

**APOLOGY STRATEGIES IN MALAY AMONG MALAYSIAN  
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
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KUALA LUMPUR**

**2018**

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MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF LINGUISTICS**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

**2018**

**UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA**  
**ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION**

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Title of Dissertation: Apology Strategies in Malay Among Malaysian  
University Students

Field of Study: Pragmatics

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports on a study that was carried out to describe the apology strategies utilized by Malaysian university students in the Malay language in six apology situations. For this purpose, data were elicited from 40 Malaysian university students through a *Discourse completion tasks* questionnaire. The participants were of the same language proficiency. Results of the study showed certain strategies appear more frequent than the others and that context plays an important role in the choices of apology strategies used. Other than that, they are more inclined towards the positive politeness, and they remain 'polite' in the sense they try to be courteous. The findings of this study might be of pedagogical help and significance to teachers, students and those interested in pragmatics in general and apology speech act in particular.

## ABSTRAK

Disertasi ini merupakan hasil kajian yang dilaksanakan untuk menggambarkan strategi memohon maaf dalam enam situasi menggunakan Bahasa Melayu yang diamalkan oleh pelajar-pelajar universiti Malaysia. Untuk tujuan tersebut, data diperoleh dan dikumpul daripada 40 pelajar universiti Malaysia melalui soalselidik Tugas Penyempurnaan Pertuturan (*Discourse completion tasks*). Subjek kajian tersebut memiliki kefasihan berbahasa yang sama. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan beberapa strategi tertentu kelihatannya lebih kerap digunakan oleh subjek berbanding yang lain-lain manakala konteks memainkan peranan penting dalam pemilihan strategi untuk memohon maaf. Selain itu, subjek cenderung terhadap kesopanan positif dan kekal sedemikian dalam ertikata mereka cuba untuk berlaku sopan. Penemuan kajian ini berpotensi membantu secara pedagogi dan bermakna kepada guru, pelajar dan mereka yang berminat dalam pragmatik secara amnya dan perilaku lisan memohon maaf, khususnya.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank my thesis supervisor Ass. Prof. Dr. Toshiko Yamaguchi of the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Malaya. The door to Dr Yamaguchi's office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. She consistently allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right the direction whenever she thought I needed it.

I would also like to thank the experts who were involved in the validation survey for this research project and proof reader, for without their passionate participation and input, the validation survey could not have been successfully conducted.

I would also like to acknowledge the second or third reader of this thesis, and I am gratefully indebted to his/her for his/her very valuable comments on this thesis.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my parents Prof Dr Nasrudin Mohammed and Zaliha Mustapa Kamal, for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout my years of study and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without them. Thank you.

Nasiha Binti Nasrudin

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Abstrak.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
List of Tables .....	viii
List of Appendices .....	x
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1    Problem Statement.....	2
1.2    Research Objectives.....	4
1.3    Research Questions.....	4
1.4    Significance of the Study.....	4
1.5    Limitations of the Study.....	5
1.6    Definition of terms.....	6
1.7    Plan of Study.....	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1    Speech Acts.....	10
2.2    Apology.....	13
2.2.1    Apologies and Politeness Expressions.....	14
2.2.2    Apologies and Context.....	18
2.2.3    Discourse Completion Test.....	20
2.3    Previous Studies on Apology Strategies .....	22
2.4    Malay Culture and Code-Switching.....	29

<b>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>34</b>
3.1 Research Design.....	35
3.2 Population and Sample .....	35
3.3 Instrumentation and Data Collection .....	37
3.4 Data Analysis.....	40
3.5 Coding.....	40
3.6 Pilot Study.....	43
3.7 Ethical Consideration.....	45
3.8 Summary of Chapter.....	45
<b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS .....</b>	<b>46</b>
4.1 Types of Apology Strategies.....	46
4.2 Positive and Negative Politeness Strategies .....	54
4.3 Apologies and Context.....	63
4.3.1 Situation 1:.....	65
4.3.2 Situation 2:.....	68
4.3.3 Situation 3.....	70
4.3.4 Situation 4.....	72
4.3.5 Situation 5.....	74
4.3.6 Situation 6.....	77
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>79</b>
5.1 Summary.....	79
5.2 Conclusion .....	81
5.3 Implications and recommendations .....	84



INDEX .....	86
REFERENCES .....	88
APPENDICES .....	96

University of Malaya

## List of Tables

Table 2.1	Austin’s speech act theory (1962).....	12
Table 2.2	Searle & Vanderveken’s (1985) descriptions of speech acts.....	13
Table 2.3	Holmes’ taxonomy of apology strategies (1990).....	23
Table 2.4	Sets of apology strategies by Fraser (1981) Olshtain & Cohen (1983), and Trosborg (1987, 1995).....	29
Table 2.5	Apology by Cohen & Olshtain (1981) and Trosborg (1987).....	29
Table 2.6	Social factors for code-switching among Malay-English bilinguals (Hadei, Kumar & Jie , 2016).....	32
Table 3.1	Data of Respondents.....	36
Table 3.2	Apology Instrument by Olshtain & Cohen (1983) and Trosborg (1987).....	43
Table 3.3	Negative and politeness strategy by Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009).....	43
Table 3.4	Strategies used to apologize.....	45
Table 4.1	Types of apology strategies.....	48
Table 4.2	Frequency of combination of apology strategies.....	49
Table 4.3	Frequency of apology strategies based on the Negative and positive politeness apology strategy adapted from Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009).....	55
Table 4.4	Six situations adapted from Maros’(2006) DCT questionnaire.....	64
Table 4.5	Situation 1.....	65
Table 4.6	Situation 2.....	68
Table 4.7	Situation 3.....	70
Table 4.8	Situation 4.....	72
Table 4.9	Situation 5.....	75

Table 4.10 Situation 6.....77

University of Malaya

## LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Answers

95

University of Malaya

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A person's communicative competence in a language relies on the way in which linguistic expressions are chosen by their users. One important feature that makes a person competent in a language is the ability to use appropriate sociocultural rules of speaking. In other words, the effectiveness of interactions depends on the speaker's ability to select contextually and stylistically appropriate content and to deliver it in a culturally proper manner (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981).

Different languages require different sets of linguistic regulations that suit each respective culture. Native speakers of a language have acquired the knowledge of rules of that language, and they choose among the speech acts when communicating with others (Wilson, 2016). This is why the findings of several previous researches conducted with regard to speech acts such as those by Paramasivam & Mohamed Nor (2013), Sugimoto (1997), Murad (2012), showed that respondents faced difficulties in using the most appropriate strategies of speech acts in their second or foreign language. They shed light on the cultural differences that affect language users' attempt to express themselves (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008), in other words, the use of speech acts.

Speech acts, originally conceived by the philosopher, John Langshaw Austin, and developed by John Searle, refer to the ways in which speech participants perform on the basis of "acts" they choose. Apologizing is one speech act among many. It is a "counteractive way of treating someone" in order to cease the harm that has been committed (Helmreich, 2015), to preserve the positive identity of an individual in society (Wohl, Hornsey & Philpot, 2011), and to maintain relationships (Kitao & Kitao, 2014). Exchanges and encounters among people of different cultures have increased rapidly since the last decade due to factors such as globalization, tourism and academic exchanges (Al-Shboul, Maros, & Mohd Yasin, 2012). As a multicultural country, where the

population consists of three main ethnics, which are Malay, Indian and Chinese, with several others, many languages are being spoken. The languages being said are Bahasa Malaysia (the national language), English (the second language), Mandarin, Tamil, Punjabi and many more vernacular languages and dialects.

Due to this factor, Malaysia is a fertile ground for studies on culture (Awang, Maros, & Ibrahim, 2012). The diversity of the people makes it possible to compare and contrast between the different ethnics present in the country as the use of speech acts are usually reflecting one's culture. For example, the Malay culture values the display of respect, consideration and concern for each other, and in being sensitive to and anticipating the interests of the other (Goddard, 2006) and the Indian culture values the sense of belonging, brotherhood, family, modesty, participation, hard work, security, face-saving acts, loyalty, champion of causes and harmony (Awang, Maros & Noraini Ibrahim, 2012).

Although both of these ethnics live in the same country, they do have their own ways that they are rooted to. The similarities and differences between the values in each culture might affect the choice of strategy used in performing speech acts, and specifically in respect of the current study, the strategies used to apologies. Therefore, the researcher has chosen to observe and analyse the apology strategies in a Malaysian context.

## **1.1 Problem Statement**

Malaysian authors have observed that speaking politely, by means of proper use of word choice, tone of the voice, facial expression, and body gestures are rarely practiced among the society (Hamzah, Mat Hassan, & Md Adama, 2011). Among the problems that a previous study addressed, the most serious problem is that Malaysians rarely apologize when they made mistakes or spoke in harsh manners with customers, as also mentioned by Rosli (2009).

This is the opposite of how Malaysians are usually described in several previous studies. Although Malaysia is a multicultural country, with Malay, Chinese and Indian as the three major ethnic groups and several other ethnics that make up the majority of East Malaysia, they share some common traits. One common trait that is related to this study is the preservation of face (Zawawi, 2008). Based on this statement, Malaysians are supposed to be polite, in order to preserve each other's face. This is supported by a claim made by Awang, Maros, & Ibrahim (2012), who stated based on the findings of their study that conflict-avoidance and the ability to adapt with the values of other ethnic groups are the two elements that greatly contribute to a harmonious life in the diverse Malaysian setting.

Referring to the claim made by Rosli (2009) regarding apology previously, Juhana (2011) suggested that expressing apology is probably something we should naturally do since in social interactions we cannot avoid from doing something wrong even if we do not intend to do so. Based on the contradicting views regarding this matter, the researcher would like to study whether either of these claims can be supported by the dataset compiled for this study and whether there are other reasons people apologize or do not apologize. Because there has been a dearth of study on this area in Malay language, there is a need to start an investigation as this study aims to help other researchers be aware of different ways of apologizing and also help people understand how politeness strategies relate to them. Even previous studies like the one by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) have called for more investigation of apologies in non-Western cultures. Based on the rationale stated above, the following research objectives and research questions are proposed as the guidelines of the current study:

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

1. To identify the types of Malay apology strategies used by Malaysian university students.
2. To distinguish whether the Malay apology strategies practiced by Malaysian university students are more inclined towards positive or negative politeness strategies.
3. To examine the role of context in the use of Malay apology strategies by Malaysian university students.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

1. What are the types of Malay apology strategies used by Malaysian university students?
2. What type of politeness (positive or negative) is more prevalent and practiced by Malaysian university students?
3. To what extent does context play a role in the choice of Malay apology strategies used by Malaysian university students?

