaysia, attracts hundreds of international students every year. The medium of instruction in UM for postgraduate studies is English. Apart from academic use, students and professors highly rely on the English language in their everyday conversations with international students. All international students in UM are required to have at least an intermediate command of English to be able to enrol in their postgraduate programmes. However, due to a large variety of cultural backgrounds evident in the international students, even using one common language that is English, may fail to overcome all communication barriers. Undoubtedly, international students experience instances of miscommunication when interacting with their peers, professors, or local non-academic Malaysians. These problems in communication may be caused by either linguistic differences, such as different levels of English language proficiency, or some less evident differences rooted in cultural values, which are often unconsciously embedded in people's behaviour. The main focus of this study, which is of the most important and most frequent speech acts used in multicultural settings, is the speech act of apology. People commit big or small misconducts on a daily basis. According to numerous studies done, which will be reported in the following sections,

nationality, mother tongue, and common cultural values influence the kind and variety of apology strategies used. Being unaware of these cultural and linguistic influences might cause miscommunication or misinterpretation in an international setting. As mentioned earlier, the University of Malaya, hosts thousands of international students from more than 60 different countries. To have a better picture of the internationality of UM, some figures will be presented in the following section.

### 1.2 IRANIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

According to Shoja (2011), in the years 2007-2009, “2473 postgraduate international candidates enrolled in UM”. Iranian students have been the largest group of international candidates to enrol in UM every year. This number for the years 2007-2009 is 695, which is more than 28% of the total number of postgraduate international candidates. Shoja (2011, p. 5) reports that “the second largest group is Indonesians (N=296) which includes almost 12% of the international students. Candidates from Iraq, Sudan, China, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Yemen stand next”. Figure 1.1 shows the number of “postgraduate international students enrolled in UM from 2007 to 2009 from the countries with more than 20 candidates” (Shoja 2011, P. 5).

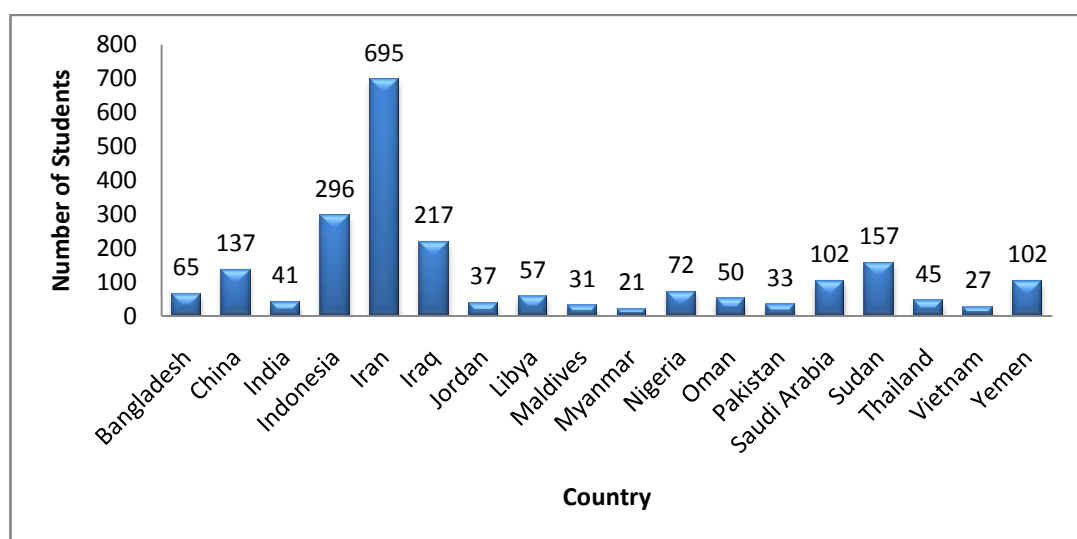


Figure 1.1 Postgraduate International Students Enrolled in 2007-2009 (Shoja 2011, p.5)

According to the above-mentioned figures, Iranian students account for almost one-third of the whole population of Postgraduate international students in UM. Looking back at the importance of inter-cultural awareness in achieving effective communication in a multi-cultural setting such as UM, one can argue that being aware of the Iranian culture and the ways this culture affects the way Iranian students interact with each other and with their Malaysian and international peers is of utmost importance.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Language is a system of signals that operates in a speech society and culture. It is acquired in the same way by all people for the purpose of communication. Pragmatics includes linguistic or structural aspects of language use (pragmalinguistics) and social features of it (sociopragmalinguistics). Among the other aspects of language, the speech acts are really culture specific and are used for the purpose of request, apology, compliment, politeness, thanking and others. Austin (1962), one of the first two philosophers in the speech act field, believed that people perform actions when they use utterances. The speech act of apology as a significant object of this study plays a main role in usual interactions, because people commit an offence more easily than ask for forgiveness. Leech (1983) who defined speech acts according to the verbs that express them, stated that apologies are used to re-establish the balance between the wrongdoer and the victim.

The speech act of apology is perceived as a complex interaction by language learners who want to re-establish the broken balance between themselves and the interlocutors after an imposed violation. They have to realize the extent of their fault in violating social norms and provide enough support to their interlocutors. Teaching the

grammar and vocabulary of a language is insufficient and teachers of a second or a foreign language should help the learners be aware of differences existing not only in their native language but also in their target language. The reason is that misunderstandings resulting from assumptions and beliefs are more serious than linguistic incompetence in intercultural communications. In addition, negative transfer of some socio-cultural norms of L1 into English may cause some misapprehensions and failure in communication. According to Olshtain and Cohen (1981) formal instructions on the use of speech acts can accelerate the process of learning the target language.

Bergman and Kasper (1993) believed that foreign language learners make use of positive transfer from their L1 into The foreign language, but it is not always possible because of pragmatic variations across cultures and languages. Many studies have shown that even proficient learners cannot express or understand the intended illocutionary force. Also, various factors such as age, sex, status of the interlocutors, and some situational constrains influence production and comprehension of learners.

The discussions in the previous section, highlights the significant number of Iranian students joining the postgraduate programmes in UM. All these Iranian students come from quite the same cultural backgrounds. The specific cultural characteristics of Iranians with relation to apology and politeness will be discussed in Chapter 2. Another aspect that almost all of these Iranian students have in common is that, if they have lived and been educated in Iran before coming to Malaysia, they have learned English as a foreign language. The English curriculum offered in Iranian schools is not communication-based. The methods of English teaching are widely grammar translation methods that contain extensive memorization, readings and translation activities. There is very little emphasis on spoken skills of English, and the assessment is largely based on written exams. According to Dahmardeh (2008) “the vast majority of language

exams and tests in Iran fail to assess real communicative language content, teaching communicative skills becomes or remains a neglected component in many foreign language classrooms”. Ghorbani (2009) asserts, “In Iran, the highly standardized national tests force both teachers and learners to focus only on structural or formal grammatical features of English because these are the ones needed to perform well in the exams”. He continues, “Teachers put much less emphasis, if any, on oral drills, pronunciation, listening and speaking abilities than on reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary” (Jahangard, 2007, as cited in Ghrbani, 2009). As a resolution to this lack of attention to spoken skills, attending English proficiency courses in private and semi-private language schools and colleges is very common in Iran. Most of the students who plan to pursue their higher education overseas take at least a few courses of English classes especially to improve their speaking and writing skills.

The University of Malaya requires international students to provide a certificate that shows at least an intermediate to upper-intermediate level of English language proficiency. To get a minimum score required by UM in the international English proficiency tests (IELTS or TOEFL), the candidates must practise and improve their spoken skills as well their reading, listening and writing skills. However, since the scope of these language tests is focused on academic language skills, the students taking and passing these scores even with high scores might not be very fluent in their everyday spoken and written communication. These Iranian students in Malaysia are communicating mainly in English with their peers, their professors, and with other Malaysians and non-Malaysians on and outside the university campus. Although politeness is a universal value, it is expressed in different ways across different nations. Expressions, idioms, or even body language signals that might be polite and acceptable in a given society, might be considered rude or insulting in another. For example,

calling one's university professor with their first name is not accepted in Iran, and it is not practised at all. Similarly, university lecturers are not supposed to use their students' first names when addressing them. However, in Malaysia, it is very common to call each other with first names in the university. This example, along with so many other, signify the value of inter-cultural understanding.

This brief background of the English learning process of Iranian students can be helpful in the understanding of the Iranian students' overall English proficiency. This discussion also brings us to the focus of the study which is the apology strategies of the Iranian postgraduate students in UM. In order to narrow down the scope of the study, the researcher has only focused on apology strategies since they are the most important and most frequently used speech acts.

Bataineh and Bataineh (2008) argued that "differences in apology strategies do not only occur in different cultures, they also occur between males and females of the same culture. This makes the speech act of apology problematic for ESL/ EFL students since the use of apology strategies in their culture might defer." Therefore, to investigate whether the apology strategies used is different among male and female participants, the data obtained from the two different groups of male and female respondents will be compared and analysed considering significant difference levels.

With an aim to create a better understanding of Iranian students' use of apology strategies, and with a hope to fill the gap in the literature related to Iranian students' use of apology strategies in English, this study was conducted in the University of Malaya.

Overall, this study scrutinizes Persian-speaking ESL University students' use of apology based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) framework, comprising non-apology strategies to realize variations that may be ascribed to the gender, mother tongue, and

culture. Almost all the researches reviewed have been conducted in the EFL context of Iran. However, the present study will look at apology and non-apology strategies of Iranian students in an ESL setting (Malaysia). ESL or English as a Second Language can be referred to the learning of English by someone after learning their first language or their mother tongue. ESL is often contrasted with EFL or English as a Foreign Language. EFL is referred to the English learnt in a “formal classroom setting with limited or no opportunity for use outside the classroom in country in which English does not play an important role in internal communication” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 180). Unlike in Iran, where English is not at all used in daily interaction, or in formal or official contexts, Iranian students who are living and studying in Malaysia are using and learning English as a second language, as English is widely spoken in Malaysia, and they use it to interact with their friends, university lecturers, and in everyday interactions with Malaysians or other foreigners in Malaysia. The researcher has found no studies discussing the use of apology and non-apology strategies by Persian postgraduate ESL students, therefore, this study aims to fill the existing gap and add data to the growing literature.

#### **1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

This study attempts to pursue the following objectives:

- a) To investigate various strategies that Iranian ESL students employ respectively to express their regret or entreatment for forgiveness, or for softening the relationship with the victim.
- b) To identify non-apology strategies that Iranian ESL students use most often; the current study also tries to discover the non-apology strategies employed by Iranian ESL students. The type of the non-apology strategy is a choice through

which the apologizer tries to evade or avoid necessity of apologizing to the victim. This manner can be different among males and females, which determine their conduct and apology behaviour.

c) To examine the extent to which Iranian respondents' use of apology strategies are related to gender; as stated earlier in this chapter, the apology strategies males and females use in case of necessity may be different according to the gender of the speaker. In accordance with the previous aim, this objective attempts to differentiate the apology strategies, if any, according to the gender of the apologizer.

d) To explore the apology strategies used by the participants that reflect the Iranian culture, and those that are influenced by the participants' mother tongue, Persian (Farsi).

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

With regard to the points mentioned in the previous section, in this dissertation the researcher attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the apology strategies used by Iranian ESL students?
2. What kinds of non-apology strategies do Iranian ESL students use most often?
3. To what extent are the Iranian respondents' strategy use related to gender?
4. What are the apology and non-apology strategies used by the Iranian ESL students that are influenced by Iranian culture and the Persian language?



## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In general, one of the outcomes of research in the area of pragmatics is that it helps identify culture and linguistic specific uses of speech acts used by speakers of a language. Furthermore, more extensive knowledge about this culture and language specific uses can help raise better awareness of the particular communication strategies that people from various cultures and languages use. This understanding and analysis of communication strategies, and in particular, apology strategies used can enable comparisons among different languages and cultures. The results may help Persian learners who need to know the comment forms of apology in Persian. Furthermore, the findings of resembling researches on other languages can be contrasted with the outcomes of this study to disclose similar and different realization of apologies across languages. So, it assists Persian learners to avoid transferring wrong norms to target language that may cause misapprehensions in their cross-cultural interactions.

The results of this research can be beneficial for different stakeholders in relation to this field, namely, the Iranian students pursuing their tertiary education in English and outside Iran, university lecturers and staff who interact with Iranian students speaking English as a second or foreign language, and English language teachers who have Iranian students, and any researcher who is interested in this area of research.

The findings of this study can help Iranian ESL students in their English learning process. Knowing the most common apology and non-apology strategies, especially the culture specific and gender specific strategies used by their peers can help them gain a better understanding of the use of those strategies, thus helping them to learn the

common English speech acts of apology, and avoiding the possible expressions and speech acts that might create confusion and misunderstanding in non-Iranian listeners.

Iranian students who are studying or planning to continue their tertiary studies outside Iran can similarly benefit from the results of this research. They can improve their communication with their non-Iranian peers and lecturers by knowing the most common apology speech acts in English. Besides, by identifying the apology strategies specific to Iranians, they can become aware of the differences between what speech acts and strategies Iranians use in particular, and be prepared to fix any possible miscommunication that might occur in their interactions with non-Iranians, maintaining friendly inter-personal relationships with their peers and their university professors.

On the other hand, English language teachers in Iran will also benefit from the findings, as they become aware of the common strengths and weaknesses in their students' use of apology strategies in English. Since L1 interference is a very common cause of errors in spoken language for ESL or EFL learners, these findings can help them introduce the possible areas of difficulty or the common errors Iranians have in their use of speech acts of apology when used in English. By explaining and pointing out these speech acts, they can provide a better informed and more instructional lessons for their learners. The same benefits can be there for English language teachers outside Iran, who have Iranian students. Being aware of culture and language specific apology strategies can help them understand the roots of their Iranian students' possible errors in their use of apology strategies in English.

Apart from Iranian English learners and English teachers, this study can help create a better understanding of Iranian students' culture and linguistic background, and the ways these backgrounds has shaped their use of apology strategies, for university

lecturers and staff in countries other than Iran. Besides, many misunderstandings can be caused by lack of gender differences when intercultural communication is concerned; thus, knowing how the use of apology or non-apology strategies might be different among Iranian male or female speakers will be useful for them to enhance their communication with the Iranian international students.

Finally, the findings of this study will add to the current knowledge of the Iranians' use of apology strategies in the literature related to this field. The outcomes of this study enable comparative studies between Iranian ESL learners and ESL learners from other nationalities. The methodology and instruments used in this research can also be used to conduct future studies with an aim to compare and contrast ESL learners from Iran or other countries.