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

A thorough review on the literature indicated that apologies in the Malay language in Malaysia are somewhat limited. The main theoretical and methodological issues of the field, such as the relationship between ‘politeness’ and ‘culture’ and that between ‘universal’ and ‘East Asia-specific’ have not been studied in a comprehensive way (Kádár & Mills, 2011). There are however a few studies, such as those carried out by Goddard (2000), Maros (2006), Che Lah, Raja Suleiman & Abdul Sattar (2011), Farashaiyan & Hua (2012), that had provided some insights for the present study.

The findings of their studies show that although with years of exposure to the target language, it does not guarantee enough understanding regarding the cultural values.



This is due to the importance of understanding speech acts across the different cultures because in doing so, one can improve communication exchanges between cultures. According to these studies, people who live in a different culture have different perceptions on how responses to an offensive situation should be performed in interpersonal communication (Farnia, Abdul Sattar & Mei, 2014).

Therefore the present study aims to fill the research gap on apologies used in the Malay language in a Malaysian context. By observing and analysing the apology strategies employed by the sample, this research exposes how apologies are performed with regard to politeness and how some form of apology strategies are considered more polite than others. This study has also explored how the apology strategies applied in the given situations are affected by the context (i.e. reason for need to apologize, the people who are interacting with the respondents, etc.) in which the apology is implemented in. Thus, this study is significant not only because it looks at an area of culture that has not been sufficiently explored and analysed but also because it helps the researcher and readers to have a general overview of the cultures in Malaysia better. It adds to the existing body of research and enriches the field of study where apology strategies are concerned within the Malaysian societal context, and lays the foundation for further investigations and studies in the future.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

There are three kinds of limitations. Firstly, the present study only deals with the total of 40 participants who are limited to university students. Secondly, the data was collected using a set of questionnaire in the form of Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The answers collected through DCT might be limited in the situations described as the participants can answer according to their free will, so responses can be too short or in the worst case, unanswered. The responses collected may not be natural occurrences, as

they were to imagine the situation and to write down their response, instead of facing them head on. Thirdly, politeness strategies are considered only from the perspectives of positive and negative aspects, as postulated by Brown and Levinson's (1987) original work. In general, a further study can look into a broader population of subjects instead of using DCT, naturally occurring spoken discourses can be observed so that we may have deeper insights into the problems with apologies among Malay speakers and their link to politeness strategies. It might be interesting if the results based on this broader scope can be compared and contrasted to other languages. The results may provide a new perspective on the variety of strategies that different languages adopt.

## **1.6 Definition of terms**

Provided below are definitions of relevant terminologies used in this study to assist in the discussions and understanding in the following chapters:

Speech acts:

The speech act is used to express meaning and intention. It is usually a sentence, but it can be a word or a phrase as long as it follows the rules necessary to accomplish the intention, they are actions that are performed by utterances (Searle, 1969).

Apologizing (in linguistic terms):

According to Holmes (1995), apologizing is a type of speech act that is performed with the intention to repair or minimize the offense for which the apologizer takes responsibility. As a result, it rebalances social relations between speakers.

Apology strategies:

The literature suggests that for an apology to be convincing, the offender has to use one or more strategies. Several scholars have proposed their own sets of apology strategies and Fraser (1981), for example, put forth four direct strategies, which are:

- 1) announcing the apology,
- 2) stating one's obligation to apologize,
- 3) offering to apologize,
- 4) requesting acceptance

In addition to the above, Fraser had also suggested five indirect strategies, which are:

- 1) expressing regret
- 2) requesting forgiveness
- 3) acknowledging responsibility
- 4) promising forbearance
- 5) offering redress

Discourse Completion Test:

A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is a tool that involves a written description of situations followed by short dialogues with empty gaps that has to be completed by the learner. The context specified in the situation is designed in such a way that the particular pragmatic aspect under study is elicited (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2011). This tool was first developed by Levenston (1975), and adapted by Blum-Kulka (1982).

Positive and negative politeness:

Positive politeness is oriented toward the positive face of the hearer, the positive self-image that he creates for himself.

Negative politeness is mainly oriented toward partially satisfying (redressing) the hearer's negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Context:

Austin (1962) notes that words are to some extent "explained" by the context in which they are designed to be in or actually have been spoken in a linguistic interchange.

## **1.7 Plan of Study**

A plan of study shows the layout of this dissertation. This study is written in five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces what the study is about, with the subtopics that consist of statement of the problem, research objectives and questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 consists of a review of literature that covers the definition of keywords and theoretical concepts for this study, and an overview of previous researches that has been carried out regarding apology strategies in both the native language and/or other languages.

Chapter 3 of this study is the methodology section, which presents the research design and procedures, the tool used to collect the data, the population sample, and a brief explanation of how the data will be analysed.

After that, Chapter 4, which is Data Analysis, presents the results of the study in terms of the three research questions proposed. Basically, it covers the use of apology strategies in Malay. This then leads to the last chapter, which is Chapter 5- Conclusion. The overall result analysis will be finalised and concluded, whether they are supporting, or against the research question of this study.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews related literature on speech acts, apologies, and politeness in the aspect of pragmatics.

Firstly, this chapter discusses on speech acts, where Austin (1975) states that language is not only used to represent concepts in isolation, but also to express different actions that speakers perform or require them to be performed by others. It is important to be competent in producing speech acts as it varies across culture. One may have a wide range of vocabulary and a sound knowledge of grammar, but misunderstandings may still arise if one does not apply pragmatic knowledge appropriately (Che Lah, Raja Suleiman, & Abdul Sattar, 2011). This is why people find difficulties in choosing the correct strategy for speech acts in the second or foreign language. They are already attuned to the linguistic forms of their mother tongue, and unconsciously, are transferred to the target language. Some strategies will seem less appropriate in a certain language compared to another. This then relates speech acts to politeness.

This leads the researcher to discuss further into apologies and politeness, and context in this chapter. González-Cruz (2012) concluded in her study based on previous research that the explanation and/or motivation for using certain linguistic forms of specific speech act are proven to be related to the different politeness norms in use in a particular sociocultural group. Despite the fact that apologies are inherently polite speech acts, the manifold possibilities of formulating them already indicate that some are likely to be perceived as more polite than others (Ogiermann, 2009). An example of this is like the Western culture that prefers directness compared to the East, where indirectness is seen as more polite and appropriate. According to the Malay culture, politeness is achieved when the messages are indirectly conveyed (Awang, Maros & Ibrahim, 2012).

Apart from politeness, the use of strategies can also be contextual (Paramasivam & Mohamed Nor, 2013). People choose the strategies based on context, which covers the environment where the offense took place. Different contexts require different sets of strategies to make the apology achieve its target, which is to restore the harmony between the two parties involved. The importance of these issues will be highlighted and discussed in the following sections in this chapter.

## **2.1 Speech Acts**

As a means of communication, language is more than just sounds, words and sentences. Language is defined as “a system of signs that express ideas” (Saussure, 1959). Based on this definition, language can be used to express different actions that speakers perform or require them to be performed by others (Austin, 1975). Everything that is uttered conveys certain messages and can be interpreted in several ways, depending on the situation. In attempting to express themselves, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, they perform actions via those utterances (Yule, 1996). Those utterances are called speech acts. Speech acts can likely risk the interpersonal relationship of the speakers as they are often referred to as face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and because of this, in interactions, learners should have a high level of pragmatic competence (Al-Shboul, Maros, & Mohamad Subakir Mohd Yasin, 2012).

Speech acts are used not only to describe realities but also helps speakers ‘to act’ by modifying or changing specific realities. By doing that, a speaker is able to communicate more effectively. Examples of such acts are many: apologizing, forgiving, persuading, convincing, and seeking attention. Hymes (1972) defines it as “the level [which] mediates immediately between the usual level of grammar and the rest of a speech event or situation in that it implicates both linguistic form and social norms”.

Speech acts have an important role to play in our day-to-day use of language because they allow us to perform a wide range of functions (Jamuna, 2015). Different cultures

have been shown to vary drastically in interactional styles, leading to different preferences for speech act behaviors (Che Lah, Raja Suleiman & Abdul Sattar, 2011).

Previous studies on the role of language as speech acts are numerous. Akinwotu (2013) looks at the role of language in the communication and interpretation of intentions by examining selected political speeches as pieces of discourse with specific goals, mainly to persuade voters during elections. Another interesting study, which was carried out by Nemer (2016), found that celebrities tend to communicate using different speech acts when talking to different audiences.

Speech acts are basically actions that are performed via utterances. This concept has been suggested by Austin (1962). He states that in order for the utterance to be correctly performed, it should not only make sense and be grammatically correct, but it should also be felicitous. Presented below are the three types of felicity conditions;

- 1) Preparatory condition- there must be a conventional procedure and effect, appropriate circumstances and participants.
- 2) Executive condition- the procedure must be executed or performed properly.
- 3) Sincerity condition- the speaker's intention is sincere

According to him, there are three levels in everyone's speech:

1) Propositional meaning	the literal meaning of what is said	"I'm hungry"
2) Illocutionary meaning	the social function of what is said	"I'm hungry" could be an indirect request for an invitation to go out for a meal
3) Perlocutionary meaning	the effect of what is said on the hearer	"I'm hungry" could result in someone offering some food to the speaker

Table 2.1: Austin's speech act theory (1962)

Based on Austin's theory, several other scholars began to develop their own theory by adding their own ideas and opinions. One of the scholars is Searle (1979), who proposed the next theory by classifying them into five subtypes, which are as follows:

- (1) Assertiveness: stating and reporting.
- (2) Directives: requesting and ordering,
- (3) Commissive: promising and offering,
- (4) Expressives: thanking, apologizing, congratulating, and
- (5) Declarations: declaring, naming.

Provided below is a table that further describes the five subtypes of speech acts;

Speech Acts	Description	Verbs associated with Speech Acts	Examples
Assertiveness	Statements that can be verified as true or false.	Assert, claim, affirm, assure, inform, predict, report, suggest, insist, hypothesize, swear, admit, confess, blame, praise.	I assure you that we will meet our budget goals in 2001.
Directives	Statements that call upon the listener to do something.	Direct, ask, request, urge, demand, command, forbid, suggest, insist, recommend, implore, beg.	I urge you to vote against this resolution.
Commissives	Statements that commit to a course of action.	Promise, vow, pledge, swear, consent, refuse, assure, guarantee, contract, bet.	I assure that you will receive more funding next year.
Expressives	Statements that express a psychological position about a state of affairs.	Apologize, thank, condole, congratulate, complain, protest, compliment, praise, welcome.	I compliment your achievement in meeting your third-quarter numbers.
Declaratives	Statements that through an utterance perform an act.	Fire, pronounce, declare, appoint, confirm, endorse, renounce, denounce, name, call, repudiate.	I am firing you.

Table 2.2: Searle & Vanderveken's (1985) descriptions of speech acts



Both Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) theories provide an understanding of how utterances are and should be understood in pragmatic contexts. There are several other verbs that are not listed in Table 1 above, but are added accordingly throughout time as more new studies are emerging. An example of one is the verb 'offer', which was obtained from a study by Ad-Darraji, et.al (2012). According to this study, Ad-Darraji, et al. (2012) concluded that offers are pre-event commissive-directive acts expressing the speaker's expectation of the hearer with regard to prospective action; verbal or non-verbal.

The focus of this present study would be the act of apology, which falls under the category of expressive-based in Searle's five subtypes of speech acts as stated above. It is one of the speech acts that has long attracted the attention of scholars that deals with social and cultural patterns in language (Shariati & Chamani, 2010). The definitions of apology will be further explained in the next section.

## **2.2 Apology**

The speech act of apologizing is an important means of "restoring" the relationship between participants (Leech, 1983). Goffman (1971) also considers apology as a ritual work that restores social equilibrium and harmony. It is an act that is done by uttering certain expressions to show their feelings of empathy. Apologies constitute a way of maintaining social order and they are called for when social norms are violated (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). Once a person has done something that has offended the hearer, they apologize to set things right.

Apology is also defined according to the functions it serves (Shariati & Charmani, 2010). There are several definitions of apology according to different scholars. The variety of definitions of apologies leads to the various classifications of apology strategies. Apology strategy is defined as the strategy in which the wrongdoer offers to

compensate for the physical or material damage for which he/she is apologizing (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008).

Apologies as a common communicative practice in human interaction is universal, but apologies specifically and the method which apologies are applied in vary from one culture to another. Hence, this study examines how Malaysian university students apply apologies in Malay.

In order to observe the act of apologizing among the targeted sample, it must be first understood by the researcher of the general concept of apologies. According to Yousofi & Khaksar (2014), apologies are considered as a type of politeness strategy as they are applied in order to maintain a healthy relationship with each other even after committing a mistake that might cause certain discomfort to the addressee. Apology, in a way, is saying something to make the addressee feel important as it implies that the addressee's feelings matter. In order to show that the addressee has regretted committing the mistake, either intentionally or unintentionally, they would commit the act of apologizing.

Apologies and politeness strategies will be discussed further in the next section.

### **2.2.1 Apologies and Politeness Expressions**

No culture will unequivocally hold to a set of norms for what counts as polite or impolite behaviour (Kádár & Mills, 2011). For example, within the context of rudeness or impoliteness, using the index finger to refer to people and objects is acceptable in the Middle East; however, it is perceived impolite and extremely rude in Malaysia (Farnia, Abdul Sattar, & Mei, 2014). This shows that different cultures hold their own sets of rules on what they perceive as polite or impolite. This is because politeness or impoliteness is a context-dependent evaluative judgment and linguistics constructions in themselves do not bear any property of what is being polite or rude, rather this is determined by the

condition of usage (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Politeness can be expressed by choosing lexical words and grammatical structures (Watanabe, 2004). The choice of words and structures depends on the context and the message an addressee intends to convey.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) universal theory of politeness suggested five possible strategies called the face-threatening acts, or FTA which are as follows:

- (1) Without redressive action, baldly;
- (2) By positive politeness;
- (3) By negative politeness;
- (4) By going off record; and
- (5) By not doing the FTA.

There are several other subordinate categories listed under the five strategies above, and there are several researchers who disagree with this theory. One of them is Matsumoto (1988), who described that Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory's explanation regarding the Japanese honorific phenomenon as questionable. This claim could be resulting from the emergence of the theory based on data from just three languages, English, Tzeltal and Tamil (Vilki, 2006), hence why the universality could be questioned.

However, there are always the advantages and disadvantages of a theory and in addressing this particular issue, Brown and Levinson (1987) did mention in their study that there would be other factors that will emerge over time that is relating to other cultures. As stated in Vilki (2006), cultural elaboration is expected on certain levels such as what kinds of speech acts threaten face, what kinds of politeness strategies are more preferred, and what kinds of social relationships will trigger face-protective strategies. It is only logical that different factors or outcomes emerge as new studies are being conducted throughout the world, hence, the reason why people study, learn, and explore.

Other than that, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is also criticized for its neglect of impoliteness (Gilks, 2010). They focus more on the degree of politeness, without discussing much on impoliteness, which is supposed to be equally important. Several other theories of politeness emerged added the focus on impoliteness in the attempt to cover what is lacking in the Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory such as those by Lakoff (1989), Kasper (1990) and Culpeper (1996). As stated in Culpeper (1996), the study will investigate impoliteness, which is the use of strategies that are designed to have the opposite effect, i.e. that of social disruption.

Although there are people who argue against this well-known theory, researchers across the world still use it. The reason for this being is because Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory provides a framework for the study of social interaction at multiple levels (from the minutiae of politeness rituals to the broader interpersonal variables of power and distance to the ethos of a culture) and makes explicit the links between these various levels (Holtgraves & Joong-Nam, 1990). A general framework is needed as a base for any study, and if any other outcomes emerge from it, they can be treated as newly treated data, which would be an interesting add to the existing studies.

According to Goffman (1971) and Brown & Levinson (1987), the concept of 'face' plays a crucial role in the study of linguistic interactions and to maintain good social interactions. Based on this concept, there are two categories of politeness strategies that are presented to indicate the need for approval and not imposing on either party, which are as follows:

- (1) positive politeness: approached based, it 'anoints' the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, speaker wants hearer's wants (e.g. by treating him as a member of an in-group, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked)

(2) negative politeness: avoidance based, and realization of negative politeness strategies consists in assurances that the speaker recognizes and respects the addressee's negative-face wants and will not (or will only minimally) interfere with the addressee's freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

In certain cultures and language groups, there is a tendency for negative politeness to be the norm, and the instances that are generally cited are Japanese and English cultures, where they claim deference and formality are seen to be of greater importance than in other language groups (Kádár & Mills, 2011). Research shows that Japanese apology sounds longer and more formal. Japanese apology is longer not only because it includes various features mentioned above and others, but also due to repetition of the same words and phrases within the same utterance (Sugimoto, 1997). In approaching apologies with regard to politeness, different scholars have different opinions.

According to Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model (1987), apologies are considered as "negative politeness strategies" because they convey respect, deference, and distance rather than friendliness and involvement (Wagner, 2004). There are several debates regarding this matter, as there are scholars who disagree with the claim. Leech (1983), for example, would classify apologies as positive politeness strategies while Holmes (1990) argues that apologies can address both positive and negative face needs (Ahmed Alfattah, 2010).

Based on these opinions and debates, it can be concluded that apologies can fall into both categories, depending on the strategies used. Brown & Levinson (1987) and Wagner (2004) listed several apology strategies that fall under the category of positive politeness such as providing justification, use of intensifiers, offer of repair, promise of forbearance, and showing concern. According to Ogiermann (2009), offer of repair, promise of forbearance, and showing concern are considered as positive politeness

because it attends to the victim's needs, which have been negatively affected by the offence. The remaining apology strategies based on the framework of Cohen & Olshtain (1981), which are the promise of non-recurrence, denying responsibility and avoiding or postponing apology fall under the category of negative politeness because these three strategies show avoidance-based, on-record strategy of self-effacement and restraint.

Apologies are ubiquitous; occurring in different languages and cultures, and may be realised in various forms and achieving different functions (Page, 2014). Apology can be performed as simple as apologizing directly by saying the word "*sorry*", but it can also be accompanied by other expressions such as "*please*" before saying "*sorry*" or "*Are you okay?*" after saying "*sorry*". The added words can be seen as a polite expression to reduce one's feelings of discomfort after committing a mistake. Intensifiers such as "*really*", "*very*", and "*terribly*" are also samples of polite expressions that add to the level of politeness in apologizing.

It appears that cultures may alter the appropriateness of apology usage, such as the types of strategies or semantic formulas used to accomplish apology in a given situation, the type of apology term used (whether an apology is minimized or intensified), and the ways an apology is strengthened or upgraded (Wouk, 2006).

### **2.2.2 Apologies and Context**

All speech occurs in an interactive context in which interactants, -speakers and hearers- make choices from the linguistic system (Holmes, 2013). Originally, context meant the accompanying text, the wording that came before and after whatever was under attention (Halliday, 1991). Basically, context covers more than just the direct words uttered, as it can be interpreted in several different ways. As stated in a study by Nureddeen (2008), the intended meaning of any communicative act can only be accurately interpreted in the

light of the context in which it is uttered. According to Labov's (1972) 'variation analysis' context, it is defined in a way of separate components as stated below:

- 1) the social situation considered as the setting and scene,
- 2) the social identities (gender, age, and ethnicity), and/or
- 3) the key (formal vs. informal style).

Fraser (1981) also elaborated on context by identifying context into five factors that help determine the choices of strategies used, which are:

- 1) nature of infraction- the social damaged inflicted
- 2) severity of infraction- the level of seriousness of the mistakes committed
- 3) situation in which the infraction occurs
- 4) relative familiarity between the interactants- the relationship between the speaker and hearer
- 5) gender of interactants

Though several previous studies chose to look into some of the factors individually or a combination of some, there is also those who looked into context as a whole, without focusing specifically at either one. Context can be seen as one of the important factors in pragmatics. Context influences the sequence of interaction which is shaped, maintained, and changed by the speakers in the entire conversation (Dumanig, David, Kadhim & Lumayag, 2015). A phrase or sentence can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the context. For example, "*Get out now!*" can be interpreted as someone dismissing a person in an angry manner or it can also bring the meaning of urgency, such as in a situation of telling others to exit a building if there is a fire. A person cannot in any way claim that it is impolite to say "*Get out now!*" during a fire because if a person appears polite in the situation by speaking calmly and providing justification, it will not appear to be a warning anymore.