## **1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATION**

The focus of this study was to identify apology and non-apology strategies of Iranian ESL students in the University of Malaya. Participants were selected from the Iranian students studying in master's and PhD programmes, a group of 40 Iranian postgraduate ESL students (20 males, 20 females), ranging between 24-35 years old, from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics and the faculty of Education at the University of Malaya. The respondents were homogeneous in their cultural background and academic/linguistic experience.

The respondents were given an open questionnaire with 10 fixed discourse situations which was a modified version of "Discourse Completion Test" used in CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka, 1982). It was prepared and used by Afghari (2007). Each question set a different situation in which the respondent would be the wrongdoer.

The respondents were asked to explain what they would say and do in those given situations.

Although this research adds more data to the growing literature, there are some limitations that should be taken into consideration. Gender and culture are the only possible variables investigated. However, some other factors like social distances and power will also be discussed in the data analysis and discussion where necessary.

Since there was no role-play, and the questions only concerned the wrong-doer, the victim's response to this apology is not considered.

With an aim to explore answers to the fourth research question, that is to identify possible influences of the respondents' mother tongue and culture on the language they use, the respondents were asked to write the answer to the questions in English. If the debate is to be moved forward, a better understanding of pragmatic transfer among Iranian students in the ESL classroom needs to be developed.

## **1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The following definitions are reported as cited by Afghari (2007).

**Pragmatics** is the use of language in various contexts by different people for many purposes. It is ranged from Linguistics characteristics (pragmalinguistics) to social aspects (Sociopragmatics).

**A speech act** is an utterance used in a particular context for the functions of stating, promising, apologizing, thanking, greeting, condemning, praising, threatening, requesting, and predicting.

**Apology** is a kind of speech act by which the wrongdoer endeavors to attain the victim's forgiveness.

**The offender** offends the victim and must apologize, and **the victim/hearer** is the person who is offended.

## **1.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter includes introduction, Iranian international students in the University of Malays, statement of the problem, aim of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and limitations, and definition of terms. In addition to this chapter, the study encompasses four other chapters. Chapter two is a review of the written works on the use of apology. Chapter three includes the methodology used in this study. Chapter four presents a statistical description of the findings and a profound analysis of results. Chapter five shows introduction, summary of the main findings, and the researcher's recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter discusses the literature related to the area of Pragmatics, Apology Strategies, and speech acts of apology, as well as the literature on the relationship between apology and culture. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of this study will be specified, and the definitions of key terms will be presented. In the end, the previous studies in the field conducted in Malaysia and other countries will be reviewed and discussed in relation with the present research.

Language is a system of signals that operates in a speech society and culture. It is acquired in the same way by all people for the purpose of communication. Pragmatics includes linguistic or structural aspects of language use (pragmalinguistics) and social features of it (sociopragmalinguistics). Among the other aspects of language, the speech acts are really culture specific and are used for the purpose of request, apology, complement, politeness, thanking and others. Austin (1962), one of the first two philosophers in the speech act field, believed that people perform actions when they use utterances. Apology plays a main role in usual interactions, because people commit an offence more easily than ask for forgiveness. Leech (1983) who defined speech acts according to the verbs that express them, stated that apologies are used to re-establish the balance between the wrongdoer and the victim. Cohen and Olshtain (1981) have classified the following apology strategies:

- IFID (An Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) such as *sorry*, *excuse me*, and *I apologize*.
- Taking on responsibility for the violation like *it was my fault*.
- An account such as *traffic was heavy*.
- An offer of repair, such as *I will fix it*.
- A promise of forbearance such as *I will not do it again*.

Brown and Levinson (1987) distinguished two types of face, namely “negative face” and “positive face” and argued that apologies are really face-threatening speech acts. By performing an apology speaker accepts that a violation has occurred, thus it threatens his/her face, if not it undermines the victim’s face. According to Owen (1983) apologies are classified by the type of utterance they integrate such as “apology,” “apologies,” “apologize,” “sorry,” and “I’m afraid” followed by a sentence. Stabb (1983) believed that apology menaces the speaker and the hearer’s face. Holmes (1990) believed that apologies have affective meaning and are politeness strategies to remedy an offence. According to the above discussion embracing Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) that stated more attention should be paid to non-western languages and cultures, the present study investigates native Persian-speaking ESL university students’ apology strategies based on Cohen and Olshtain’s (1981) framework, comprising non-apology strategies to find out variations that may be assign to gender and culture. Sometimes offenders refrain from apologizing like blaming the victim, offending the victim, considering offend as unimportant, and refrain from subject.

Although these strategies are not exactly within the area of apologizing, they are related to it in a negative way.

Pragmatics is usually ignored in the L2 instruction that traditionally gives importance to grammar. Recently this area has been identified in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), and understanding of its aspects has been increased. According to Canal and Swain (1980), L2 teaching should help the learners use language in social contexts and give them enough knowledge of combining utterances and communicative functions. According to Bachman (1990) argued that “Learners should know grammar, text organization rules, and the pragmatic aspects of the target language to acquire rules for proper application of linguistic forms.” Nevertheless, studies in inter language pragmatics show that L2 learners may not use pragmatic rules of the target language because of the conflict between their self-image and the way they attempt to express themselves. For instance, Siegal (1995) argued that American female learners of Japanese avoided acquiring self-depreciation and respect towards powerful male figures. Similarly, Dufon (1999) asserted that L2 learners of Indonesian did not acquire politeness markers because they were unwilling to admit social distance between themselves and native speakers, so they used incorrect forms to present an equal relationship with their interlocutors. Based on Olshtain and Cohen (1981), formal instructions on the use of speech acts can accelerate the process of learning the target language. For this reason, this study focuses on the speech act of apology as it is perceived as a complex interaction by language learners who want to re-establish the broken balance between themselves and the interlocutors after an imposed violation. They have to realize the extent of their fault in violating social norms and provide enough support to their interlocutors.

In the following sections, the researcher conducts a review of related literature on inter language pragmatics and apologies which is divided into subsections on research on pragmatics, speech acts, politeness, politeness in Persian, apologies,



apology and non-apology strategies, apology and culture, apology and gender, apology in Persian, and forgiveness to provide more insights.

## **2.2 INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

A language that is used by second or foreign language learners in learning process is called inter language (Richards et.al, 1985). Kasper (1989) argued that “Inter language pragmatics is the study of non-native speakers’ use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language.” Cross-cultural pragmatics is the basis of inter language pragmatics that emphasizes illocutionary and politeness dimensions of speech act performance (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). After 1970s, inter language studies accentuated the communicative dynamics of L2 performance more than grammatical development of L2 learners. Recently, literature includes a lot of studies on inter language pragmatics that implies learners’ ability in acquiring L2 pragmatics (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper & Rose, 1999; Rose, 2000). Nearly all participants of these studies are English foreign language students who are rarely exposed to target language input and have less opportunity for using L2 outside the classroom.

Thomas (1983) classified pragmatics into two main groups like *pragmalinguistics* and *sociopragmatics*. Pragmalinguistics is related to grammar and encompasses pragmatic strategies like directness and indirectness, routines, and many linguistic forms that reinforce communicative acts. However, sociopragmatics is akin to appropriate social behaviour.

Trosborg (1987) argued that discourse completion tests, which are used by many researchers of inter language pragmatics, do not give enough information about learners’ abilities to communicate in real situations and their skills in achieving intended

communicative goals. The interactional process has been ignored by these studies and their results merely reveal the learners' competence in controlled situations. Only few researchers like Rintell-Mitchell (1989) and Edmondson et al., (1984) made use of role-plays that counts on spoken language. Investigating learners' performance in real situations sheds light on their problems in using speech acts in operating circumstances and helps to develop communication tasks.

Bergman and Kasper (1993) believed that foreign language learners make use of positive transfer from their L1 into The foreign language, but it is not always possible because of pragmatic variations across cultures and languages. Many studies have shown that even proficient learners cannot express or understand the intended illocutionary force. Also, various factors such as age, sex, status of the interlocutors, and some situational constrains influence production and comprehension of learners.

Blum-Kulka (1991) investigated American immigrants to Israel who were proficient in two languages. The results revealed that they used an intercultural style of speaking that was both similar and different from the common styles in those languages. Furthermore, this researcher asserted that adult learners receive a lot of L2 pragmatic knowledge. Some aspects of this pragmatic knowledge are universal but the others are transferred from L1. Conversational organization through turn taking and sequencing of contributions are considered as universal aspects of discourse and pragmatics.

Koike (1996) who investigated the perception of Spanish suggestions by English-speaking learners of Spanish showed that proficiency affects the recognition of the intent of speech acts, but Takahashi (1996) found no relationship between proficiency and perception of L1 transferability to L2 pragmatics.

### 2.3 POLITENESS IN IRANIAN CULTURE AND PERSIAN LANGUAGE

The term “politeness” indicates good manners and correct social behaviour (Loga Mahesan Baskaran, 2005). We have to learn it because we are not born with it (Richard J. Watts, 2003). Baskaran (2005) argued that “Various factors influence the degree of politeness like social distance, degree of formality, the social power, and the cultural context.” Lakoff (1973) defined three major rules of politeness such as “do not impose”, “give options”, “make the hearer feel good”, and “be friendly”. He believed that people perceive politeness differently due to various priorities that they give to specific rules.

Based on politeness theory that defines face threatening speech acts according to some parameters like the *speaker*, the *hearer*, and the *type of face*, positive face is a tendency to be liked by others and is kept safe with a friendly behaviour (positive politeness), while a negative face is protected by a manner that avoids impeding (negative politeness). Therefore, people use positive and negative politeness strategies to decrease the face-threat. So far, numerous researchers have discussed this theory in their intercultural studies (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; watts, 2003).

Zahra Akbari (2002) compared English politeness strategies with those used by Persian mono-lingual speakers based on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) frame work. She also examined the use of swear words in her study.

The results demonstrated that Persian speakers used the same politeness strategies that were acclaimed by Brown and Levinson (1987). The gender factor strongly affected the use of some strategies by males and females. Swear words were mainly used by females unlike their male counterparts. An expression like “don’t boast

so much” was used by both males and females, because of exposure to some television programs. Educated people used less religious swear words, whereas some expressions like “if God wishes”, “God preserve you from the evil eye”, and “congratulations” were mostly used by aged or uneducated people as positive politeness strategies. The socio-economic status did not influence the use of strategies by males and females except in some cases. In her opinion, increasing the number of participants and observing them in various situations can bring about more authentic results.

Ahangar and Ali Akbari (2002) investigated request strategies used by native speakers of Persian and the effect of the power of the hearer and the gender of the speaker on his/her use of politeness strategies. Ninety male and female university students joined this study. The outcomes represented that negative politeness strategies were used by both Persian and English native speakers. The speaker’s use of politeness strategies was influenced by the power of the hearer and the gender of the speaker did not affect his/her choice of politeness strategies.

Felix-Brasdefer (2003) examined some factors like gender, education, age, and Spanish dialect were taken into consideration in this study. Fifteen males and females completed five open role-plays and the data was analyzed based on Garcia’s (1992, 1999) model of invitation-response and insistence-response. The findings revealed that direct strategies are generally used by Americans speaking English. In contrast, non-native speakers use more negative and positive transfer in their inter language behaviour.

Eslami-Rasekh (2004) studied face-saving strategies used by Persian and American English speakers in response to complaints. The outcomes revealed that both groups use the speech acts of apology in their responses. Persian speakers react to

contextual factors and change their face-keeping strategies appropriately. In contrast, one intensified apology strategy is used by English speakers in accordance with contextual factors. Furthermore, some crucial differences appeared through the analysis of IFID and supportive strategies.

Eslami (2005) looked at the structure of invitation in Persian and English. He used participant observation and semi-structured interviews for collecting data. The findings indicated that Persians aimed to achieve ritual politeness in issuing and replying to invitations and a genuine invitation in English was perceived as an ambiguous invitation in Persian.

*Ta'arof*, which is an intricate expression of five concepts, forms the Iranian system of politeness. These five notions, which imply courtesy, respect, self-restraint, modesty, and hospitality, have been pointed out by many researchers (Hodge, 1957; Beeman, 1976, 1986; Assadi, 1980; Rafiee, 1992; Koutelaki, 1997; Sahragard, 2000). Moosavi (1986) defined *ta'arof* as ritualized linguistic forms that appear in the interaction of Iranians. Sahragard (2000) asserted that courtesy (*Adab*) is a personal feature that is obtained based on good upbringing, but respect (*Ehteram*) is a sense of ethical obligation and a subjective matter. Iranians usually greet each other in a very friendly manner and prolong it to show respect. Children become familiar with the notion of respect at home and expand it to their friends and relatives. Self-restraint or being ashamed is another constituent notion of *ta'arof* in the Persian culture. According to Dekhoda (1994) *sharm* and *haya* are two Persian synonyms for being ashamed. Jorjani (1994) stated that *haya* means to avoid doing or saying something that is socially or morally inappropriate. Furthermore, Persians often refuse to accept their abilities, traits, or assets to show their modesty. In other words, they lower their status by using self-lowering strategies. They believe that people of higher status must be more humble

like a fertile tree that bends its branches. Besides, in Persian, neutral, low and high lexical verbs are used for politeness reasons. The neutral verb does not have any degrading or upgrading function. The low verb puts the speaker in an inferior position, whilst the high verb is used to put the hearer in a superior status. Finally, hospitality is the last component of *ta'arof* that indicates a host's good verbal and nonverbal behaviour towards a guest.

Taleghani-Nikazm (1998) investigated politeness in the interaction of Iranians based on Jefferson's (1984) transcription notation. The results revealed that the preference format of offers differs in Persian and American English. Iranians do not accept an offer at once in formal situations. They upgrade the offerer's status and degrade their own due to the politeness system of *ta'arof*. On the other hand, the offerer who is aware of *ta'arof* rejections repeats the offer several times.

Sahragard (2000) explored Iranian politeness system of *ta'arof* by using elicitation techniques like questionnaire and interview. The findings presented that *ta'arof* is an important constituent of Persian culture that includes five critical notions like courtesy, respect, self-restraint, modesty, and hospitality. It appears in all verbal and non-verbal interactions and the use of it is strongly influenced by some variables like age, social class, power, and distance.

## **2.4 APOLOGY**

What the speech act of apology is, and how it is performed in different cultures have been the purpose of many studies all over the world. Speakers of languages not only vary in the ways of apologizing, but also in considering the necessity of apology.

Reid (1950) asserted in her *Etiquette Book*, “The real test of an apology is the sincerity of feeling in the back of the spoken words”. Leech (1983) believed that apology is not merely enough and it needs the victim to forgive the wrongdoer in order to re-establish the balance. Olshtain (1989) argued that apologies are used by the wrongdoer to support the victim who has been violated by the offence. Apologies are not always effective unless the speaker expresses his or her true feelings of regret for what has happened, so the victim should give enough time to the offender to defend his or her position because two sides are involved in removing any conflict. Blum-Kulka (1989) pointed out that the speaker can change the apology by intensifying or by downgrading it. When the speaker intensifies the apology, it makes the victim’s support stronger and undermines his or her face. Trosborg (1995) claimed that apologies are expressive acts that are convivial in nature, and they differ from other kinds of speech acts such as thanking or congratulating for their remedial functions.

Moreover, Brown and Attardo (2000) considered characteristics of apology as follows:

1. The wrongdoer expresses his/her regret.
2. The wrongdoer explains the situation to attain forgiveness.
3. The wrongdoer takes responsibility for the violation.
4. The wrongdoer wants to undo the harm.
5. The wrongdoer promises not to offend the victim in future.

Gooder and Jacobs (2000) asserted that an appropriate apology includes some features: it admits the offence, takes on responsibility, shows regret and promises not to do it again in future.

Like Hussein (1995) and Soliman (2003) believed that “apology can be influenced by some variables such as familiarity with the victim, formality of the situation, intensity of the offense, place of exchange, age, sex, level of education, and relative authority of the offender and the victim.”

## **2.5 SPEECH ACT OF APOLOGY**

Speech acts are performed when speaker in a language intends to offer an apology, request, greeting, complaint, compliment, or refusal. In such situations, speech acts are utterances for communication with the interlocutor. A speech act can be formed of single word such as "Sorry!", or multiple words or sentences such as “it was my fault,” or “I’m sorry I forgot your birthday. I just let it slip my mind," intended to display an apology. Austin (1975) and Searle (1969) were forefathers of speech act theory. They were influenced by Saussure (1959) who claimed the difference between “Language” and “Parole” and Chomsky’s (1965) theory of competence and performance to define a theory of action. Austin (1975) emphasized on performative utterance in his book, *How to Do Things with Words*, because he believed that we perform actions by utterances. On the other hand, Searle (1969) claimed that “talking is performing acts according to rules” (p.22).

The speech act of apology is usually categorized as a subdivision of the expressive speech acts due to its role in expressing the feeling of the speaker toward the illocutionary hearer. Through the speech act of apology the speaker attempts to create an agreement with the offended or victim. As Seale (1975) states, the illocutionary aspect of the speech act of apology is to enable the apologizer to communicate the psychological state of affairs specified in the propositional content.



According to Trosborg (1995), apologies are speech acts used to display the regret of the speaker to someone who has been offended in a way or other as a result of an action or utterance. In this signification, apology generates a restriction for the speaker to offer a kind of support for the illocutioner. Generally, the speech act of apology is resorted to compensate for a mistake or fault on the side of the speaker. Apology is only possible when there are two participants, the offender and the offended (the apologizer and the apologizee). When a victim is offended as a result of an action or statement while s/he still keeping the respect of the actor or speaker, the offender needs to humiliate her/himself to repair the relationship with the victim by convincing the victim that s/he is really sorry for the specific action or utterance which has led to the violation. However, as it is possible, sometimes the offender who has brought about the violation may not consider her/himself as a sinner, guilty of offence. As a consequence, the offender may not feel apology is required, or s/he may not like to repair the relationship.

Blum-Kulka *et al* (1993) also considered that “apology as a speech act intends to compensate for the offence or violation the speaker brings about which might end up with a friction between the speaker and the hearer.” However, the apologizer who tends to verbally apologize for the violation needs to humiliate her/himself to an extent which accords the type and impression of the offence accepting the responsibility for reconciliation. This way, an apology can serve the speaker as a face threatening act and for the victim as face saving act.

Speech act of apology and the way it is performed in different cultures has been subject of myriad number of studies around the world. Speakers of different languages vary not only in way of apologizing, but also in considering the necessity of apology.

There are different apology instances in everyday life in which speakers resort apology to compensate for a violation, especially, when an established social norm is violated. In line with this statement, an apology consists of communicational and linguistic measures taken to set the violations right. The form apology takes depends on the way and extent the apologizer has created friction or violation which itself is based on some other variables such as the age of the violator or the type of the relationship between him/her and his/her interlocutor. Apology can also be expressed directly (“I am sorry” or “I apologize”) or indirectly (“I didn’t mean that”) depending on a certain situation in which apology is performed such as in reaction or response to a complaint. Structurally, an apology is made up of strategies as follows:

1. IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device)
2. Taking on responsibility
3. Explanation
4. Reparation
5. Promise of avoidance

Various strategies of apology can be internally modified so that an apology either intensifies or softens the offenses and violations. Modality markers like down-toners ('perhaps', and 'possibly'), predicates of mental state ('I think', 'I suppose', and 'I believe'), hedges ('kind/sort of', 'somehow'), or intensifiers ('I'm really sorry')

A good number of studies have focused on apologies performed by both non-native and native speakers of a certain language such as English. Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) studied apologies across seven different languages. The categorization of apology strategies in the seven languages has provided later studies of apologies with considerable and valuable contributions.

Performance of speech act for learners of a second or foreign language seems to be easy since it is very likely that the learners are not familiar with the cultural values and idiomatic expressions employed by the native speakers of that language. The rules of their first language, which seem to be natural and universal for them, may also interfere or influence the expressions formulated in the second language. Speakers of Farsi learn different politeness and apology strategies in their first language acquisition which may influence the formation of parallel speech acts in the second language, which in this case is English.

A good example of misunderstanding that an Iranian learner of English may experience is during a dinner party, which obliges an Iranian to offer a hearty thank to the entertainer or the host. During the meal serving and after the service, the Iranian host apologizes to her guests several times for the lack of appropriate service and meal with expressions such as (“bebakhshid agar ghaza bad bud” = “Sorry if the food was not good”) by which the host does not mean the literal meaning. Instead, she expects the guest to apologize for troubling the inviter or bothering her and thank and compliment her for the food and entertainment and deliciousness of the food. These apologies are meant for their politeness intentions more than apologies. However, in English language such figurative meaning is not applicable to the similar expressions in similar situations. Although English speakers may not feel comfortable during such ceremonial compliments and apologies, their omission might be interpreted as signs of rudeness of an uncultivated person. However, such speech acts may also be appropriate English, they are hardly unaccompanied by a few apologies in Farsi.

According to Crystal (2003), success of any speech act, including apology, depends on the felicity conditions which represent the norms that need to be satisfied for

success of the speech act. Facility conditions refer to circumstances considered as appropriate or expected for a speech to be perceived and understood as intended by the speaker.

## **2.6 CATEGORIZATION OF APOLOGY STRATEGIES**

Studies on apologies show that socio-cultural factors influence the speech act of apology. Furthermore, apology strategies used by the speaker and the hearer relate to their cultural backgrounds. The difference between their native language and target language may lead to inappropriate use of apology strategies in the target language, so they should know how apologies are performed in their native language and in the target language to increase their pragmatic competence and avoid misunderstandings in their communications.

Before introducing different categorization of apology strategies, it seems necessary to define some of the main terms. The following definitions are reported as cited by Bataineh and Bataineh (2008).

**Accounts** are the strategies in which the wrongdoer states the reason of the violation/offence such as traffic was heavy.

**Taking on responsibility** in which the offender takes responsibility for his/her violation like it was my mistake.

**Lack of intent** in which the offender tries to assure the victim that what happened was not on purpose.

**Gratitude** in which the wrongdoer appreciates the victim for the time to speak

**Self-castigation** in which the wrongdoer criticizes her/his behaviour.

**Contextualization** in which the transgressor tries to show the entire context to the hearer.

**Reparation** in which the offender tries to fix the harm or offer words to help the victim forget it.

**Compensation** in which the wrongdoer wants to recompense for the damage

**Promise of forbearance** in which the offender assures the hearer that the violation will not happen again

Based on Fraser (1981) apology strategies are classified into six categories.

1. Announcing that you are apologizing
2. Stating one's obligation to apologize
3. Offering to apologize
4. Requesting that the hearer accept an apology
5. Expression of regret
6. Requesting forgiveness for the offence

Similar to Fraser's classification, Trosborg (1987) suggested the wrongdoer to use the following apology strategies.

1. Accusing someone else or debate to reduce the level of the violation.
2. Using the following six types based on the extent that the wrongdoer admits his/her fault:
  - Implicit acknowledgement
  - Explicit acknowledgement
  - Showing lack of intention
  - Indicating self-deficiency

- Showing embarrassment
  - Accepting the fault explicitly
3. Accounts
  4. Reparation is performed in two ways:
    - Defray for doing damage
    - Recompense to balance the offence
  5. Promise of avoidance
  6. Showing apprehension for the victim

Blum-kulka, House and Kasper (1989) suggested the following apology strategies:

- a. IFIDs in which the wrongdoer apologizes explicitly, e.g. 'I am sorry'.
- b. Taking responsibility in which the speaker takes responsibility for the offence.
- c. Promise of forbearance when the speaker promises that the violation will not happen again in future
- d. Showing embarrassment, e.g. 'I'm ashamed'.
- e. Account is used to express reasons, e.g. 'Traffic was heavy'.
- f. Reparation in which the wrongdoer wants to fix the damage or offers words to help the victim forget the harm, e.g. 'I will make it up to you'.
- g. Distracting from the offence that includes two types of strategies such as query precondition and future remark, e.g. 'let's go to the party then...'

On the other hand, Al-Hami (1993) categorized apology strategies in six types:

1. Expression of apology
2. Explanation or account
3. Acknowledgement of responsibility

4. Repair
5. Promise of forbearance
6. Expressing concern for the hearer

He also suggested three ways that can intensify apologies.

1. Intensifiers like *very*;
2. Repetition of intensifiers
3. Compounding intensifiers

Furthermore, Sogimoto (1997) presented the following strategies:

1. Primary strategies that include the following parts:
  - Declaration of regret
  - Accounts to explain what has occurred based on his/her role and the way he/she tells the story
  - Explanation of damage to show the changes on the object in the discussion
  - Reparation to repair the damage by offering words to help the victim forget the harm
2. Secondary strategies include:
  - Compensation in which the wrongdoer recompense for the damage.
  - A promise of forbearance in which the wrongdoer assures the victim that it will not happen again in future.
3. Infrequently applied strategies that contain:
  - Explicit assessment of responsibility to show whether or not he/she was responsible for the violation.

- Contextualization to help the victim realize a clear picture of what has happened.
- Self-castigation to show the wrongdoer's responsibility for the violation which is harsh in rendering his/her character.
- Gratitude to express appreciation for the time to express true feelings

Finally, Cohen and Olshtain (1981) classified the following apology strategies:

- IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) like *sorry*, *excuse me*, and *I apologize*.
- Taking on responsibility for the offence such as *it was my fault*.
- Account to show the cause of the offence such as *traffic was heavy*.
- An offer of repair such as *I will fix it*.
- A promise of forbearance such as *I will not do it again*.

## **2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

In this study, the researcher will use Cohen and Olshtain's strategies as the basis of her data analysis, although the other classifications will be considered in mind. Cohen and Olshtain (1981), who introduced the notion of 'the speech act set of apology', identified the following apology strategies:

1. An Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)
  - An expression of regret, e.g. I'm sorry
  - An offer of apology, e.g. I apologize.
  - A request for forgiveness, e.g. excuse me/ forgive me/ pardon me.
2. Explanation or account, e.g. there was a heavy traffic.
3. Taking on responsibility:



- Explicit self-blame, e.g. it's my mistake.
  - Lack of intent, e.g. I didn't do it on purpose.
  - Expression of self-deficiency, e.g. I totally forgot it.
  - Expression of embarrassment, e.g. I feel ashamed.
  - Self-castigation, e.g. It was very stupid of me.
  - Justify the hearer, e.g. you are right to be angry and disappointed now.
4. An offer of repair, e.g. I'll pay for the damage.
  5. Promise of forbearance, e.g. it won't happen again.

The following table also includes the researcher's apology strategies.

Table 2.1 Cohen and Olshain's (1981) Apology Strategies

Cohen and Olshain's Apology Strategies	Researcher's Apology Strategies	Examples
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An IFID                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ An expression of regret</li> <li>➤ An offer of apology</li> <li>➤ A request for forgiveness</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Account</li> <li>3. Taking on responsibility                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Explicit self-blame</li> <li>➤ Lack of intent</li> <li>➤ Exp of self-deficiency</li> <li>➤ Exp of embarrassment</li> <li>➤ Self-castigation</li> <li>➤ Justify the hearer</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. An offer of repair</li> <li>5. Promise of forbearance</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An IFID                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ An exp* of reg* &amp; 1 inte*</li> <li>➤ An exp of reg &amp; 2 inte</li> <li>➤ An exp of reg &amp; 3 inte</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Compensation</li> <li>3. Referral compensation or reparation</li> <li>4. Promise of better time</li> <li>5. Concern for the victim</li> <li>6. Gratitude</li> <li>7. Expression of love</li> <li>8. Asking victim not to be angry or worry</li> <li>9. Invoking Allah's name</li> <li>10. Cursing the cause of the violation</li> </ol> <p>Using idioms</p>	<p>So sorry Very Very sorry So So So Sorry I clean it right now Is there anything I can do about it? Let's go another day Are you ok? Thanks I love you Take it easy</p> <p>We will go there “ Insha'Allah” Damn it! I'm down in the mouth</p>

\* exp= expression, reg= regret, inte =intensifier

## 2.8 NON-APOLOGY STRATEGIES

**Non-apology strategies** are those the wrongdoer does not take responsibility for the offence instead blames the victim, offends the victim, brushes off the incident as unimportant, and avoids subject/person. The following definitions are reported as cited by Bataineh and Bataineh (2008).

**Annoying the hearer** in which the wrongdoer hurts the feelings of the victim and offends him/her.

**Showing violation as not important** in which the offender tries to persuade the hearer that the offence is not very important.

**Refraining from the person or subject** in which the wrongdoer tries to avoid talking about the offence.

## **2.9 APOLOGY AND CULTURE**

According to Young (1972) although various ideas are expressed in different forms, the basic concepts are shared by all cultures Olshtain (1989) argued that CCSARP data showed “stunning similarities in IFID and taking on responsibility”.