Cultures throughout the world use speech acts and apology strategies but they differ as to when, where, how, and with whom they use them (Jebahi, 2011). Thus based on this statement, apology can be chosen depending on context. Most accounts are situation-specific and reflect the circumstances of the offence, which is why their analysis should take into account the situation in which they occur (Ogiermann, 2009). A direct apology could be seen as a more appropriate strategy in a context where a person is in a rush, while an acknowledgement of responsibility is more appropriate in a context that requires a person to show remorse for committing a more serious mistake. The context of where the action takes place plays an important role in choosing the apology strategies.

### **2.2.3 Discourse Completion Test**

The Discourse Completion Test, or DCT, was first developed by Levenston & Blum (1978) because they could not find a tool of which was really suitable for studying how specific words are acquired and used. So this method, or tool, was proposed where participants are required to fill in short answers or 'discourse', in order to obtain responses for the study. The DCT has evolved over time, in order to cater to the needs of each particular studies. According to Kim (2007), there are five kinds of DCTs and they differ in the degree of control on the responses the informants provide. The types of DCT is presented below:

- 1) open-ended: participants are required to write their response however they prefer.
- 2) oral: the concept is similar to open ended, but instead of writing the response, they are to voice out their responses and the audio will be recorded.
- 3) cartoon: cartoons are drawn like those in comic books, where respondents have to write responses in dialogue forms. This type require shorter responses compared to the open-ended type.



- 4) dialogue-completion: participants will be given scenarios where there are incomplete dialogue in the form of missing turns in a conversation.
- 5) multiple-choice: participants are provided with multiple choice responses, where they are required to choose the best possible answer

The relevance of using DCT at present is because of its usefulness in collecting very large corpus of data on a wide range of difficult-to-observe speech behaviours in a limited amount of time and it creates an initial classification of semantic formulas and strategies that will occur in natural speech. Basically, the responses will be more organized according to the variables or settings that the researcher wants to focus on.

This is why many studies still prefer to use DCT as a tool despite debates regarding the validity of the data collected. A study by Che Lah, Raja Suleiman, & Abdul Sattar (2011) used DCT with prompts that were created in order to elicit the specific speech act comprising the focus of the study, which is the refusal of requests. It was mentioned in their study that it is hard for them to tell whether the responses were what people would say in a normal occurring conversation, but they were satisfied with the findings of the study as they received several range of strategies due to the controlled context provided.

The next study uses DCT for the same reason as stated above. The purpose of the DCT is to test the clarity and the contextual appropriateness of the items that will elicit the speech act under study and to check whether the dialogue elicited apologies and not other speech acts (Nureddeen, 2008). Since the DCT contains dialogue, the researcher randomized the order of the situation in order to elicit responses that will not be affected by the previous situation or response. There will be advantages and disadvantages of every tool, so researchers need to choose one that is most suitable for the study and take certain actions or precautions to minimize the disadvantage of each.

Hence, these two stated reasons are why the researcher opted to use DCT for this current study. In order to obtain apology strategies by the participants, the DCT with the prepared situations will be the best tool for this study. This will also ease the researcher in analyzing the data as the data will be translated later and if role-plays or interviews were used, there will be more process involved from recording, to transcribing, to translating, and only then prepared for the coding of the responses.

### 2.3 Previous Studies on Apology Strategies

Several studies were carried out on the subject of apology strategies, in which they are focused on different strategies in different languages. However, the majority of these studies focused on the use of politeness only in the English language, i.e. both native and non-native varieties.

Holmes (1990) conducted a study focusing on the apology strategies in New Zealand English. The data was gathered by using ethnographic method, with a corpus of 183 apology responses. The study looked into three features of apologies, which are in terms of the syntactic, semantic, and sociolinguistic. Findings of the study revealed that the apology exchanges based on the data were divided equally between single strategy apology and with those which used a combination of strategies. The use of single strategy apology was for the offenses that were considered as light, while the combination of apology strategies were used for situations that were viewed a more serious offenses. All of the apology responses, involved an explicit apology. This was included in Holmes (1990) taxonomy, which consists of the following,

Num	Apology Strategies
1)	“an explicit expression of apology” with subcategories as follows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) “offer apology/IFID,”</li> <li>b) “express regret,”</li> <li>c) “request forgiveness.”</li> </ul>

2)	“an explanation or account, an excuse or justification.”
3)	“an acknowledgment of responsibility,” with subcategories of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) “accept blame,”</li> <li>b) “express self-deficiency,”</li> <li>c) “recognize H as entitled to an apology,”</li> <li>d) “express lack of intent,”</li> <li>e) “offer repair/redress.”</li> <li>f) “a promise of forbearance”</li> </ul>

Table 2.3: Holmes’ taxonomy of apology strategies (1990)

The next study was done looking into apologies in British English that were made in everyday conversation and those made by politicians in public (Murphy, 2015). The data for this study was collected from a set of 56 apology strategies from recording transcripts performed on the floor of the House of Commons, a building that houses the UK parliament. Based on the data, results showed that members of the parliament use a more fulsome apology compared to apology strategies found in daily conversation. The reason for this is because the choices of strategy were affected by the severity of the offense committed. Hence, the most detailed use of apology strategies were found in situations that involved financial irregularities. Apart from these studies that are done in the English language produced by native speakers, there are also studies done looking into apology strategies in English, but produced by non-native speakers.

Another study was conducted by Wilson (2016), which studied the use of apology strategies in English produced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners from a Japanese university. The data was collected by using a DCT that consists of 8 situations, distributed to 100 randomly chosen EFL learners. The DCT was done to elicit apology responses from the learners and were coded by using the apology speech act sets produced by Holmes (1990) and Blum-Kulka (1989). Findings of the study revealed that only four out of the twelve strategies were used by the participants, which are an explanation or account, an explicit apology, expressing self-deficiency, and intensifiers of apology. The

researcher mentioned that the reason for the frequent use of only four apology strategies is because of the participant's lack of sociolinguistic rules and pragmatic ability in English and also the differences in the cultural values and norms.

The next study will also look into a research done in the East, which again focused on apology strategies in English. This particular study was conducted in Malaysia. Maros (2006), looked further into the production of apologies in English by adult Malay speakers in Malaysia. The researcher collected the data via DCT, consisting of 6 different situations created to collect apology responses from the respondents. The research was done to study the patterns of apology strategies produced in English by adult native speakers of Malay and how they reflect the speaker's sociopragmatic competence of English as English is the second language in Malaysia. Findings of the study revealed that although with years of exposure to the English language, it still is not sufficient in the understanding of the target language's cultural rules. Basically it shows that their choice in the apology strategies used is still affected by their first language, which in this case, is Malay. This supports the claim made by Wilson (2016) regarding the effect of the cultural values and norms towards the choices of apology strategies in the second language.

Interestingly, comparative studies by Farashian and Amirkhiz (2011) and Saad, Bidin and Shabdin (2016) analyzed the apology strategies used by Malaysian students in apology situations. Results of their study showed similarities and differences in terms of frequency and typology of strategies utilized by the students. Across gender, a study found that among Malaysian student, females tend to use more politeness strategies than males at the university level context, which lend support to Lakoff's (1975) claim that women use more politeness strategies than men (Mohamed Taha, 2002). However, as the researcher pointed out, not all the reasons for using politeness strategies support Lakoff's claim that by using politeness strategies, women avoid straightforward statements due to

their inferior positions in the society. Politeness strategies appeared to be mostly effected through the use of discourse particles.

Jamuna (2015) conducted a study on apologies used by the Indian ESL learners in multicultural classes. The study investigated the notions of polite and impolite apologies by the respondents and the data was gathered using DCT and the strategies were analysed based on Blum-Kulka's (1984) project called the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP). This study looked into age, gender and region as the social variables, whether those factors influence the apology strategies used. Results of the study indicated that the only factor that influences the choices is gender, while age and region do not carry any effect.

Besides researching apology strategies in English, there are also several studies done comparing between apology strategies in English with another language. Some examples of studies will be discussed below. A study by Suszczyriska (1999), focused on differences in the realizations of apologetic responses that can be found in the choice and sequential arrangement of strategies and in the content and choice of linguistic form in three different languages. The languages are English, Polish, and Hungarian. The data were collected from a small portion of corpus of written responses from a DCT. Results of the study showed that the three languages differ in their choices of apology strategies used. Polish and Hungarian do not avoid direct confrontations, where opinions and emotions, including negative ones, can be expressed freely. This is different in English, where they prefer to use strategies that will restore the harmony between the two parties involved.

The next study to be discussed is a study that looked into the use of apology strategies offenses that motivates apologies in British English and Persian. The study by Chamani & Zareipur (2010) gathered their data by compiling a large corpus of naturally-occurring data from real-life situations. Results of the study showed that English opted

for a single direct apology in the majority of situations while Persian prefers combining them with other strategies. The result of their findings is supported by the statement made by Wierzbicka (1985) who stated that speech acts are not language-independent natural types but culture-specific communicative routines.

As the previous study above mentioned about culture, the discussion on this topic proceeds to the next study that focuses on culture. This research was conducted by Marzuki & Walter (2013) who focused on the study of pragmatics of apology in the first-language (L1) (Malay) and second-language (L2) (English) in the short messaging service text messages of adult Malay speakers. The data of the study was collected via DCT through text messages and responses were coded using a coding scheme adapted from Cohen and Olshtain (1981). The findings of this study shows that the language literacy of the participant was shaped in a complex way that sometimes accommodated the second language/second culture, which is English, and sometimes retained Malay, the first language/first culture values. This is in contrast with Maros' (2006) and Wilson's (2016) findings discussed earlier, where their findings showed that participants retained the first language's norm. The reason to why the findings revealed that participants retain the first language's norm is not stated and the researcher mentioned that a more detailed study is needed to explain why it happens. Marzuki & Walter (2013) suggested in their study that there are some cultural norms that may be more resistant to acculturation compared to others.

The studies stated above all looked into apology strategies in English, and even with one language, we can see differences in the results of the studies. In order to further study the similarities and differences in the choices of apology strategies, it would be interesting to look further into other languages. So, besides the English language, there are also several other studies that focus on other languages that will be discussed below.