Coulmas (1981), who examined apologies and thanks in several European languages such as French, German, English versus Japanese, declared that although all languages seem to have stock-phrases to express apologies and thanks, the situations where they are used may vary remarkably. For instance, Japanese speakers apologize not only for violating cultural norms but also for expressing gratitude.

Harlow (1990) studied apology strategies used by French learners of English. Harlow surprisingly denied the effect of social variables such as age, familiarity and relationship between the speakers on apologizing, but accepted the role of pragmatic competence in appropriate use of speech acts.

Holms (1990) studied apology strategies used by Newzealand speakers of English. According to Holms (1990), a single or a combination of strategies was used based on the nature of the situations. For serious offences, there were several categories in apologies, while for lighter ones there were single categories.

Cordella (1992) compared the way Australian English and Chilean speakers of Spanish used explanations in their apology strategies. The researcher claimed that Chileans accentuated family more than Australian ones and their explanations were mainly related to family affairs.

Mir (1992) compared Spanish learners of English as a foreign language to American native speakers of English. Investigations unveiled that Spanish learners used more IFIDs and were different in use of explicit apologies and offers to repair because they did not know these strategies in the target language.

Bergman and Kasper (1993) realized that Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) and taking on responsibility were used more than “promise of forbearance” and “concern for the hearer”.

Al-Hami (1993) stated that Arab learners used accounts more than native speakers. In contrast, native speakers used more expression of regret, reparation, lack of intent, and promise of forbearance. He blamed language transfer and linguistic incompetence for these differences.

Rizk (1997) examined apology strategies and his findings proved that Arabs avoid apologizing to younger ones. They attempt to attain their forgiveness with sentences like “don’t be sad dear”. Moreover, they offer food and believe it can remove many conflicts.

Sogimoto (1997) compared American and Japanese students’ use of apology. The participants were 181 Japanese and two hundred U.S college students who completed a questionnaire. The findings revealed that secondary strategies, like compensation and promise of forbearance, were mostly used by Japanese. Furthermore,

Americans tried to blame the uncontrollable circumstances, but Japanese stressed the lack of intention. In general, Japanese use more formulaic expressions, while Americans use more spontaneous in apology. According to Rosenfeld and Cass (1956), Americans apologize for their own faults or for their family members such as spouse and children when they are unable to apologize due to alcohol, excitement, or age, but Japanese apologize for immediate family, distant family, friends from school or work, so Japanese have more opportunities to apologize than Americans.

Hussein and Hammouri (1998) argued that although both American and Jordanian respondents used some similar strategies reparation and taking on responsibility, Jordanians applied some other apology strategies like offending the hearer, decreasing the level of harm, praising God for what happened, and interjections.

Suszczynksa (1999) investigated apologies in English, Polish, and Hungarian and revealed significant differences in strategy choice related to public self-exposure of a person. In her study, Polish and Hungarian native speakers used self-exposure strategies more than English native speakers, which were due to the perception of the individual's personal space and relation to the community, while Anglo-Saxon culture protected "personal preserves".

Butler (2001) referred to the main role of context to accentuate that people apologize differently according to various contexts. One speech act of apology maybe considered appropriate in one context but rude and insufficient in another context.

Based on Gries and Peng (2002), there is a great difference in causal reasoning and responsibility assessment between East and West. For instance, a Chinese may concentrate on the result of the happening, but an American try to find the wrongdoer in

a special circumstance. In Chinese culture, people are usually ready to apologize because they believe that it solves problems and wipes off many of sins.

Al-Zumore (2003, p. 29) argued that in Arab culture, “admitting one’s deficiency to set the things right is not as embarrassing as in the Anglo-Saxon culture”. People are more available to each other and more careless about their immunity.

Bharuthram (2003) scrutinized the speech act of apology in the case of the English Hindu Indians from South Africa. The study showed a different concept of face with what stated by Brown and Levinson (1987), because those speakers cared more about the face of others instead of their own face. They used the phrase “please” for both apologies and request to emphasize on politeness in their culture.

Soleiman (2003) believed that “learning apologies is difficult for non-native speakers of English, because their first language affects their use of English speech acts.” He has shown the variations and similarities in Egyptian and American cultures as follows:

1. Both employed intensifiers.
2. Expressing “Oh” was very crucial to reveal the offender’s real regret.
3. Expression of embarrassment was applied in two cultures.
4. Offending the victim was used by Egyptians.
5. Invoking Allah’s name was not used by Americans.

Jung (2004) conducted a research on Korean learners of English. Based on the findings although advanced learners did not transfer their native language in some cases, in most situations there was a negative transfer from their native language to

target one because of their inadequate awareness of difference between their native Language and target language.

Marlyna Maros (2006) investigated the use of apology by adult Malay speakers. 27 Islamic religious officers who were at Muslim Collage in London to improve their English language proficiency participated in this study. They were all from Malaysia and aged between 30 to 50 years old. The data was collected through a questionnaire including 6 situations. The findings showed that respondents tried to apologize more in situations that did not guarantee it. They all opted for negative politeness strategies as English native speakers. Moreover, their socio pragmatic competence was negatively influenced by their L1 socio cultural rules. It proved that comprehending of the target language rules is not guaranteed by exposure to English language for many years. The researcher recommended that learners of English should be proficient in socio pragmatics to perform apologies in English.

Bataine (2008) investigated common apology strategies used by Americans and Arabs. Participants were all undergraduate students ranged between 17 and 24. It was conducted according to Lipson's (1994) framework. The results showed that both groups used distinct apology strategies. All of them employed explicit strategies and combined two or more apology strategies to reveal regret. Furthermore, manifestations were mostly applied by Jordanians.

Ilkin Istifci (2009) examined two different levels of English proficiency to find out differences and similarities in using apology strategies between them and whether they use native speaker apology norms or not. It was based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) and 20 intermediate level students, 20 advanced level students and 5 native speakers were the participants of this study. The researcher reported that there were

some similarities and differences between the two groups. There was an influence of L1 on their use of apologies and native Turkish speaker norms mostly transferred by intermediate levels into English. Furthermore, advanced level subjects used more native speaker norms unlike their intermediate counterparts.

## **2.10 APOLOGY AND POLITENESS**

Apology and its expression by its user ensues from the level and type of the politeness of the speaker. This degree of politeness varies from individual to individual based on his/her cultural, educational, and behavioral backgrounds. More polite people are more likely to apologize for their faults and misdeeds compared to the less polite individuals. However, various factors affect the degree of politeness and, as a result, the level and type of the apology strategy employed. The authorial status of both victim and apologizer is also an influential factor affecting the strategy. The behavioral distinction between male and female is another factor which differentiates their apology strategies, not only according to their social positions, but also in accordance with their gender differences. Investigating the strategies employed by male and female members respectively, tends to reveal the more polite reaction of an Iranian female compared to that by an Iranian male although there are some occasions in which both genders employ the same strategies.

However, in this regard, sociolinguistic studies support that women use more politeness strategies especially positive politeness in their interactions with other women in comparison with men (Pilkington, 1998). Some studies believe that, for this purpose, they are interested in paying compliments to their addressees more (Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1988, 1998; Johnson and Roen, 1992). Also, they use more negative-



politeness strategies such as apology, light criticism or thanking compared to men (Tannen, 1994).

In usual social interactions speakers use different methods to display their politeness, adjusted with the social status of the addressee. To a close friend an imperative order such as "Give me your pen!"; however, with a teacher or manager or and elderly with whom the speaker has formal relationship, s/he needs to use different sentence to ask for a favor, e.g., "Could I have your pen for a moment please?" Such situations and structures are also applicable to apology cases. This kind of interaction can also be extended to "face" of the interlocutors.

Brown and Levinson (1978) argued that "politeness strategies intend mainly to save the addressees' face". They presented the concept of face in their model of politeness theory as a self-image and defined face threatening speech acts according to some parameters like the speaker, the hearer, and the type of face. Based on their politeness theory, positive face which is a tendency to be liked by others is kept safe with a friendly behavior (positive politeness), while a negative face is protected by a manner that avoids impeding (negative politeness). Therefore, people use positive and negative politeness strategies to decrease the face-threat. So far, numerous researchers have discussed this theory in their intercultural studies (Gu, 1990; Mao, 1994; Matsumoto, 1988; Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; watts, 2003).

Holmes (1990, p. 156) believes that the speech act of apology is interrelated to politeness and its objective as a social act is to save positive relations between speaker and hearer. Apology is a sign and act of politeness from speaker's side which demonstrates her/his concern about such a relation and its maintenance between her/himself and the victim. The following section will discuss the relationship between

the acts of apology and politeness which is intended to reconcile the two parties, i.e., the offender and the victim.

## **2.11 APOLOGY AND GENDER**

Researchers began to consider gender variations in employing the speech act of apology in 1970s and their studies revealed critical facts about men and women. Holmes (1995) investigated Newzealand men and women apology strategies. The findings showed that women use more apology strategies than men. Women talk more and do anything to have successful relationships. They apologize directly with using more words and accept the apology used by the offender. On the other hand, men use few words to save their own face and ignore these speech acts. They never use direct apology strategies and reject more apologies.

Ciler Hatipoglu (2003) contrasted apology strategies of males and females in Turkish and English. Participants were chosen from two universities in Istanbul and Bristol. The study was based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) framework and the data was collected through DCTs and role-plays. It was significant because of presenting precious realization of inter-gender communication rules. The findings revealed that context internal and context external attributes influenced the used of apology strategies. In addition, the gender and the social status of the respondents influenced the use of these strategies by males and females. The degree of imposition and reason for apologizing, which were context internal factors, changed the choice of strategy realization.

Wouk (2005) studied apology strategies among Indonesians in Lombok. The results indicated that Lombok Indonesians used requests for forgiveness. Although there were little differences between genders, male respondents used more solidarity oriented

upgrading than females. Besides, social intimates used solidarity strategies, but deference strategies were applied with high level addressees. The researcher recommended further studies with more realistic data to interview the key respondents about why their options.

Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) investigated EFL students' use of apology in Ibrid. The findings indicated that although males and females used some similar strategies, they applied them in various orders. Furthermore, female respondents tried to avoid debating the violation, but males attempted to accuse the victim.

Abu Amoud (2008) analyzed the apology and non-apology strategies of Palestinian students in Hebron University based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) framework. The results revealed that females employed more apology strategies compared to male participants due to their shyness and politeness attributes. On the other hand, males used further non-apology strategies because of male predominated society of Palestinians. Also, women talked more to attain the victim's forgiveness, but men preferred few words and ignored the consequence.

Bataineh and Bataineh (2008) studied apology strategies used by American and Arab EFL university students. The results showed that although both groups used two expressions of apology and two intensifiers, females expressed the apologies more overtly. In addition, females employed more reparation, promise of forbearance, self castigation, recompense, and less non- apology strategies in comparison with American male respondents. On the other hand, all participants used prime apology speech acts in various order. Males used accounts, reparation, compensation, showing lack of intent, and promise of forbearance, while females used accounts, promise of forbearance, reparation, compensation, and lack of intent. Unlike males, Jordanian females

apologized more, especially to males and blamed themselves for their faults instead of attacking the victim to show their readiness to make them up.

## **2.12 APOLOGY IN PERSIAN**

In the Persian culture, people's feelings, face, and belongings are fully respected because all human beings are considered as different parts of the same body. Iranians are eager to have successful communication and care for keeping their close relationships. What should be necessarily noted here is that there is a different assumption of apology between traditional and modern educated Iranians. Traditional Iranians are not willing to apologize as they consider it as a behaviour that threatens their face. On the other hand, modern educated Iranians apologize more to show politeness and being a part of a high social class. The reason that Iranians ask for forgiveness when they offend the others may be rooted in their enriched culture and the teachings of Islam that encourages them to take responsibility for their faults and mistakes. As Wierzbicka (1985) claimed "different preferences in the use of apology forms seem to be rooted in different cultural norms and assumptions".

Afghari (2007) argued that "Persian apologies are as formulaic in pragmatic structures. Two context-external variables of social distance and social dominance have a crucial effect on the frequency of apology intensifiers in various situations. The most intensified apologies are used to close friends and the least intensified are offered to strangers". In addition, except promise of forbearance, which is rarely applied by Persian speakers, accounts and reparation are the most common strategies among them.

According to Shariati and Chamani (2009), "apologies in Persian are formulaic and really culture specific. Although Persian speakers use the same apology strategies,

IFID with a request for forgiveness is used more than the others. Moreover, a combination of IFID with taking on responsibility is used in all situations”.

Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) investigated the effectiveness of direct instructing of apology strategies. The results revealed the usefulness of this teaching. Students’ lack of sociopragmatics proficiency forced them to use more intensifiers. The aim of their study was to give teachers and learners awareness of socio-cultural and sociolinguistic differences to realize the reason of failure in communication. They believed that Persian L2 learners should be exposed to the usual apology strategies used by native speakers to refuse negative transfer “excuse me” of Persian apology. From their point of view, it is essential for material developers, and teachers to give more importance to apology speech act.

## **2.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter looked at previous literature encompassing inter language pragmatics in second language learning, politeness in Iranian culture and Persian language, apology, speech act of apology, categorization of apology strategies, theoretical framework, non-apology strategies, apology and culture, apology and politeness, apology and gender, and apology in Persian to give more understanding and awareness. Since nearly all the studies reviewed have been in EFL contexts unlike the current study which examines apology strategies of Iranian students in an ESL setting and there are a few studies scrutinizing the use of apology and non-apology strategies by Persian postgraduate ESL students, this study addresses the research gap in the field of apology strategies.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the researcher will discuss the methodological issues in the study of speech acts and the methodology used in discerning the apology and non-apology strategies of native Persian-speaking ESL university students at University of Malaya. It encompasses the participants, the instrument, the research design, and the pilot study.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The research design employed in this study was qualitative in nature, as the data were collected through an open-ended questionnaire. However, the data collected through the qualitative methods were also examined for statistical figures to answer the research questions of the study that is the researcher viewed the repeated presence of strategies in apologizing.