The first study being said is conducted by Wouk (2006). This is a study looking into the type of apology strategies used in Lombok, Indonesia. The data was collected using a discourse completion task (DCT). The data was then analyzed using a combination of four different frameworks, which are chosen for the suitability of each component: for complaint situations, a framework by Bonikowska (1988); Cohen and Olshtain (1981, 1983) for strategies used for orientation of the IFID; a framework adapted from Cordella (1990, 1991); and lastly Trosborg (1995) for types of intensification used (Wouk, 2006). The result of this study revealed that the respondents prefer requests for forgiveness and other strategies were rarely used. Apart from that, social distance influences the choices of strategies, while the factor of gender shows very little influence. This is contrasting with the findings by Jamuna (2015) as the only factor that influences the choices of apology strategies is only gender.

The next study to be discussed is conducted by Nureddeen (2008), which looked into the use of apology strategies in Sudanese Arabic. The data of the study was collected through a corpus of 1082 responses from a 10 situation DCT. The situations vary in terms of the severity of the offense, the strength of the social relationship, and the power between the hypothetical speakers and hearers. Findings of the study showed that the Sudanese are more inclined towards the positive politeness as they are concerned in preserving their own positive face. So the most frequently used strategies are those categorized under the positive politeness such as sense of humor, minimization, denial of responsibility, and opting out or avoiding apology. The study provided a unique sense of responses as other studies usually revealed almost identical sets of answers such as those mentioned earlier. However, Nureddeen (2008), mentioned that the findings of this study cannot be generalized and further studies should be done to provide a clearer insight.

Looking into several previous studies from the above, there are several instruments developed as apology strategies. These instruments used in the various

languages are applied differently in order to be contextually appropriate when used in each respective language. Some of the most frequently used sets of apology strategies are displayed below;

Fraser (1981)	Olshain and Cohen (1983)	Trosborg (1987)	Trosborg (1995)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Announcing the apology</li> <li>- Stating one's obligation to apologize</li> <li>- Offering to apologize</li> <li>- Requesting acceptance</li> <li>- Expressing regret</li> <li>- Requesting forgiveness</li> <li>- Acknowledging responsibility</li> <li>- Promising forbearance</li> <li>- Offering redress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An expression of an apology which usually contains the verb apologize, forgive, excuse, pardon, or be sorry</li> <li>- An explanation or account of the situation</li> <li>- An acknowledgement of responsibility</li> <li>- An offer of repair</li> <li>- A promise of forbearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimizing the degree of offence either by blaming someone else or by discussing its preconditions</li> <li>- An acknowledgement of responsibility</li> <li>- Implicit or explicit explanation or account of what occurred</li> <li>- Offer of repair</li> <li>- Promise of forbearance</li> <li>- Expressing concern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Minimizing the degree of offence</li> <li>- Acknowledgement of responsibility</li> <li>- Explanation or account</li> <li>- Expression of apology</li> </ul>

Table 2.4: Sets of apology strategies by Fraser (1981), Olshain & Cohen (1983), and Trosborg (1987, 1995)

These apology strategies have developed over time, with new additions provided by the same researcher or by others with the new information or strategies emerged when conducting new studies. This study opts to adapt the framework of Apology Instrument by Cohen & Olshain (1981) and Trosborg (1987), which is as follows:

Avoiding or postponing an apology	The speaker does not apologize by talking about something else or stating a fact that does not require an apology such as “ <i>You know me</i> ”, so because of this, no apology is needed.
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Direct apology	The speaker uses a word to express apology, such as “ <i>I’m sorry.</i> ”
Use of intensifiers	The speaker uses intensifiers to express apology, such as “ <i>I’m really sorry</i> ” or “ <i>Sorry, sorry, sorry.</i> ”
Providing justification	The speaker provides explanation regarding the situation, such as “ <i>I woke up late</i> ”, hence the reason for being late.
Acknowledgement of responsibility	The speaker takes responsibility by admitting their mistake, such as “ <i>I know I’m late.</i> ”
Offer of repair	The speaker offers an act to counter the damage that is done by the mistake, such as “ <i>I promise I’ll buy a new scarf to replace that.</i> ”
Denying responsibility	This is almost like providing justification. The only difference is that for this one, the speaker denies their fault entirely, such as “ <i>There was a traffic jam</i> ”, instead of admitting that they should have left earlier to avoid any unwanted events such as a traffic jam.
Promise of non-recurrence	The speaker promises to not repeat their mistake, such as “ <i>I promise this will not happen again.</i> ”

Table 2.5: Apology by Cohen & Olshtain (1981) and Trosborg (1987)

There are eight apology strategies listed in the strategies above, and the responses collected from the DCT will be grouped accordingly in Chapter 4 later on. As this study is focusing on the Malay language, we will discuss further regarding the rules of speaking Malay, its culture, and code-switching in the next section.

## 2.4 Malay Culture and Code-Switching

The Malay culture is famously known for its concept of ‘budi bahasa budaya kita’, which provides the meaning that the good manners in speaking are rooted to the culture. Politeness is an important social element in the Malaysian society in formal or informal situations (Tai-Hyun, 2013), and this includes apologies. Their awareness in apologising in order to maintain the harmony between two parties by “redeeming” themselves is viewed as a cultural factor for Malaysians (Yusof, Maros, & Jaafar, 2011). Zawawi (2008) suggested that the cultural values of the Malays included respect for others, faith in God, humility, indirectness, and politeness. The Malays are known for their non-

confrontational behaviour (Zamani, 2003), and are unassuming people who would try to be “subtle” in their conversations and more often than not employing indirectness in order to avoid conflicts (Mohd. Ali, 1995).

Traditionally, the Malays value indirectness in speaking as to save face of others and maintaining good relationship among the interlocutors and the society as a whole (Maros, 2006). This means that the basic rules of speaking in Malay is usually done in an indirect manner, which is supported by the richness in the various Malay sayings, poem-type media, and proverbs. This is supported in a study by Awang, Maros, & Ibrahim (2012), which states that being indirect refers to avoiding “telling of” anyone on a certain matter. The speaker, instead, would go “beating-around-the bush” before the real intention is conveyed, and even then, is imparted in an indirect way. Examples of these are *pantun*, *sajak*, *prosa*, and so on, which are basically the different types of poetry that can be compared to their English counterparts in the form limericks, ballads, and so on. These poems would typically begin with several metaphores, hyperbole, etc., before coming to the main point of the message. This way of presenting the message is considered as being polite in the Malay language.

The words that are used in Malay to represent apologies can be as direct as *maaf* which means sorry, *maafkan saya* which means forgive me, *minta maaf* which is asking for forgiveness, in simpler word, sorry, or with elaborated explanation as stated in Ahmad, Jalaluddin, & Jaafar (2012). According to their study, it is natural if justification is followed by a direct apology in order to justify oneself and restore harmony.

Some of the examples of being cultured and refined would be in the selection of the content and form of conversation, nonverbal cues, the order of seating, and forms of greetings (Maros, 2006). Malaysia is a multilingual nation and it comprises of Malays and natives, Chinese, Indians other races. In 1957, the Malays and natives represented 49.8 per cent (3,125,474) of the total population of Malaya. The Chinese recorded 37.2

per cent (2,333,756); Indians 11.1 per cent (696,186); while the other ethnics recorded 2.0 per cent (123,342) (Fell, 1957). By 2017, the Malays and natives recorded 68.8 per cent of total population of citizens; Chinese 23.2 per cent, while Indians and Others 7.0 per cent and 1.0 per cent respectively (Government of Malaysia, 2018). Due to this factor, the Malay language was made the national language of Malaysia, and English as the second language in order to have a medium for people from different ethnics to communicate.

English is considered as a significant second language for instrumental purposes, a neutral language for social integration, and a pragmatic one for professional growth and career advancement among Malaysians (Kim et al, 2010). Therefore, code-switching has become a normal way of communicating among Malay-English bilinguals and occurs in both formal and informal contexts of communication (Abdul Kadir, Maros & Abdul Hamid, 2012). How this is done is by borrowing some lexical items from another language or by switching from one language to another (Dumanig, David, Kadhim & Lumayag, 2015). The borrowing of lexical items in Malaysia is more commonly used in the code-switching process, such as the usage of English numerical system to count. The reason for such occurrences is because English has shorter syllables compared to Malay. For example, during workout sessions in a gym, it is more convenient to count by “*One, two, three*”, and so on compared to the counting in Malay, “*Satu, dua, tiga*”, and so on. This rule also applies to short conversational exchanges or words like “*thanks*” instead of “*terima kasih*”, “*no*” instead of “*tidak*”, “*air-cond*” instead of “*penghawa dingin*”, “*toys*” instead of “*barang permainan*”, “*carpet*” instead of “*permaidani*” and so on. There are even words, which are initially borrowed from English, but are later adopted into the Malay language (Abdul Kadir, Maros & Abdul Hamid, 2012).

Although code-switching is considered as a norm in Malaysia based on the reason stated above, there are also several other interesting factors why people chose to code-

switch. Holmes (2008) has identified five major reasons on why code-switching occurs as follows:

- 1) Participants, solidarity and status – such as for greetings or social events
- 2) Topic – certain topics are easier to be explained in a certain language compared to others
- 3) Switching for affective functions – code-switch to appear more intimate or friendly
- 4) Metaphorical switching – code-switch due to the incompetence in the language
- 5) Lexical borrowing – code-switch due to the lack of vocabulary in the target language.

A study conducted by Hadei, Kumar & Jie (2016) have also listed ten reasons for code-switching to occur based on their study, and among the reasons found are shown as follows:

<b>Social Factors</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
To show identity with a group	38	29
To address different audience	24	18
Lack of facility	14	11
Pragmatic reasons	14	11
Lack of registral competence	11	9
Semantic significance	9	7
To attract attention	8	6
Habitual expressions	5	4
To amplify and emphasize a point	4	3
Mood of the speaker	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2.6: Social factors for code-switching among Malay-English bilinguals (Hadei, Kumar & Jie, 2016)

There are ten reasons for code-switching to occur, based on the table above, with the highest reason is to show identity in a group. There are other possible reasons too, and one of those is the occurrence of code-switching which affects the flow of talk that defines the success of any conversation (Dumanig, David, Kadhim, & Lumayag, 2015). Code-switching, in some aspects, provides a built-in sensibility that conversational regularities are both content-independent and context-sensitive (Auer, 1995). The first two reasons, to show identity and to address different audience, are context related. This means that when speaking to a different crowd or in a particular place, the speaker prefers to talk in a certain way or language to suit the particular situation. Due to this factor, the highest reasons are all related to context.

Overall, this chapter consists of a review of related literature, previous studies, regarding speech acts, apologies, politeness in the aspect of pragmatics, the Malay culture in terms of the manners of speaking and code-switching in order to provide an overview of the direction of this research. The researcher discusses the methodology for this study in the next chapter, which consists of the research design, population and sampling, instrumentation and data collection, data analysis, and coding.

### CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to provide an insight regarding the apology strategies in the Malay language by Malaysian university students. Based on the discussion on related studies in the previous chapter, the topics that this research focuses on include the preference of strategies, the types of politeness that the preferred strategies imply, and the influence (or non-influence) of context on the chosen strategies. Several other studies have been done in this area that focused on other languages, and therefore the current study aims to add to the existing literature in regard to apology strategies in the Malay language. The rationale for choosing this language to study on is due to the lack of research done on this subject in Eastern countries (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989).

It must be re-emphasised that this study focuses on the positive and negative politeness as both strategies are considered dominant in the Malay culture. As has been cited and indicated earlier on Malaysian students (Abdullah, 1992 and 1996; Awang and Ibrahim, 2012; Che Lah et.al, 2011; Daud, 2002), further, a study on Malaysian public apologies by Azhari (2015) for example, indicated that Malaysians employ both positive and negative politeness as it is the norm that becomes the culture of Malaysian in maintaining positive self-image and relationships so as to respect the other party.

This chapter discusses the flow of the current study. The methodology will be discussed further, starting from the research design, population and sample, instrumentation and data collection, data analysis, coding, and ethical consideration. Data from the pilot study, which was conducted prior to the data collection process, are also presented in this chapter.

### **3.1 Research Design**

A qualitative approach with Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the research design was employed for this study. This was due to the need of the researcher to gain insight from the participants' point of view.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the DCT comprise of a series of situations that are followed by short dialogues with blank spaces that are required by the sample to fill in. This design enables the researcher to observe the apology strategies of the sample. According to Kim (2007), there are five types of DCTs, which are open-ended, oral, cartoon, dialogue-completion, and multiple-choice. In the current study, the type of DCT employed is the open-ended. The reason for choosing this type is to provide freedom for the participant to provide the response for the situation however they like, either they would apologize or not. This type of DCT provides data that is as close as a natural occurring data, since the only thing given is the situation, not the answers.

Further discussion on this design is contained in the Instrumentation and Data Collection section below.

### **3.2 Population and Sample**

The sample of the study consists of Pre-Degree students of the age of 19. They are currently undergoing the American Degree Foundation Programme, a preparatory programme for students before they continue their Degree studies in various universities in the United States. The sample consists of two classes, with a total of 20 students in each class. In total, there are 40 respondents altogether. Out of the 40 students, there are 26 females and 14 males. Their level of proficiency in the Malay language is of average or higher as they are all first language Malay speaker. One of the respondent has a Chinese mother but their first language is also Malay. The respondents' educational backgrounds are those categorized as high-achiever students, where all of the respondents obtained an

A for their Bahasa Malaysia (BM) subject in their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), and with an average result of straight A's for all subjects. In the academic setting of Malaysia, the opportunity for interactions between students from different cultural backgrounds with local students and staff is most likely to occur (Al-Shboul, Maros & Mohd Yasin, 2012). In order to elicit apology responses, these students are chosen as they have or will be likely to encounter situations provided in the DCT. The details of the respondents are portrayed in the table below.

<b>Details</b>		<b>Number</b>
<b>Age</b>	19	40
<b>Gender</b>	Male	14
	Female	26
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	Malay	39
	Chinese-Malay	1
<b>Bahasa Malaysia in SPM</b>	A	40
<b>First Language</b>	Malay	40
<b>SPM Overall Result</b>	Straight A's	32
	1B (A for the rest of the subjects)	8

Table 3.1-Data of Respondents

The researcher wanted a group of respondents that will be available to answer a set of questionnaire without them worrying about the time or length of answers. Due to that factor, the researcher asked two of the classes in the university that she had taught whether they would consider participating in answering the questionnaires. All the 40 sets of DCT were collected after the end of the answering session. As there were 6 situations in a set, there were 240 responses altogether. Other than that, the researcher wanted respondents that are considered as the main focus of the study, which are Malaysian university students whom are Malay speakers. It will be hard for the researcher to obtain valid results if the respondents are non-Malay first language speakers. As the researcher is one of the lecturers in that university, the researcher had a general idea regarding the respondents' background.



### **3.3 Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The researcher has considered several instruments for this study, by looking into previous researches regarding this topic. There are scholars who argued that observations and role-plays are better tools for this topic as it will provide better data that are authentic or resemble natural occurrences. Scholars like Olshtain & Blum-Kulka (1985) stated that observation on authentic speech is considered to be the most reliable data source in speech act research. This view is also supported by Trosborg (1995) who stated that data collection in an ethnographic procedure (i.e. naturally occurring data) is the definitive objective in most cross-cultural studies. Apart from observations, role-plays are also considered a better tool as it has the most salient advantage in which they provide spoken data that resemble real-life performance (Tran, 2007).

Basically, what can be deduced from these debates is that instruments that collect natural occurring data are better tools as they provide responses that are more natural occurring and not affected by any exterior factors. However, this advantage would be seen as a disadvantage for the current study because the contextual variables (e.g. gender, age, status) cannot be controlled and it is very time-consuming (Al-Shboul, Maros, & Mohd Yasin, 2012). As this study was done to look into the apology strategies in relation to politeness and context, the variables need to be controlled, hence the choice of using DCT as the tool. Cohen (1996) also stated that a written completion test is an effective tool for collecting a large amount of data quickly and for creating an initial classification of semantic formula

The DCT is perhaps the most common method of doing research in second-language pragmatics especially when investigating speech acts such as apologies, refusals, invitations, and so on (Jebahi, 2011). Generally, a DCT consists of descriptions of situations to which the subjects are expected to react and thereby provide the desired speech act, i.e. open DCT (Ogiermann, 2009).

The DCT was distributed to 40 Malaysian university students. The respondents started by filling in their basic information prior to starting the DCT. According to (Takimoto, 2006), respondents needed to spend an average of 2 to 3 minutes on each DCT situation, thus the respondents were given 20 minutes to finish the task for this study comprising of 6 situations. The researcher and another lecturer was present throughout the whole answering process. After 20 minutes, the 40 copies of DCT were collected and ready for the coding process.

The DCT used for this study was adapted from a study by (Marlyna Maros, 2006) which consists of 6 different situations that may or may not require a person to apologize. The situations are presented below:

<p>1) You are a college student. You made an appointment with your professor at his office. But you were 15 minutes late because the closest parking place was full. You knock on the door, go in, and say to the professor ...</p> <p>1) <i>Anda adalah seorang pelajar kolej. Anda telah membuat temujanji dengan pensyarah anda di pejabatnya. Tapi kerana kawasan letak kereta yang terdekat telah penuh, anda sampai lewat 15 minit. Anda ketuk pintu, masuk, dan anda berkata.....</i></p>
<p>2) Backing out of a parking place, you run into the side of another car. It was clearly your fault. You dent the side door slightly. The driver gets out and comes over to you angrily. He is an adult, about your age:</p> <p>2) <i>Anda sedang "reverse" kereta dan terlanggar kereta di sebelah dan hasilnya terdapat sedikit kesan kemik. Pemandu kereta itu keluar dan bersemuka dengan anda dengan perasaan yang marah. Pemandu tersebut lebih kurang umur anda. Anda....</i></p>
<p>3) At a buffet restaurant: You are carrying your meal to your table. When you are walking between tables, you stumble and your soup spills over an elderly lady's blouse.</p> <p>3) <i>Di sebuah restoren buffet, anda sedang membawa makanan ke meja anda. Namun anda tersadung dan tertumpahkan sup di atas baju seorang wanita yang berumur. Anda....</i></p>

4) A friend invited you to his parents' house. You visit them. His mother serves a very sweet cake. You cannot eat it, and leave half of it. His mother asked if you don't like the cake.

4) *Rakan anda telah menjemput anda kerumahnya. Setibanya di rumah, ibunya menghidangkan kek yang sangat manis. Anda tidak dapat menghabiskannya dan telah meninggalkan separuh dari kek yang dihidangkan kepada anda. Ibunya bertanya jika anda tidak sukakan kek tersebut. Anda...*

5) You were supposed to meet your friend in front of a café but you were 15 minutes late because you had taken a nap.

5) *Anda sepatutnya bertemu dengan rakan anda di hadapan café namun anda telah lewat 15 minit kerana tertidur. Anda...*

6) In a crowded elevator, you step on somebody's (adult-your age) foot.

6) *Dalam lif yang penuh, anda telah terpijak kaki seseorang yang berumur lebih kurang anda. Anda...*

The study was done to explicate the production of apologies in English by adult Malay speakers in Malaysia. Since it was designed for respondents from Malaysia, the researcher decided to use the same set of DCT for this study as it will be culturally relatable for the respondents that are of Malay speakers. The researcher also opts for this set of DCT as it has been proven in eliciting apology strategies in the stated study. The original DCT is in English, so the researcher translated the questions into Malay for the current study. The translated version was then proofread by a qualified translator. The answers were then arranged accordingly into:

- 1) The frequency of each apology strategy individually
- 2) The frequency of the combination of apology strategies as shown in the table above.
- 3) The 6 different situations prepared

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The answers were analysed qualitatively and supported by numerical presentations of frequency and percentages in tables in order to satisfy the three research questions of this study. The answers were then classified into the categories as stated in the framework of Apology Instrument by Cohen & Olshtain (1981) and Trosborg (1987) as presented in Chapter 2 previously.

First, the researcher looked into the most frequent strategies used by Malaysian university students. After that, the answers of the respondents were tabulated in order to see whether the apology strategies chosen are more inclined towards the positive or negative politeness. Lastly, the researcher analysed the answers further to determine whether there are any differences in their choices of apology strategies according to the 6 different situations provided.