#### **3.3 THE DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT**

There is ample evidence of perceivable differences among studies in pragmatics. They are usually related to the methodology used by researchers in data collection. Blum-Kulka (1982) was the first researcher who used DCT to investigate speech acts. Since then, DCT has been used to collect data in numerous speech acts studies. According to Kasper and Dahl (1991), "DCT and role-play are both important data collection techniques in pragmatic research". Cohen and Olshtain (1994) claimed that the two main instruments Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and role-plays can be used

for speech act production. Beebe and Cummings (1996) declared that DCT precisely reveals the content expressed in natural data, so both data collection instruments present similar results. Sasaki (1998) claimed that it is really difficult to say which one of these two instruments is superior. Nelson, Carson, Al Batal, and El Bakary (2002) stated that “DCT is a suitable instrument for interlanguage pragmatic research”. Kwon (2004) indicated that “DCT is an effectual data collection instrument when the aim of the study is to inform the speakers’ pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their sociopragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategies and linguistic choices are appropriate” (p. 342). On the other hand, some researchers believe that the results of DCT cannot prove the learners’ ability to interact in genuine situations. However, based on above discussion we can conclude that DCT has many administrative advantages and is still critical in pragmatic research. Using DCT lets researchers to gather plentiful data without spending excessive time. Moreover, it is very suitable for interlanguage pragmatic as it is employed straight to the respondents from various cultures.

Using a DCT is less time consuming than observation or role-plays. Besides, except for observation, in role-plays, the elicited apology strategies may not necessarily be the ones that the respondents might use in real situations. Collecting data through observing real life situations is close to impossible for a single researcher to manage. It is highly time-consuming and exhaustive. Besides, the target group of this study are only ESL Iranian students in the University of Malaya, which makes even more difficult to observe as the population is very narrowed down. As a result, since based on the above discussion, there is not much difference between the data collected through role-

plays and through a DCT, the data collection for the present study was done through a DCT.

### 3.4 THE DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST

According to Kasper and Dahl (1991), “DCT along with role-play serves as one of the major data collection instruments in pragmatic research”. They define DCT “as a written questionnaire containing short descriptions of a particular situation intended to reveal the pattern of a speech act being studied”.

DCT is classified into five categorizations. The classic format is the initial form. In this type, “the prompt is ended by a response and/or initiated by interlocutors’ utterance”.

Example :

*“Walter and Leslie live in the same neighborhood, but they only know each other by sight. One day, they both attend a meeting held on the other side of town. Walter does not have a car but he knows Leslie has come in her car.  
Walter : \_\_\_\_\_*

*Leslie : I’m sorry but I’m not going home right away”.*

(Blum Kulka , House, and Kasper, 1989)

Dialogue construction is the second classification that may start by a respondent.

Example:

*“Your advisor suggests that you take a course during summer. You prefer not to take classes during the summer.*

*Advisor : What about taking a course in the summer?*

*You : \_\_\_\_\_”*

(Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993)



Open item-verbal response is another type. In its format, “participants are free to respond without any limitation from an interlocutor initiation and rejoinder”. However, they are supposed to provide verbal reply.

Example:

*“You have invited a very famous pedagogue at an institutional dinner. You feel extremely hungry, but this engineer starts speaking and nobody has started eating yet, because they are waiting for the guest to start. You want to start having dinner. What would you say?”*

(Safont-Jordà, 2003)

Open item free response construction is the forth form. In this case, “participants are free to give verbal response or non-verbal response and even allowed not to respond at all”.

Example:

*“You are the president of the local chapter of a national hiking club. Every month the club goes on a hiking trip and you are responsible for organizing it. You are on this month’s trip and have borrowed another member’s hiking book. You are hiking by the river and stop to look at the book. The book slips from your hand, falls in the river and washes away. You hike on to the rest stop where you meet up with the owner of the book.*

*You: \_\_\_\_\_”*

(Hudson, Detmer, and Brown, 1995)

The final form of DCT is the recent version of DCT formed by Billmyer and Varghese (2000). It is a variation of third type. In this format, “situational background is provided in details”.

Example: Old version

*“A student in the library is making too much noise and disturbing other students. The librarian decides to ask the student to quiet down. What will the librarian say?”*

(Billmyer and Varghese, 2000)

Example 6: Recent version

*“It is the end of the working day on Friday. You are the librarian and have been working in the University Reserve Room for two years. You like your job and usually the Reserve Room is quiet. Today, a student is making noise and disturbing other students. You decide to ask the student to quiet down. The student is a male student who you have often seen work on his own in the past two months, but today he is explaining something to another student in a very loud voice. A lot of students are in the library and they are studying for their midterm exams. You notice that some of the other students are looking in his direction in an annoyed manner. What would you say?”*

(Billmyer and Varghese, 2000)

The open questionnaire employed in this study “was a modified version of Discourse Completion Test” applied in CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka, 1982). This modified version was prepared and used by Afghari (2007). The researcher used it as a controlled data elicitation technique that was readily submitted to statistical analysis. It included an introduction, a part for gathering participants’ demographic information, and 10 fixed discourse situations that warranted apologies in English. Many former researchers employed such an open questionnaire in their studies and acquired critical results (Blum-Kulka et al., 1982; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Lipson, 1994; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Suszcynska, 1999).

### **3.5 PARTICIPANTS**

The participants of the study consisted of one selected group of 40 Iranian postgraduate ESL students (20 males, 20 females) ranged between 24-35 from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics and the Faculty of Education at University of Malaya. The respondents were nearly homogeneous in their cultural background and academic/linguistic experiences.

### **3.6 THE PILOT STUDY**

The pilot study was a small-scale research conducted before the main research to find out what results could be realized. It was used to avoid wasting time, money and errors and check the viability of the main research. The samples were four UM Iranian students selected from the pertinent population, and those who joined in pilot study did not participate in main study because of its impact on their later performance. The pilot study of this research was conducted to check whether the DCT items were clear and understandable to Iranian participants. It was to check vagueness, confusion and poorly prepared questions. The same DCT items were finally used in the main study.

#### **3.6.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The data collection started in April 2010 and lasted for one month. As there were some difficulties in accessing all number of participants, the researcher e-mailed the open-ended questionnaire to them. Except for some respondents who filled it out directly at the main library, the others sent it back via e-mail. The students were supposed to read the situations, consider themselves in the situations and write down their normal reactions. The open questionnaire was in English and the respondents were asked to write their answers in English. For example, when they were asked to respond

to a situation in which their university professor is involved, they were asked to think of their professors in Malaysia with whom they speak in English. The reason was to investigate whether there will be any common errors in the participants' responses as an effect of their mother tongue or Iranian culture.

### **3.6.2 ANALYSIS OF DATA**

Responses to the open questionnaire were coded and fed to the computer using the SPSS package. Descriptive statistics with one-way frequency distribution was used and the results were defined as frequency counts and percentages. The researcher identified and tabulated all apology strategies used by respondents based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) framework, which was also used in CCSARP project by Blum-Kulka et al., (1982). The significant values were calculated to identify and analyse the differences attributed to gender, encompassing non-apology strategies. Blaming the victim, offending the victim, avoidance of discussion, and showing the incident as unimportant are some instances of non-apology strategies by which the offender tries to abstain from apologizing. Although these strategies were not exactly within the area of apologizing, they were related to it in a negative way.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter scrutinized research design, data collection instrument, discourse completion test, participants, pilot study, data collection procedures, and analysis of data to provide more apprehension and awareness.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present and discuss the findings obtained from the DCT. It is hoped that the data collected through the qualitative methods help provide useful information apology and non-apology strategies used by the Iranian ESL students of the University of Malaya. The findings related to the research questions will be comparable to the findings from several studied referred to in Chapter Two.

The data will be analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, and the results will be presented in tables. Significant differences will also be discussed and displayed in tables where relevant. The findings will be discussed aiming to suggest answers to the four research questions posed in Chapter 1.

The findings will be presented and discussed in relevance to each of the four research questions:

1. What are the apology strategies used by Iranian ESL students?
2. What kinds of non-apology strategies do Iranian ESL students use most often?
3. To what extent are the Iranian respondents' strategy use related to gender?
4. What are the apology and non-apology strategies used by the Iranian ESL students that are influenced by Iranian culture and the Persian language?

## 4.2 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 1

This section will present the data obtained from the DCT in order to suggest answers to the first research question; what are the apology strategies used by Iranian ESL students?

### 4.2.1 IFID

The findings will be presented in tables, and the analysis will be provided below each table. Using the model for categorization of apology strategies by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), and the researchers' list of apology strategies, the findings regarding Iranian male and female ESL students are shown in Table 4.1. First the results related to the IFID will be presented.

Table 4.1 IFID Strategies Used by Male and Female Respondents

Strategies		Items												
		Gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N	%
1	One expression of regret	M	3	1	11	9	6	5	5	5	7	4	56	28.0
		F	4	6	11	7	2	6	7	8	17	11	79	39.5
2	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	M	6	9	5	1	5	6	8	8	7	3	58	29.0
		F	10	7	7	7	9	10	16	9	7	3	85	42.5
3	One expression of regret and two intensifiers	M	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
		F	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	7	3.5
4	One expression of regret and three intensifiers	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		F	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
5	An offer of apology	M	4	5	2	8	4	5	1	4	3	2	38	19.0
		F	2	5	1	1	0	0	3	1	2	0	15	7.5
6	A request for forgiveness	M	1	2	3	1	1	2	1	0	3	2	16	8.0
		F	1	1	4	2	2	2	3	5	4	1	25	10.3

As shown in Table 4.1, male and female respondents showed their regret using various types of IFID strategies such as “one expression of regret”, “one expression of regret and one intensifier”, “one expression of regret and two intensifiers”, “an offer of apology” and “a request for forgiveness”. It should be noted that “one expression of regret and three intensifiers” was not used by any Iranian male respondent.

**1. One expression of regret;** In 28.0% of the situations (n = 56), male respondents used one expression of regret like sorry, while in 39.5% of the situations (n = 79), female respondents used it in response to all questionnaire items to express regret.

**2. One expression of regret and one intensifier;** In 29.0% of the situations (n = 58), male respondents used one expression of regret and one intensifier such as really sorry, terribly sorry and too sorry. In 42.5% of the situations (n = 85), female respondents used one expression of regret and one intensifier like so sorry, really sorry and terribly sorry in response to all questionnaire situations to show regret.

**3. One expression of regret and two intensifiers;** In only 0.5% of the situations (n = 1), male respondents used “one expression of regret and two intensifiers” such as “really so sorry” just in response to item 1 to show regret for the violation. On the other hand, in 3.5% of the situations (n = 7), female respondents used “one expression of regret and two intensifiers” such as “very very sorry” and “so so sorry” just in response to items 1, 4, 5, 7, and 9 to express regret for the violation.

**4. One expression of regret and three intensifiers;** In only one instance (0.5%), a female respondent used “one expression of regret and three intensifiers” saying “so so so sorry” in response to item 1 to express regret for the offence. It is worth noting that “one expression of regret and three intensifiers” was not used by any Iranian male respondent.

**5. An offer of apology;** In 19.0% of the situations (n = 38), male respondents used “an offer of apology”, for example, “I do apologize” to show sorrow; while Iranian respondents used an offer of apology such as “please accept my apologies”, “I apologize”, and “I do apologize” in 7.5% of the situations (n = 15) in response to all items except items 5, 6, and 10 to show their sorrow.

**6. A request for forgiveness;** In 8.0% of the situations (n = 16), male respondents used a request for forgiveness, for instance, “excuse me”, “forgive me” and “pardon me” in response to all questionnaire items except item 8 to show regret for the offence. Female respondents, on the other hand, used “a request for forgiveness” such as “please forgive me”, “excuse me”, and “please pardon me” in 12.5% of the situations (n = 25), in response to all questionnaire.

Overall, it is worth noting that “one expression of regret and one intensifier” and “one expression of regret” has been the most frequently used IFIDs by Iranian male and female respondents, in 35.8 and 33.8% percent of the instance respectively. On the other hand, one expression of regret and two or three intensifiers seem to be the least frequently used strategies, being used only in 2.0% and 3% of the instances.

#### **4.2.2 Summary**

The results indicate that Iranian female respondents felt more need to use explicit expressions of apology, namely “IFID” and “Intensified IFID”. This is due to the fact that they were willing to express their extreme and profound regret to keep their successful relationship with the victim. Also, they used these direct apologies to avoid the risk of misinterpretation. This is consistent with many studies in literature review that revealed a direct apology in many combinations (Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Holmes, 1990, Barnlund& Yoshiko, 1990; Nagano, 1985; Taghuchi, 1991).



On the other hand, male respondents attempted to offer an apology instead of requesting for forgiveness as to keep their high social status, while female respondents requested for forgiveness to save the victim's face. This is in accordance with what mentioned by other researchers as well (Austin, 1962; Brown and Levinsons, 1978; Searle, 1979).

#### **4.2.3 Apology Strategies Based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981)**

##### **Categorization**

1. **Accounts;** In 39.0% of the situations (n = 78), male respondents used accounts in response to all items except 3, 7, and 9. Two examples are shown below:

I was horribly sick [2].

I was in the traffic [6].

On the other hand, in 35.0% of the situations (n = 70), female respondents used accounts in response to all items except 3, and 9, as shown below:

I was very sick [2]

There was a heavy traffic [4].

2. **Expression of self-deficiency;** In 10.5% of the situations (n =21), male respondents used expression of self-deficiency in their responses to items 4, 5, 9, and 10. Two examples are given below:

Oh, I forgot it [5].

I didn't see you [9].

While, female respondents used expression of self-deficiency in response in 14.0% of the situations (n = 28), to all items except 1, 2, 8, and 9, which resulted in answers such as:

I lost my control [3].

I totally forgot about it [5].

3. **Self-castigation;** Male respondents used self-castigation in 8.0% of the situations (n = 16) in response to all items but 2 and 4. Examples are:

It was very stupid of me [6].

It was thoughtless of me to carry the chair in the lobby [9].

Female respondents used self-castigation in only 3.5% of the situations (n = 7) in response to items 1, 4, 6, 8, and 9. Responses came as follows:

I had to be more cautious [9].

I was supposed to leave earlier [8].

4. **Expression of embarrassment;** In only 3.5% of the situations (n = 7), male respondents expressed their embarrassment in response to all items except 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9. Examples are:

I'm ashamed for such a long delay Sir [4].

I really feel awful [3].

On the other hand, in 6.5% of the situations (n = 13), female respondents used this especially in their responses to items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9 as is shown below:

I'm really ashamed [9].

It's really embarrassing [7].

5. **Lack of intent;** In 3.0% of the situations (n =6), male respondents rejected intending to hurt the victim in response to items 1, 3, and 7.

Examples of the use of this strategy are:

I didn't mean it [7].

I didn't do that on purpose [3].