### **3.5 Coding**

The data for this study were analysed by using semantic formulaic sequences. According to Cohen (1996), semantic formula refers to “a word, phrase, or sentence that meets a particular semantic criterion or strategy, any one or more of these can be used to perform the act in question”. Based on this definition, the answers from the DCT were all translated by the researcher, starting from translating word by word into English, and then into a complete sentence with the correct meaning. In order to maintain the reliability and validity of the translated data, the translated version is then checked and proofread by a qualified translator for accuracy. Once checked, the answers were grouped by the researcher into apology strategies according to the Apology Instrument adapted by Olshtain & Cohen (1983), and Trosborg (1987). Changes to the instrument used were based on the patterns, which emerged from the data collected from a pilot study done first by the researcher, and then checked by language lecturers from USM and UiTM, as shown in the following table:

Num.	Apology Strategy	Definition	Examples in English	Examples in Malay
1	Avoiding or postponing an apology	The speaker does not apologize by talking about something else or stating a fact that does not require an apology	No words indicating apology used.	No words indicating apology used.
2	Direct apology	Direct word indicating apology used.	Sorry, forgive me.	<i>Maaf, minta maaf.</i>
3	Use of intensifiers	Speaker uses words indicating intensification to accompany apology.	Truly, Really, extremely, very	<i>Betul-betul Sangat,</i>  Any repetition of these words or the word sorry
4	Providing justification	The speaker provides explanation regarding the situation	I woke up late, I fell asleep, I was distracted	<i>Saya bangun lambat, tertidur, lalai</i>
5	Acknowledgement of responsibility	The speaker takes responsibility by admitting their mistake	The fault was mine, I was wrong	<i>Salah saya, silap saya, saya mengaku</i>
6	Offer of repair	The speaker offers an act to counter the damage that is done by the mistake	I'll pay for the damage caused, I'll buy you a new one.	<i>Saya akan ganti,</i>  <i>saya akan belikan</i>
7	Promise of non-recurrence	The speaker promises to not repeat their mistake	This will not happen again, I will not do this again.	<i>Ini tidak akan berulang,</i> <i>Saya tidak akan mengulangi</i>
8	Denying responsibility	This is almost like providing justification. The only difference is that for this one, the speaker denies their responsibility entirely, blaming on circumstances.	It was not my fault, there was no parking.	<i>Bukan salah saya, tiada parking.</i>

Table 3.2: Theoretical Framework, Apology Instrument by Olshain & Cohen (1983) and Trosborg (1987)

The tool used to aid the researcher in coding research question 2, which looked into apology strategies and politeness is presented in the Table below. This coding for Negative and Politeness Strategy is adapted from Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009).

Positive- and Negative Politeness Strategies Coding	
1	Positive Politeness: (a) Offer of repair (b) Showing concern (c) Joking (d) Use of intensifiers (e) Acknowledgment of responsibility (f) Providing justification
2	Negative Politeness (a) Promise of non-recurrence (b) Avoiding or postponing apology (c) Denying responsibility

Table 3.3: Negative and politeness strategy by Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009)

Once the responses were grouped into the types of apology strategies respectively, they are then separated into two types of politeness, positive and negative politeness, based on the coding adapted by Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009) as shown in Table 3.3 above. These were then also checked by the same lecturers from USM and UiTM stated earlier in the previous paragraph. Once the responses were separated into the two groups, the frequencies were counted and presented in a table form, and further explained by the researcher. Results on the tendency of using which type of politeness can be seen from the table of frequency presented in Chapter 4. This will enable the researcher to answer research question 2.

As for research question 3, which looked into the relationship between context and apology strategies used, the researcher has provided the participants with 6 different situations in the DCT. All the situations provided are prepared in order to elicit apology response from the participants. Based on the responses given, they will be tabulated in 6 different tables based on the 6 different situations. The frequencies of apology strategies

used will be presented and results can be observed according to which strategies or combination of strategies are more frequently used according to the different situations. Findings will be shown on the relation of context with the apology strategies chosen.

### **3.6 Pilot Study**

The researcher conducted a pilot study in December 2015, to gain a general insight into the types of apology strategies that Malaysians use as there are not many studies done in the Malay language. The pilot study was conducted on 4 respondents; 2 male and 2 female respectively. The respondents' profile background is relatively close to the target population and therefore they are selected in order to demonstrate a general idea of the possible outcomes in the answers received from the sample. The results of the pilot study were then analysed in order to aid in the design of completing the final version of the test.

Based on the answers obtained from this pilot study, the researcher is able to use the apology strategies adapted by Olshtain & Cohen (1983) and Trosborg (1987) as a guide to characterize the answers as different cultures use different apology strategies, and choosing the most suitable set of strategies is important. The pilot study provided a clearer picture in composing a better set of situations for the DCT prepared for the participants in the real study.

Pragmatic competence needed to be acquired along with other components of communicative competence: linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence (Bachman, 1990). Due to this statement, it will be interesting to look further into how people apologize in different situations or context, and do they have any differences or similarities.

This is why the questionnaire for the pilot study consists of three situation questions, asking what they would do or say in the given situation. The fourth question is a general question asking how they generally apologize in the Malay language. Jianda

(2006), also mentioned that one of the five stages in creating DCT, which is in the stage of metapragmatic assessment, priority was given to those situations with different combinations of features. This ensures that several variables can be looked into. Following this notion, several studies were done such as a study by Muthusamy & Farashaiyan (2016), a study attempting to describe the request, apology, and request mitigation strategies utilized by international postgraduate students in confronting different situations.

The result of the pilot study shows that both male and female opt to provide justification as a strategy. However, there is no indication that gender plays a role in the use of different apology strategies. It can be seen that the respondents opt for different strategies according to the different situations regardless of their gender. This is why the researcher chose to not look further into the role of gender for this current study.

Based on the answers provided, it can be seen that the respondents answered differently according to different situations, hence the researcher decided to look further into the role of context in choosing the strategies to apologize. The researcher opted to adapt a different set of questionnaire taken from a study by Marlyna Maros (2006) to address any issues regarding the validity of the DCT. By using a set of DCT that has been done and proven to elicit the responses needed, the results of this study will be more reliable as compared to using the set of questionnaire from the pilot study.

Apart from that, due to the fact that apology is always viewed as a polite act that is done to maintain positive relationship among speakers, the researcher also decided to study whether there are any relation between apology strategies and politeness strategies.

A summary of the results from the pilot study is provided in the table below.

1. You were writing your part of an assignment for a group project when the laptop suddenly crashed. The deadline is tomorrow and you can't finish it on time since you have to start from the beginning. What would you say to them?	
Male	Female
1) OFFER OF REPAIR	1) PROVIDING JUSTIFICATION



2) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY	2) OFFER OF REPAIR
2. Your institution provides buses every half an hour for students to commute from your hostel to your college. The buses will be available from 6.30am up to 7.30am for the morning session, so there will be three trips. While you were descending the stairs, you saw the last bus, the 7.30 bus, departs. So you had to call the cab and because of this, you were half an hour late for class. The lecturer is already in the middle of delivering her lecture when you entered the class. What would you do or say in this particular situation?	
Male	Female
1) PROVIDING JUSTIFICATION 2) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY	1) DIRECT APOLOGY 2) OFFER OF REPAIR
3. You borrowed your friend's blazer for your presentation because you don't have one. It is grey in colour and while you were filling your pen with black ink, you accidentally spilled some ink and stained your friend's blazer. What would you do in this given situation?	
Male	Female
1) DIRECT APOLOGY 2) AVOIDING APOLOGY	1) DIRECT APOLOGY 2) OFFER OF REPAIR

Table 3.4: Strategies used to apologize

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

Since the data of this study is collected by DCT among university students, there are certain ethical considerations that need to be registered. In order to achieve credibility and authenticity of the data from this study, the researcher had requested permission from both the institution and the respondents for their consent for the data collection. Once the researcher had been granted permission by the faculty, the respondents were informed of the process and procedure. They were also informed that their personal information will be treated as confidential to ensure their privacy. Once they had understood their rights and had agreed to participate, only then the process of answering the DCT was started.

### 3.8 Summary of Chapter

Basically this chapter discusses the methodology of this research, which covers the research design, population and sample, instrumentation and data collection, data analysis, coding, and ethical consideration. This will lead to the next chapter, where the researcher discusses the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data collected from the DCT that were distributed to the respondents were analysed in order to answer the research questions of the current study. The overall results will be presented in this chapter in three sections, where the first section presents the types of apology strategies in the Malay language among Malaysian university students and the combination of the strategies used among them. This is done in order to find out which strategy and combinations of strategies are more frequently used by the respondents.

The second section presents the findings that discusses the inclination towards positive or negative politeness strategies of Malay apology strategies practiced by Malaysian university students. The responses that were categorized into the apology strategies in section 1 are divided into two groups, i.e.: the positive and negative politeness. This is done in order to discover the apology strategies adopted by Malaysian university students and subsequently their preference on the type of politeness. The last section presents the results in six separate tables which represent six different situations. The situations are taken from the DCT and this is done in order to observe the role of context towards the choices of DCT. As the situation differs in terms of the environment, participants involved, and severity of the offence, we can see whether the respondents use almost the same sets of apology strategies consistently or that they have irregular responses in the six different situations. The findings from these three sections aided the researcher in answering the three questions proposed in this study. The results are presented in the following sections.

### **4.1 Types of Apology Strategies**

The table below shows the frequency of each of the strategies used, which was collected and tabulated from the DCT.

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	Direct apology	189	37.3
2	Offer of repair	73	14.4
3	Use of intensifiers	29	5.7
4	Providing justification	91	17.9
5	Acknowledgement of responsibility	20	3.9
6	Promise of non-recurrence	11	2.2
7	Denying responsibility	38	7.5
8	Avoiding or postponing an apology	46	9.1
9	Showing Concern	10	2.0
	Total	507	100

Table 4.1: Types of apology strategies

Based on Table 4.1, it can be seen that the most frequently used single apology strategy is “direct apology”, with a total of 189. This is combined with other strategies, which will be discussed further in subsequent sections of Chapter 4. As stated earlier in the previous chapter, “direct apology” is done by uttering words showing apology such as *Maaf* which means sorry, which explains why it is the most frequent strategy. According to a study by Yusof, Maros & Jaafar (2009), local students are aware that when a mistake happens, there is a need for people to apologise. This is because Malays view that it is important to be forgiven, which is why they frequently apologise, even though sometimes the situation does not deem it so, such as when parting with a friend (Ahmad, Jalaluddin, & Fadzeli, 2012).