In 4.0% of the situations (n =8), Iranian female respondents rejected intending to hurt the victim in response to items 1, 3, 7, and 9. Examples of the use of this strategy are:

I did not do it on purpose [7].

It happened accidentally [1].

6. **Promise of forbearance;** Iranian male respondents promised not to repeat the offence in the future in 3.0% of the situations (n =6) in response to items 6 and 8. Responses appeared as follows:

I promise it won't happen again [6].

I promise to be on time after this [8].

In 4.0% of the situations (n = 8), female respondents promised not to repeat the offence in future, in response to items 4, 5, 6, and 8. Examples are:

It won't happen again [4].

I promise not to do it again [5].

7. **Explicit self-blame;** In 1.5% of the situations (n = 3), male respondents accepted their fault. This was clear in responses to items 2, 3, and 8 as is shown below:

It was my fault [8].

I know I was supposed to bring a lecture for the last session [2].

At the same time, in 5.0% of the situations (n = 10), female respondents accepted their fault. This was clear in responses to items 1, 4, 6, 8, and 9 as is shown below:

It's my fault [8].

I didn't take good care of you notes [1].

8. **Justify the hearer;** In 1.5% of the situations (n = 3), female respondents used justified the hearer in response to item 4, 5, and 6 as shown in the following examples:

You are right to be mad at me [4].

I know you are right to be angry [5].

On the other hand, in 0.5% of the situations (n = 1), Iranian male respondents used this strategy in response to item 6. Example of the use of this strategy is:

I know how upset you are [6].

9. **Reparation;** In 8.5% of the situations (n = 17), male respondents used reparation in response to all items except 2, 3, 4, 8, and 9 as is shown below:

Here is an ice cream for you [5].

I want to make it up by buying something for you [6].

At the same time, in 11.5% (n = 23) of the situations, female respondents offered words to help the victim forget the harm in response to all items except items 3, and 4.

Responses came as follows:

Let's go and have a drink first to make it up to you [6].

Table 4.2 shows apology strategies used by Iranian male and female respondents in ascending order of frequency.

Table 4.2 Apology Strategies Used by Male and Female Respondents based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) Categorization

Strategies		Items												
		Gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N	%
1	Accounts	M	10	17	0	16	5	8	0	15	0	7	78	39.0
		F	10	12	0	14	5	6	1	17	0	5	70	35.0
2	Expression of self-deficiency	M	0	0	0	2	6	0	0	0	5	8	21	10.5
		F	0	0	1	4	10	1	2	0	0	10	28	14.0
3	Self-castigation	M	3	0	0	1	3	4	1	1	2	1	16	8.0
		F	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	2	0	7	3.5
4	Expression of embarrassment	M	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	7	3.5
		F	5	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	1	0	13	6.5
5	Lack of intent	M	2	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	3.0
		F	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	8	4.0
6	Promise of forbearance	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0	0	6	3.0
		F	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	4	0	0	8	4.0
7	Explicit self-blame	M	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1.5
		F	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	4	2	0	10	5.0
8	Justify the hearer	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
		F	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	1.5
9	Reparation	M	4	0	0	0	9	1	2	0	0	1	17	8.5
		F	2	2	0	0	6	4	4	1	1	3	23	11.5

### 4.2.3 Apology Strategies Based on the Researcher's Categorization

Some of the apology strategies used by the respondents did not belong to any of the categories suggested by Cohen and Olshtain' (1981). Therefore the researcher made a list of those apology strategies, which are presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Apology Strategies Used by Male and Female Respondents based on the Researcher's Categorization

Strategies		Items												
		Gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N	%
1	Compensation	M	9	1	0	0	2	0	11	0	1	2	26	13.0
		F	4	0	0	0	3	0	7	0	0	5	19	9.5
2	Referral compensation or reparation	M	3	8	0	0	3	0	0	0	6	4	24	12.0
		F	6	8	0	2	7	0	0	0	3	5	31	15.5
3	Promise of better time	M	0	1	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	10	20	10.0
		F	0	3	0	1	6	0	0	0	0	8	18	9.0
4	Concern for the victim	M	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	8	1	13	6.5
		F	1	0	7	1	0	3	1	2	10	0	25	12.5
5	Cursing the cause of the violation	M	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6	3.0
		F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	Expression of love	M	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	4	2.0
		F	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	1.0
7	Gratitude	M	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.5
		F	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
8	Asking victim not to be angry or worry	M	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1.0
		F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
9	Using idioms	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
		F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Invoking Allah's Name	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		F	1	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	5	2.5

1. **Compensation;** In 13.0 % of the situations (n = 26), male respondents used compensation in response to all items except 3, 4, 6, and 8.

Examples of the use of this strategy are:

I have copied them [1]

I go back to the bookstore to get it my dear [10].

While, in 9.5% of the situations (n = 19), female respondents used compensation in response to items 1, 5, 7, and 10 as is shown below:

I copy them or write them again [1].

I will clean it now [7].

2. **Referral compensation or reparation;** In 12.0% of the situations (n = 24), male respondents used referral compensation or reparation which resulted in answers such as

Do you want me to take you to the doctor [9]?

Can I buy it tomorrow on my way back home [10]?

On the other hand, female respondents used referral compensation or reparation in 15.5 % of the situations (n = 31), in response to all items except 3, 6, 7, and 8.

Examples of the use of this strategy are:

If you need it, I go and buy it now [10].

I'll rewrite them for you if you want [1].

3. **Promise of better time;** male respondents promised the victim better times particularly in 10.0% (n = 20) of the instances, in response to items 2, 5, and 10. Responses came as follows:

Let's go to the cinema another day [5].

I promise to buy it tomorrow [10].

Female respondents promised the victim better time in 9.0% of the situations (n = 18) in response to items 2, 4, 5, and 10. Examples are:

I promise we will go by next week [5].

I'll buy it tomorrow [10].

4. **Concern for the victim;** This strategy appeared in 6.5% of the situations (n = 13) especially in male's responses to items 2, 3, 9, and 10 as is shown below:

Are you ok [3]?

Do you feel ache [9]?

In 12.5% of the situations (n = 25), female respondents used concern for the victim in responses to all items except 2, 5, and 10 as is shown below:

I hope I didn't hurt you [3].

Are you ok [9]?

5. **Cursing the cause of the violation;** In 3.0% of the situations (n = 6), male respondents cursed the cause of the violation to express their regret in response to items 3, and 10 as shown in the following examples;



Damn it! Crazy driver [3]!

Oh, damn it [10]!

It is worth noting that this strategy was not used by any female respondent.

6. **Expression of love;** In 2.0% of the situations (n = 4), male respondents expressed their love in response to items 5, and 6 as is shown below:

I love you [6].

Let me kiss and hug you [5].

While, in only 1.0% of the situations (n = 2), female respondents used this strategy in response to Items 5, and 6 as is shown below:

I love you babe [5]

Love you [6].

7. **Gratitude;** In 1.5% of the situations (n = 3), Iranian male respondents used gratitude in response to item 6 as is shown in the following examples:

I really appreciate you [6].

It's really sweet of you [6].

On the other hand, in 0.5% of the situations (n = 1), female respondents used gratitude in response to item 1 as is shown in the following example:

I would like to appreciate you for what you have done to me, thanks a lot [1].

8. **Asking victim not to be angry or worry;** In only 1.0% of the situations

(n = 1), male respondents asked victim not to be worry or angry in response to items 1 and 10. Examples of the use of this strategy are:

Don't worry about it [1].

Take it easy [10].

Female respondents did not use this strategy in response to any of the items.

9. **Using idioms;** In 0.5% situations (n = 1), Iranian male respondents used this strategy in response to Item 6 as is shown in the following example:

I'm down in the mouth buddy for being late [6].

Female respondents did not use this strategy at all.

10. **Invoking Allah's name;** In 1.3% of the situations (n = 5), female respondents mentioned Allah's (God's) name to show that everything is by the hand of Allah and his will, in response to items 1, 4, 5, and 6 as shown in the following examples;

We will go there tomorrow "Insha'Allah" [5].

God knows it wasn't my fault [1].

This strategy was not used by any Iranian male respondent.

Overall, the most frequently used strategies by both male and female respondents are "accounts", "referral compensation/ reparation", "expression of self-deficiency", "compensation", and reparation. "Using idioms", "asking victim not to be angry or worry", "justify the hearer", and "gratitude" have been the least frequently used strategies.

Finally, it is worth noting that strategies like “asking victim not to be angry or worry”, “using idioms”, and “cursing the cause of the violation” were not applied by any of the female respondents.

#### **4.2.4 Summary**

In the previous sections, the finding related to the apology strategies of male and female respondents were presented and analysed. To suggest a summarized answer to the first research question, the main findings related to the first research question is provided in this section. The first research question is: what are the apology strategies used by Iranian respondents?

The findings show that male respondents used more “accounts”, “compensation”, “self-castigation”, and “promise of better time” to attain the victim’s forgiveness. The reason is that they were willing to make excuses, repair the damage instead of helping the victim forget the harm and postpone the compensation. They were also proud, thankful, unconcern about the victim, and expressed their love easier than females.

Similarly, female respondents used apology strategies of “accounts” 35.0%, “referral compensation or reparation” 15.5%, “expression of self-deficiency” 14.0%, “concern for the victim” 12.5%, “reparation” 11.5 %, “compensation” 9.5 %, “promise of better time” 9.0%, “expression of embarrassment” 6.5%, “explicit self-blame” 5.0%, “promise of forbearance” 4.0%, “lack of intent”, “self-castigation” 3.5%, “invoking Allah’s name” 2.5%, “justify the hearer” 1.5%, “expression of love” 1.0%, and “gratitude” 0.5%”. This reveals the following facts about them:

1. Referral compensation and reparation were mostly used by female respondents.

2. They assigned responsibility to themselves to clear up the situation for which they are apologizing.
3. They blamed themselves for the offence and promised not to do the violation in future to reveal how unbecoming their action was.
4. They justified the hearer more to lessen the deleterious effect of the violence on the victim.
5. They asserted that no one is blameless.
6. They invoked Allah's name to show their honesty.

Thus, as argued in the literature review, this is definitely relevant to shy and polite nature of the females (Austin, 1962; Brown and Levinsons, 1978; Sealr, 1979).

### **4.3 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

In this section the findings related to the second research question will be presented and analyzed. The second research question of the study is: what kinds of non-apology strategies do Iranian ESL students use most often?

#### **4.3.1 Non-apology Strategies**

Non-apology strategies are the strategies that the wrongdoer uses in order not to take responsibility for the offence. The wrongdoer instead blames the victim, offends the victim, brushes off the incident as unimportant, or avoids the subject or the victim.

Table 4.4 shows non-apology strategies used by Iranian male respondents in ascending order of frequency.

Table 4.4 Non-Apology Strategies Used by Male and Female Respondents

Strategies		Items												
		Gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N	%
1	Denial of Responsibility	M	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.5
		F	6	2	6	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	19	9.5
2	Avoidance of subject or person	M	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1.0
		F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Blaming the victim	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.5
		F	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	1.5
4	Laughing the incident Off	M	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
		F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	Brushing off the incident as not important	M	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
		F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.5
6	Offending the victim forgiveness	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

As shown in the table above, Iranian male and female respondents used the following non-apology strategies:

**1. Denial of responsibility;** In 1.5% of the situations (n = 3), male respondents did not take responsibility for the offence in response to items 1, 2, and 3 as shown in the following examples;

It wasn't my fault [1].

It wasn't my mistake [3].

On the other hand, in 9.5% of the situations (n = 19), female respondents did not take responsibility for the offence in response to all items except 4, 5, 7, and 9 as shown in the following examples;

It wasn't my fault [1].

It wasn't in my hand and I couldn't do anything [2].

**2. Avoidance of subject or person;** In 1.0% of the situations (n = 2), male respondents attempted to avoid discussing the offence.

**3. Blaming the victim;** In 0.5% of the situations (n = 1), male respondents blamed the victim for the violation in response to item 9 as shown in the following example:

Watch out [9]!

While, in 1.5% of the situations (n = 3), female respondents blamed the victim for the violation in response to item 5 as shown in the following example:

You should have reminded me [5].

Why you didn't call me [5]?

**4. Laughing the incident off;** In only one situation a male respondent used laughing the incident off as a non-apology strategy. This was obvious in response to item 1. Example is:

Hehehe [1].

**5. Brushing off the incident as not important;** only one of the male respondents tried to persuade the victim that the offence is not very important as is shown in response to item 1. Example of the use of this strategy is:

Take it easy [1].

Similarly, only one of the female respondents tried to persuade the victim that the offence is not very important as is shown in response to item 10. Example of the use of this strategy is:

One day makes no difference [10].

Overall, “denial of responsibility” has been most frequently applied by male and female respondents. “Laughing the incident off” and “brushing off the incident as unimportant” have been rarely used. This very little use of these strategies shows that Iranian male and female participants do not tend to pretend the offence as unimportant, and try to use other apology or even no-apology strategies to deal with the situations. Moreover, offending the victim was not used by any Iranian male or female respondent. In the end, it should be noted that laughing the incident off, avoidance of subject or person, and offending the victim were not used by any female respondent.

#### **4.3.2 Summary**

In this section, by looking at the findings about the non-apology strategies used by respondents, the researcher suggests a summarized answer to the second research question: what kinds of non-apology strategies do Iranian ESL students use most often?

Although denial of responsibility, and blaming the victim were mainly employed by female participants, male respondents used different types of non-apology strategies such as laughing the incidents off, and avoidance of subject or person. This might be due to the fact that male respondents wanted to evade hard situation of apologizing and avoid making more mistakes toward the offended. By contrast, female respondents attempted to assure the victim that what happened was totally out of their control in order to keep and save their relationship with the victim. It is worth noting that offending the victim was not used by any respondents because in Persian culture, people’s feeling, face, and belongings are fully respected and all human beings are considered as different parts of the same body.

In general, neither male nor female participants used non-apology strategies as frequently as they used apology strategies, and IFIDs.

#### **4.4 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 3**

The third research question asks: to what extent are the Iranian respondents' strategy use related to gender? In the following sections the differences between male and female respondents' use of apology and non-apology strategies will be presented and analysed using the significant difference levels.

The significance level that is conventionally used in statistical tests is 0.05 or 5%. This significance level is also referred to as the *P* value. When the *P* value is greater than the prespecified significance level of 0.05, we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups of respondent, regarding a certain variable. Hence, it is decided that the difference observed was produced by chance. In this study, differences between the two groups were tested by the Chi-square test. The results were considered to be significant if  $P < .05$ .

##### **4.4.1 Differences in Use of Apology Strategies Based on Gender**

Illocutionary Force Indicative Device (IFID) and verbal expressions are two main apology strategies used by Iranian male and female respondents. In this section the statistical differences between male and female respondents in using apology strategies will be presented and discussed.

###### **4.4.1.1 IFID**

As is shown in table 4.5, Iranian male and female respondents were unlike in using explicit expressions of apology.



Table 4.5 Statistical Comparison of Male and Female Respondents in Using IFDI

IFID		Male		Female		Total		P Value
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	One expression of regret	56	28.0	79	39.5	135	33.8	0.015
2	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	58	29.0	85	42.5	143	35.8	0.005
3	One expression of regret and two intensifiers	1	0.5	7	3.5	8	2.0	0.032
4	One expression of regret and three intensifiers	0	0	1	0.5	1	0.3	0.317
5	An offer of apology	38	19.0	15	7.5	53	13.3	0.001
6	A request for forgiveness	16	8.0	25	12.5	41	10.3	0.138

The IFID strategies used by these respondents were significantly different in four out of six cases. As shown in Table 4.5, the female respondents used the first three IFIDs significantly more frequently than the male respondents. These IFIDs were “one expression of regret”, “one expression of regret and 1 intensifier”, and “one expression of regret and two intensifiers”; the corresponding *P* values were 0.015, 0.005, and 0.032 respectively. However, the fifth IFID, which is “an offer of apology”, was used more frequently by male respondents (*P* = 0.001). These differences indicate that female respondents tend to use one or two intensifiers such as “very” or “really” to express their regret, while male respondents do so by offering an apology.

#### 4.4.1.2 Apology Strategies based on Cohen and Olshtain’s (1981) Categorization

Table 4.6 displays the statistical comparison of male and female respondents in using apology strategies based on Cohen and Olshtain’s (1981) categorization.

Table 4.6 Statistical Comparison of Male and Female Respondents in Using Apology Strategies: Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) Categorization

Strategies		Male		Female		Total		P value
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	Accounts	78	39.0	70	35.0	148	37.0	0.407
2	Expression of self-deficiency	21	10.5	28	14.0	49	12.3	0.286
3	Self-castigation	16	8.0	7	3.5	23	5.8	0.053
4	Expression of embarrassment	7	3.5	13	6.5	20	5.0	0.169
5	Lack of intent	6	3.0	8	4.0	14	3.5	0.586
6	Promise of forbearance	6	3.0	8	4.0	14	3.5	0.586
7	Explicit self-blame	3	1.5	10	5.0	13	3.3	0.048
8	Justify the hearer	1	0.5	3	1.5	4	1.0	0.315
9	Reparation	17	8.5	23	11.5	40	10.0	0.317

As highlighted in the table, male and female respondents were not significantly different in using the apology strategies suggested by Cohen and Olshtain's (1981), as in only one out of nine strategies, the *P* value is less than 0.05. In other words, female respondents used significantly more instance of "explicit expression of self-blame", compared to male respondents ( $P = 0.048$ ). In all the other strategies, no significant level was observed. These findings indicate that using different apology strategies in various social situations by Iranian ESL students does not depend on gender.

#### 4.4.1.3 Apology Strategies Based on the Researcher's Categorization

Table 4.7 displays the statistical comparison of male and female respondents in using apology strategies based on (1981) the researcher's categorization.

Table 4.7 Statistical Comparison of Male and Female Respondents in Using Apology Strategies: Researcher's Categorization

Strategies		Male		Female		Total		P value
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	Compensation	26	13.0	19	9.5	45	11.3	0.268
2	Referral compensation or reparation	24	12.0	31	15.5	55	13.8	0.309
3	Promise of better time	20	10.0	18	9.0	38	9.5	0.733
4	Concern for the victim	13	6.5	25	12.5	38	9.5	0.041
5	Cursing the cause of the violation	6	3.0	0	0	6	1.5	0.014
6	Expression of love	4	2.0	2	1.0	6	1.5	0.411
7	Gratitude	3	1.5	1	0.5	4	1.0	0.315
8	Asking victim not to be angry or worry	2	1.0	0	0	2	0.5	0.156
9	Using idioms	1	0.5	0	0	1	0.3	0.317
10	Invoking Allah's Name	0	0	5	2.5	5	1.3	0.024

The highlighted fields in the table above show that except for three out of 10 strategies, there is no statistically significant difference between the groups considering the number and type of apology strategies used. Once more, it is observable that gender does not play an important role when using apology strategies

among the respondents.

#### 4.4.2 Differences in Use of Non-apology Strategies Based on Gender

Table 4.8 compares the use of non-apology strategies between the male and female participants.

Table 4.8 Statistical Comparison of Male and Female Respondents in Using Non-apology Strategies

Strategies		Male		Female		Total		P value
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	Denial of Responsibility	3	1.5	19	9.5	22	5.5	0.000
2	Avoidance of subject or person	2	1.0	0	0	2	0.5	0.156
3	Blame the victim	1	0.5	3	1.5	4	1.0	0.315
4	Laughing the incident Off	1	0.5	0	0	1	0.3	0.317
5	Brush off the incident as not important	1	0.5	1	0.5	2	0.5	1.000
6	Offending the victim	0	0	0	0	0	0	N/A*

\*N/A=Not Applicable (No statistics are computed because Non-apology Strategy 6 is a constant)

As shown in the table above, in general, except for the significantly more uses of “denial of responsibility”, by the female respondents, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female participants in the use of other non-apology strategies. As highlighted before, “offending the victim” was not used by any Iranian respondents because in the Persian culture, people’s feelings, face, and belongings are fully respected. That is why, Iranians tend to apologize for the offences they commit and do not resort to non-apology strategies.

#### 4.4.3 Summary

This section will provide a summarized answer to the third research question: to what extent are the Iranian respondents’ strategy use related to gender?

To sum up the significant differences used by male and female respondents, Table 4.9 illustrates only the statistically significant levels in the use of IFIDs, apology strategies, and non-apology strategies.

Table 4.9 Significant Differences in IFID, Apology, and Non-apology Strategies

<b>Strategies</b>		Male		Female		Total		<b>P value</b>
		<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	
<b>IFID</b>								
<b>1</b>	One expression of regret	56	28.0	79	39.5	135	33.8	0.015
<b>2</b>	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	58	29.0	85	42.5	143	35.8	0.005
<b>3</b>	One expression of regret and two intensifiers	1	0.5	7	3.5	8	2.0	0.032
<b>4</b>	An offer of apology	38	19.0	15	7.5	53	13.3	0.001
<b>Apology Strategies</b>								
<b>5</b>	Explicit self-blame	3	1.5	10	5.0	13	3.3	0.048
<b>6</b>	Concern for the victim	13	6.5	25	12.5	38	9.5	0.041
<b>7</b>	Cursing the cause of the violation	6	3.0	0	0	6	1.5	0.014
<b>8</b>	Invoking Allah's Name	0	0	5	2.5	5	1.3	0.024
<b>Non-apology Strategies</b>								
<b>9</b>	Denial of Responsibility	3	1.5	19	9.5	22	5.5	0.000

As displayed in the table above, male and female respondents showed significantly different used of strategies in the 10 situations given in the DCT. As highlighted in the Table 4.9 except for one IFID and one apology strategy, female respondents have used more IFIDs, apology strategies and non-apology strategies than the male respondents have.

Regarding IFIDs female respondents have used more instances of “expression of regret” while male respondents have offered more apologies. These differences indicate that the female respondents have felt more regret and sorrow for the offences they have caused, and attempted to express this feeling. Male respondents, on the other, did not expressed much sorrow or emotions, and simply offered and apology to ratify the situation. Based on this interpretation, we can conclude that females feel sorry and

regret the violation they cause much more often than males, and that males politely offer an apology and do not get emotional about the situations.

Similarly, in the apology strategies category, females showed significantly more emotions by using “explicit self blame” or “concern for the victim”. On the other hand, males cursed the cause of the violation significantly more than females.

The non-apology strategy of “denial of responsibility” was used more frequently by females. This denial is due to the fact that females tend to show that the cause of the incident or the offence was out of their control. Therefore, they deny the responsibility but at the same time, they use regret and intensifiers to express their sorrow for the violation. One can also argue that female respondents attempted to cast the blame on someone or something else other than themselves to imply to the hearer that they did not commit the violence on purpose. They did so with an aim to show that their relation with the hearer is very important to them and they do not want the victim to think that the violation had been on purpose.

#### **4.5 ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTION 4**

This section will attempt to suggest answers to the second research question: what are the apology and non-apology strategies used by the Iranian ESL students that are influenced by Iranian culture and the Persian language?

##### **4.5.1 Effects of the Persian Culture on the Use of Strategies**

As Wierzbicka (1985) claimed, “different preferences in the use of apology forms seem to be rooted in different cultural norms and assumptions”. As discussed in Chapter Two, in the Persian culture, people’s feelings, face, and belongings are highly respected. Iranians are eager to have successful communication and care for keeping

their close relationships. It was also pointed out that, traditionally, asking for forgiveness and apologizing was considered a face-threatening act; however, modern and educated Iranians apologize more often and consider this as a polite behaviour and the norm of a modern society.

The most frequently used IFIDs used by the participants of this study were “one expression of regret and one intensifier”, which was used 143 times (35.8%), and “one expression of regret”, which was used 135 times (35.8%). These findings prove that Iranians care very much for others and feel sorry when they unintentionally hurt the people around them. They express this regret by using intensifiers such as “very” or “really”.

Based on Afghari (2007), “Persian apologies are as formulaic in pragmatic structures. Two context-external variables of social distance and social dominance have a crucial effect on the frequency of apology intensifiers in various situations. The most intensified apologies are used for close friends and the least intensified are offered to strangers”. Similarly, except for situation 7, where the victim is a stranger (a university staff), the participants of the present study used the most number of intensifiers and IFIDs in situations 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, in which the victims are close friends, university professors or family members. However, in situation 9, which asks, “as you are carrying a chair in the lobby of the university, you hurt a fellow student’s hand accidentally. What would you say?”, includes the most number of IFIDs, especially an “expression of regret” with one or two intensifiers.

In another study, Shariati and Chamani (2009) stated that “apologies in Persian are formulaic and culture specific. Although Persian speakers use the same apology

strategies, IFID with a request for forgiveness is used more than the others. Moreover, a combination of IFID with taking on responsibility is used in all situations”.

On the other hand, by looking at the apology strategies, we can see that the most frequently used apology strategy was “accounts”, which was used 148 times (almost 40%) by the respondents. The next most frequently used was “an expression of self-deficiency” which was used only 49 times. These findings show together with the most frequently used “expression of regret” show that Iranians feel sorry and express their regret when they commit an offence or hurt somebody, and they also try to give an explanation and justify the offence. The most numbers of accounts were used in situations 1, 2 4, and 8, where the victim is a close friend or the speakers university lecturer. This shows that, the participants cared very much to explain the situation and account for the offence. Denial of responsibility together with the explanation used in situations 1 and 2, highlight the fact that Iranians tend to blame other causes such as traffic jams or other excuses to express that they did not commit the violation or offence on purpose, and the cause of the violation was something out of their control.

Furthermore, Afghari (2007) adds that except promise of forbearance, which is rarely applied by Persian speakers, accounts and reparation are the most common strategies among them. Afghari’s report is in line with the findings of this study as, the most frequent apology strategies used by the respondents in this study has also been accounts, compensation and reparation.

Regarding non-apology strategies, as discussed before, the participants did not use so many of these kind of strategies. The total number of non-apology strategies used by respondents is only, which is very few compared to the number of apology strategies and IFIDs used. This signifies the fact Iranians care for the people they deal with, no



matter what their social status or their relationship is. They regret the offences they make and they attempt to explain and compensate the violations. The use of denial of responsibility, which was the most frequently used non-apology strategy, highlights the same fact. By denying the responsibility for the violation, Iranians aim to express a third party or issue that was responsible for the offence. This denial is a kind of explanation they add to the account strategies they have used in every situation.

#### **4.5.2 Effects of the Persian Language on the Use of Strategies**

Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) investigated the effectiveness of direct instructing of apology strategies. The findings revealed that this teaching was beneficial. Students' lack of sociopragmatics proficiency forced them to use more intensifiers. The aim of their study was to give teachers and learners awareness of socio-cultural and sociolinguistic differences to realize the reason of failure in communication. They believed that Persian L2 learners should be exposed to the usual apology strategies used by native speakers to refuse negative transfer "excuse me" of Persian apology. From their point of view, it is essential for material developers, and teachers to give more importance to apology speech act.

According to Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010), "EFL learners tend to transfer their sociopragmatic strategies of intensifiers from their first language to make exaggeration in the context of second language use" (p. 101). They further argue "In Iran, people wish to present a positive self-image of themselves through an overuse of intensifiers in their apology. In other words, they apologize strongly in contexts where there is little need to apologize" (p. 101). These claims are in accordance with the findings from this study. One expression of regret, such as "I'm sorry" or "excuse me" with one intensifier was used 143 times, and an expression of regret with two

intensifiers was used 8 times (7 of which were used by females) in all of the 10 situations given in the questionnaire. Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010) conclude, “given the same level of offence or mistake in the same social context Iranian people tend to apologize more frequently than a native speaker with frequent use of intensifiers”.

The findings of this study also reveal the over use of “Excuse me” by Persian native speakers. The words “excuse me” are literal translation of “bebakhshid” in Persian, which is used very frequently by Iranian ESL or EFL learners in situations where this expression is not used in the English language. Rojo (2005) suggests and quotes a suitable definition of an apology as a “compensatory action for an offence committed by S [the speaker] which has affected H [the hearer]” (Márquez Reiter, 2000, P. 44). According to Goffman (1971), apologies are *remedial interchanges*, “which aim at re-establishing social harmony after a real or virtual offence has been performed”. He distinguishes “between (1) apologies, which rectify a virtual offence, “often realized by an *apologetic formula*” (e.g. “Excuse me”/“bebakhshid”), and (2) “those which remedy real damage on the victim, which apart from an apologetic formula might also require an offer of material compensation (e.g. “I’m sorry. I promise I’ll fix it”)”.

In American English, *excuse me* is used to attract someone’s attention or to for instance leave a room or a table due to a reason. While, *I’m sorry* is used to apologize or to express sympathy for someone who has experienced something sad or disappointing. In Persian the expression” bebakhshid” is used in both situations and the difference in meaning is realized from the context it is used in. That is why Iranian ESL and EFL learners tend to over use or misuse “excuse me”. The following are some wrong uses of “excuse me” by the participants:

**Awkward structures:**

Please accept my excuse. [2]

I expect you to accept my excuse. [2]

**Inappropriate situations:**

Excuse me! I had a bad cold and I wasn't able to go out. [2]

Oh, excuse me, I didn't mean to step on your foot. [3]

Excuse me! That was not my fault. [3]

Excuse me! [3]

Excuse me; something happened to me that I could not return this form on time. [4]

Excuse me, I should have filled it up two days ago [4]

Excuse me buddy, I'm late. I overslept. [6]

The above examples are only some of the instance that the participants of this study have wrongly used “excuse me” when they attempted to apologize or sympathize with the victims. This over use and misuse of this English expression can cause misunderstanding and can also be offensive in certain situations. The participants of this study were MESL and English literature students of the University of Malaya. These types of errors by ESL learners of such high proficiency students confirms the need for pragmatic and sociopragmatic lessons in TESOL to ensure that learners are aware of these cultural and linguistic differences across languages and cultures.

According to Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010), “The syllabus designers need to expose the learners to the patterns used most commonly by English native speakers. In this way the L2 learners avoid using repetitive use Persian apology “*excuse me*” which is a result of negative transfer”. They have also experimented and concluded that explicit teaching of apology speech acts can improve and enhance the students’ use of

the speech acts of apology. To have a review of the types of situations that appeared on the questionnaire in this study, Table 4.10 shows the type of violation, and the victim in each of the ten situations laid out on the questionnaire given to the participants of this study.

Table 4.10 Strategies Used in Each Situation

Sit.	Violation	Victim	Most Strategies Used		
			Type	Strategy	N
1	Damaging someone's notes due to rain	your friend	<i>IFID*</i>	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	16
			<i>AS*</i>	Accounts	20
			<i>NAS*</i>	Denial of Responsibility	7
2	Not attending a class to deliver a lecture due to bad cold	your professor	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	16
			<i>AS</i>	Accounts	29
			<i>NAS</i>	Denial of Responsibility	3
3	Stepping on a someone's foot	a fellow student	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret	22
			<i>AS</i>	Concern for the victim	10
			<i>NAS</i>	Denial of responsibility	7
4	Submitting a form with a two-day delay	a university staff	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret	16
			<i>AS</i>	Accounts	30
			<i>NAS</i>	-	0
5	Forgetting to take someone to the cinema and keeping them waiting	your younger sister/brother	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	14
			<i>AS</i>	Expression of self-deficiency	16
			<i>NAS</i>	Blaming the victim	3
6	Arriving one hour late to a meeting with someone	your close friend	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	16
			<i>AS</i>	Accounts	14
			<i>NAS</i>	Denial of Responsibility	3
7	Accidentally spilling a cup of tea on someone's desk	a university staff	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret & 1 intensifier	24
			<i>AS</i>	Compensation	18
			<i>NAS</i>	-	0
8	Arriving with a 45-minute delay to meet someone due to heavy traffic	your supervisor	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret	17
			<i>AS</i>	Accounts	32
			<i>NAS</i>	Blaming the victim	1
9	Accidentally hurting someone's hand	a fellow student	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret	24
			<i>AS</i>	Concern for the victim	18
			<i>NAS</i>	Blaming the victim	1
10	Forgetting to buy someone a book you have promised	your younger sister/ brother	<i>IFID</i>	One expression of regret	14
			<i>AS</i>	Expression of self-deficiency	18
			<i>AS</i>	Promise of better time	18
			<i>NAS</i>	-	0

\*IFID: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device

\*AS: Apology Strategy, \*NAS: Non-apology Strategy

## 4.6 CONCLUSION

This study investigated native Persian-speaking ESL university students' apology strategies based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) framework, encompassing non-apology strategies to find out differences attributed to gender. The findings showed that Iranian participants (males and females) applied different percentages of strategies. Unlike Iranian males, Iranian females employed more IFID and apology strategies to keep their successful relationships with the victim. Even if both groups used non-apology strategies in their responses, male respondents used various types of non-apology strategies to get rid of difficult situation of apologizing. Considering significance levels, the IFID strategies used by female respondents were significantly more. While, in general, except for a few strategies, there was not any significant difference between respondents considering the number and type of apology and non-apology strategies used, which means, on the whole, gender did not play a significant role. Furthermore, students' L1 and culture influenced the choice of strategies used (Afghari, 2007; Shariati and Chamani, 2009; Eslami-rasekh and Mardani, 2010).

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study investigated native Persian-speaking ESL university students' apologies strategies based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) frame work, including those which didn't imply an apology. The population of the study consisted of one selected group of 40 Iranian postgraduate ESL students (20 males, 20 females) ranged between 24-35 from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics and the Faculty of Education at University of Malaya. The respondents were homogeneous in their cultural background and academic/linguistic experiences. They were supposed to read each situation and consider themselves in the situation and write down their normal reaction. The open questionnaire employed in this study "was a modified version of Discourse Completion Test" applied in CCSARP project (Blum-Kulka, 1982). This modified version was prepared and used by Afghari (2007).The researcher used it as a controlled data elicitation technique that was submitted to statistical analysis. It included an introduction, a part for gathering participants' demographic information, and 10 fixed discourse situations that warranted apologies in English. Responses to the questionnaire were coded and fed to the computer using the SPSS package. The researcher identified all apology strategies comprising non-apology strategies to find out variations that may be assign to gender and culture.

In this chapter, the summary of the main findings will be presented in relation to the three research questions of the study, besides, concluding remarks the researcher's suggestion for additional research will be given.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. What are the apology strategies used by Iranian ESL students?
2. What kinds of non-apology strategies do Iranian ESL students use most often?
3. To what extent are the Iranian respondents' strategy use related to gender?
4. What are the apology and non-apology strategies used by the Iranian ESL students that are influenced by Iranian culture and the Persian language?

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN FINDINGS**

In the following sections, after a brief description of the participants, the main findings will be presented.

### **5.2.1 The Participants**

The participants of the study consisted of one selected group of 40 Iranian postgraduate ESL students (20 males, 20 females) ranged between 24-35 from the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics and the Faculty of Education at University of Malaya. The respondents were relatively homogeneous in terms of their cultural background and academic/linguistic experiences.

### **5.2.2 Research Question 1: Most Frequently Used IFIDs**

This section will suggest some answers to the first research question: what are the apology strategies used by Iranian ESL students?

This study revealed that Iranian male and female respondents used different percentages of IFID strategies,

- “One expression of regret” (33.8%),
- “One expression of regret and one intensifier” (35.8%),

- “One expression of regret and two intensifiers” (2.0%),
- “One expression of regret and three intensifiers” (3.0%),
- “An offer of apology” (13.3%),
- “A request for forgiveness” (10.3%).

Overall, it is worth noting that “one expression of regret and one intensifier” and “one expression of regret” has been the most frequently used IFIDs by Iranian male and female participants, in 35.8 and 33.8% percent of the instance respectively. On the other hand, one expression of regret and two or three intensifiers seem to be the least frequently used strategies, being used only in 2.0% and 3% of the instances.

Unlike their male counterparts, Iranian female respondents used more IFID strategies with more intensified expressions of regret. This is due to the fact that they were willing to express their extreme and profound regret to keep their successful relationship with the victim. Besides, they used these direct apologies to avoid the risk of misinterpretation. This is consistent with many studies in literature review that revealed a direct apology in many combinations (Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Holmes, 1990, Barnlund & Yoshiko, 1990; Nagano, 1985; Taghuchi, 1991). On the other hand, Iranian male respondents offered an apology instead of requesting for forgiveness as to keep their high social status and save their face, while Iranian female respondents requested for forgiveness more to save the victim’s face. This is in accordance with what mentioned by other researchers as well (Austin, 1962; Brown and Levinsons, 1978; Searle, 1979).

### **5.2.3 Research Question 1: Most Frequently Used Apology Strategies**

The apology strategies most frequently employed by Iranian male and female participants are as follows:



- “Accounts” 37.0%,
- “Referral compensation or reparation” 13.8%,
- “Expression of self-deficiency” 12.3%,
- “Compensation” 11.3%,
- “Reparation” 10.0 %,
- “Promise of better time” 9.5 %,
- “Concern for the victim” 9.5%,
- “Self-castigation” 5.8%,
- “Expression of embarrassment” 5.0%.

The apology strategies least frequently used by male and female respondents are as follows:

- “Promise of forbearance” 3.5 %,
- “Lack of intent” 3.5 %,
- “Explicit self-blame” 3.3%,
- “Lack of intent” 2.36%,
- “Cursing the cause of the violation” 1.5%,
- “Expression of love” 1.5%,
- “Invoking Allah’s name” 1.3%,
- Gratitude” 1.0%,
- “Justify the hearer” 1.0%,
- “Asking victim not to be angry or worry” 0.5%,
- “Using idioms” 0.3%’.

The results indicates that apology strategies like accounts, compensation, self-castigation, and promise of better time were mostly used by male participants because

they were willing to make excuses, fix the damage instead of helping the victim forget the offence, and delay the compensation. They were grateful, unconcern about the victim, and showed their love easier than females.

#### **5.2.4 Research Question 2: Most Frequently Used Non-apology Strategies**

In this section a summary of the findings regarding the participants' most and least frequently used non-apology strategies will be provided aiming to provide answers to the third research question of this study: what kinds of non-apology strategies do Iranian ESL students use most often?

The male and female respondents applied the following non-apology strategies:

- “denial of responsibility”
- “blaming the victim”
- “avoidance of subject or person”
- “brush off the incident as not important
- “laughing the incidents off”

Although denial of responsibility was mainly used by female respondents, male respondents used different types of non-apology strategies such as laughing the incidents off, and avoidance of subject or person. This might be due to the fact that male respondents wanted to evade hard situation of apologizing and avoid making more mistakes toward the offended. By contrast, female respondents attempted to assure the victim that what happened was totally out of their control in order to keep and save their relationship with the victim. So, as mentioned in the literature review, this is definitely relevant to shy and polite nature of the females (Austin (1962), Brown and Levinsons (1978), and Searle (1979). It is worth noting that offending the victim was not used by

any respondents because in Persian culture, people's feeling, face, and belongings are fully respected and all human beings are considered as different parts of the same body.

In general, neither male nor female participants used non-apology strategies as frequently as they used apology strategies, and IFIDs.

### **5.2.5 Research Question 3: Role of Gender in the Use of Strategies**

The third research question asks: to what extent are the Iranian respondents' strategy use related to gender?

As displayed in chapter four, IFID strategies used by male and female respondents were significantly different and it was markedly consistent with the ones stated in literature review (Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989; Tannen, 1990; Bergman and Kasper, 1993; Holmes, 1995; Bataine, 2006; Mahmoud S.M Abu Amoud, 2008; Afghari, 2007). Female respondents employed more expression of regret while male respondents offered more apologies. Females employed one expression of regret, one expression of regret and one intensifier, and one expression of regret and two intensifiers. It indicates that they felt more remorse about their offences and tried to express their feelings, but males simply offered an apology and did not get emotional about the situation. On the other hand, male and female respondents were not significantly different in using apology strategies and gender did not play a significant role in this case. Moreover, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female respondents in using non-apology strategies except for the use of denial of responsibility. Female respondents used more denial of responsibility to assure the victim that what happened was totally out of their control in order to save their relationship with the victim. It should be noted that offending the victim was not used by any respondent

## **5.2.6 Research Question 4: Effects of the Iranian Culture and the Persian**

### **Language**

According to Afghari (2007), Iranians use intensified apologies for close friends and the least intensified ones for strangers. Similarly, the participants of this study employed so many intensifiers and IFIDs for close friends, university professors or family members. It indicates that Iranians try to express their remorse by using intensified apologies. By considering the apology strategies, we can see that “accounts” and “expression of self-deficiency” are the most frequently used apology strategies. It shows that they attempt to explain and justify the situation to assure the victim that they did not commit the offence on purpose. The most frequent apology strategies used by the participants has also been “compensation” and “reparation”. Furthermore, Iranians did not use a lot of non-apology strategies which were few compared to the apology strategies and IFIDs used. By denying the responsibility, they wanted to show a third party or an issue that was responsible for the violation. On the other hand, the results show the over use of ‘excuse me’ by Persian native speakers. Iranians use it as a literal translation of “bebakhshid” in Persian to apologize or express sympathy with the victim and the difference in meaning is comprehended from the context it is used in. In American English, however, “excuse me” is employed to catch someone’s attention and “I’m sorry” is used to apologize or express sympathy for someone. So, the culture and the students’ L1 influenced the choice of strategies used in many situations. These conclusions are remarkably consistent with the ones presented in literature review (Afghari, 2007; Shariati and Chamani, 2009; Eslami-Rasekh and mardani, 2010). Based on Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani (2010), “the syllabus designers need to expose the learners to the patterns used most commonly by English native speakers”. So, L2

learners who are Iranian should avoid using “excuse me” in situations where “sorry” is more appropriate to avoid negative transfer.

### **5.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

As mentioned before, L2 teaching should help the learners use language in social contexts and give them enough knowledge of combining utterances and communicative functions (Canal & Swain, 1980). Bachman (1990) argued that “Learners need to know grammar, text organization rules, and the pragmatic aspects of the target language to acquire rules for proper application of linguistic forms”. Unfortunately, pragmatics is usually overlooked in the L2 instruction that traditionally gives prominence to grammar and lexicon. According to Olshtain and Cohen (1981), formal instructions on the use of speech acts can accelerate the process of learning the target language. Studies reveal that apology is perceived as an intricate interaction by learners who want to reestablish the broken balance between themselves and the interlocutors. They have to realize the extent of their fault in violating social norms and provide enough support to their interlocutors. So, due to the fact that the speech act of apology plays a significant role in their communication, more extensive explorations should be done by the other scholars. The researcher’s recommendations for further study are as follows:

1. Using other instruments such as role plays, interviews, and observations in data collection.
2. Conducting a comparative study between respondents and native speakers of English.
3. Investigating the acceptance of apology by the victim.

4. Finding out the most effective apology strategies that may increase the attainability of the victim's forgiveness.
5. Pondering some supra segmental features like pitch and ton.
6. Examining how females apologize to males or vice versa.
7. Increasing the number of respondents.
8. Comparing EFL and ESL learner's apology strategies.
9. Comparing learners with different levels of English fluency.
10. Administering this study comparing various cultures and languages.
11. Examining pragmatic transfer among Iranian students in the ESL classroom.