The second frequently used single strategy is “providing justification”. As stated earlier in Chapter 2, the culture of speaking in the Malay language is that people tend to try to appear polite in order to save the face of others. Thus, they are more inclined to state what should be said rather than say what they really feel (Maros, 2006). Based on the statistics given, in order to apologize, they elaborate more by “providing justification”.

The least used apology strategy is the “promise of non-recurrence”. There is no guarantee that a person would definitely not repeat the mistake, so based on the respondents’ answers, it can be seen that they do not prefer to make such promises.

Presented below is a table showing frequencies of the combination of apology strategies used in this study.

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	Direct apology + Providing justification	25	15.4
2	Direct apology + Acknowledgement of responsibility	3	1.9
3	Direct apology + Use of intensifiers	7	4.3
4	Direct apology + Promise of non-recurrence	3	1.9
5	Direct apology + Offer of repair	27	16.7
<b>6</b>	<b>Direct apology + Denying responsibility</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>19.8</b>
7	Direct apology + Providing justification + Acknowledgement of responsibility	2	1.2
8	Direct apology + Providing justification + Use of intensifiers	4	2.5
9	Direct apology + Providing justification + Promise of non-recurrence	3	1.9
10	Direct apology + Providing justification + Offer of repair	11	6.8
11	Direct apology + Providing justification + Showing Concern	2	1.2
12	Direct apology + Acknowledgement of responsibility + Offer of repair	6	3.7
13	Direct apology + Use of intensifiers + Denying responsibility	2	1.2
14	Direct apology + Use of intensifiers + Offer of repair	9	5.6
15	Direct apology + Denying responsibility + Promise of non-recurrence	1	0.6
16	Direct apology + Denying responsibility + Showing Concern	1	0.6
17	Direct apology + Providing justification + Acknowledgement of responsibility + Promise of non-recurrence	2	1.2
18	Direct apology + Providing justification + Acknowledgement of responsibility + Offer of repair	3	1.9
19	Direct apology + Providing justification + Use of intensifiers + Offer of repair	4	2.5
20	Direct apology + Providing justification + Promise of non-recurrence + Offer of repair	1	0.6
21	Direct apology + Acknowledgement of responsibility + Use of intensifiers + Promise of non-recurrence	1	0.6
22	Direct apology + Acknowledgement of responsibility + Use of intensifiers + Offer of repair	3	1.9
23	Avoiding or postponing an apology + Offer of repair	7	4.3

24	Avoiding or postponing an apology + Sense of Humour	1	0.6
25	Avoiding or postponing an apology + Denying responsibility	2	1.2
Total		162	

Table 4.2: Frequency of combination of apology strategies

Based on Table 4.2, findings showed that the combination of “direct apology” and “denying responsibility” is the most frequently used strategy. The reason for the result of the finding is that for Malaysians, it is more important to maintain the harmony between the two parties compared to actually admitting the truth and resulting in a rise in tension between the two. As stated in a previous study, the important thing is not the sincerity of the action, but the successful concealment of all dissonant aspects of the relationship (Soon, 2015). An example of this situation is shown below:

Extract 1:

*Saya minta maaf sebab lambat Prof saya terpaksa*  
I ask sorry because late professor I forced  
*park kereta jauh sikit sebab yang dekat semua*  
park car far a little because that near all  
*penuh Maafkan saya*  
full forgive I

“Sorry because I’m late, Professor. I had to park my car a bit far because the near ones are all full. Forgive me.”

Based on the excerpt above, the apology can be described as follows,

*/Saya minta maaf sebab lambat, Prof,|* which in English is translated into

“Sorry because I’m late, Professor’ (direct apology),

*/Saya terpaksa park kereta jauh sikit sebab yang dekat semua penuh. |*

“I had to park my car a bit far because the near ones are all full” (denying responsibility)

*|Maafkan saya. |*

“Forgive me” (direct apology)

The participant is denying responsibility by blaming the absence of empty carpark, instead of admitting that they could have avoided the situation by arriving earlier than the time made for their appointment. The participant could have taken responsibility by explaining the truth, which is to explain that they have departed late from home, but that would make the professor feel displeased as they have already agreed to meet at a certain time. So in order to reduce the displeasure of the Professor, the participant denied responsibility and created a different excuse for their lateness.

There is not much difference between providing justification and denying responsibility. According to Ahmad, Jalaluddin, & Jaafar (2012), justification is divided into four subcategories which are as follows:

1. Providing explanation such as “I was late due to the rain”
2. Stating it was unintended such as “I did not mean to burden you”
3. Justifying the action such as “I did it for your own good”
4. Blaming something else such as “You should not have asked me to do it”

However, the researcher decided that the fourth point falls into a different category following the framework used in this study which is “denying responsibility”. This is because when a person puts the blame on something else, they are denying that they are actually at fault. So the offence committed is due to other factors instead of them.

In summary, providing justification is providing explanations that are beyond our control such as the weather and justifying our intentions, which still shows that people are admitting their part and encouraging the hearer to understand why it happened.

Denying responsibility, on the other hand, is directly or indirectly not admitting people are at fault by blaming other factors that are still in our control such as the no parking excuse, the appointment should have been set up later, a friend woke them up

late, and the list goes on in order to reduce the other person's anger or discomfort towards the speaker. One is never frank (because frankness is not valued, but courtesy is) except of those whose sympathy can be relied on (Soon, 2015).

The nature of how Malaysians speak has also affect their tendency to combine strategies in order to apologize. Instead of just saying sorry directly and let go of the situation, they combined several other strategies together. There are up to four combinations of strategies used and one of them is shown below.

Extract 2:

<i>Minta</i>	<i>maaf</i>	<i>banyak</i>	<i>banyak</i>	<i>salah</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>saya</i>
ask	sorry	many	many	wrong	I	I
<i>tanggung</i>	<i>kos</i>	<i>repair</i>				
bear	cost	repair				

“I’m so so sorry. (It was) My fault. I’ll bear the cost of repair (the damage).”

Based on the response, the apology strategies are as follows,

|*Minta maaf banyak banyak.*|

“I’m so so sorry” (direct apology and use of intensifiers)

|*Salah saya.*|

“(It was) My fault” (acknowledgment of responsibility)

|*Saya tanggung kos repair.*|

“I’ll bear the cost of repair (the damage)” (offer of repair)

The response consists of a combination of four apology strategies. According to Abdullah (1992), one symbol of humility is an apologetic behaviour among the Malays. The usage of “use of intensifiers” and “acknowledgement of responsibility” portrays humility as they not only acknowledge that it was their fault, but also added intensifiers to show their

determination in wanting to apologize and make things right. This leads to their next strategy used, which is the “offer of repair”.

It is uncommon in the English language to repeat the same word in a sentence, but it is a different case in Malay. Ahmad, Jalaluddin, & Fadzeli, (2012) stated that the “use of intensifiers” in Malay is by the usage of adverbs that carries the meaning to intensify, or by the repetition of intensifiers two times, such as *|Minta maaf banyak banyak|*, which brings the meaning “I’m really really sorry.” More examples of the use of intensifiers in Malay apology are indicated in the responses below:

*|Saya dengan rendah hati memohon maaf.|*

“I humbly apologize”;

*|Saya memohon maaf seikhlasnya |*

“I’m truly sorry”; and

*|Saya memohon maaf dari hujung kaki ke hujung kepala.|*

“From the bottom of my heart, I apologize.”

Typically, the intensifiers will be complemented by acknowledgment of responsibility such as:

*|Semuanya memang salah saya.|*

“It’s entirely my fault”;

*|Saya janji tidak akan mengulanginya lagi|*

“I promise it won’t happen again”; or

*|Saya tidak sengaja melakukannya|*

“It was not intentional”.

So not only they show humility, but also take responsibility for causing the offense.

Based on Table 4.1 and 4.2, the findings from the current study are in contrast with the claim made by Rosli (2009) who stated that Malaysians rarely apologize.



Findings from this study show that Malaysians do apologize and is shown in the 2 tables above. There are only several occasions where they avoid apology and one of the responses is shown below:

Extract 3:

<i>Saya</i>	<i>diet</i>	<i>makcik</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>kurangkan</i>	<i>ambik (ambil)</i>	<i>gula</i>
I	diet	aunty	I	reducing	take	sugar

“I’m on a diet aunty. I’m reducing my sugar intake.”

Based on the response above, the apology strategies used are as follows:

|*Saya diet makcik. Saya kurangkan ambil gula.*|

“I’m on a diet aunty. I’m reducing my sugar intake” (providing justification)

There are no words and no apology expression present in the response that suggests an apology. Therefore, this response falls under the category of “avoiding or postponing apology”. The participant does not see any need to apologize for the current situation, so they just provided an explanation for not finishing the cake which in this case is informing that the respondent “*is on a diet and reducing the sugar intake*” as the hearer posed them a question that requires an answer. There is no “sorry” or “I apologise” phrase present in the response above.

In summary, the result of this study shows that Malaysians apologize and they prefer to combine several strategies to do so. The findings of this study is the same as the one conducted by Alfattah (2010) who stated that apologies should consist of a direct apology expression as a compulsory component accompanied by any one of the other strategies. The reason for this is due to cultural factors or norms. That corresponds the findings of previous studies which iterated that as far as Malay culture is concerned, showing tolerance and understanding via silence and avoidance of responses are valued

more than rational excuses particularly when faced with uncomfortable situations (Daud, 2002; Abdullah, 1996; and Mohd Ali, 1995). Further, discontent, if expressed, will be done indirectly so as to avoid overt confrontation and arouse feelings of discomfort in the other party. This, as the researchers concluded, explains why Malays are more inclined to state what should be said rather than say what they really feel.

The next section shows the findings to answer research question 2 in regard to positive and negative politeness.

#### 4.2 Positive and Negative Politeness Strategies

This section of the study will discuss the apology strategies used by the participants in relation to the positive or negative politeness. Several studies looking into apologies have been conducted with regard to politeness, which was previously presented in Chapter 2 of this study (p.20). Different results could be observed in those studies, which are affected by several reports from Soliman (2003) and Gries & Peng (2002), that there are considerable East–West differences in causal reasoning and responsibility assessment when it comes to apologies (Bataineh & Bataineh , 2008).

The findings of this study are presented in order to analyse the apology strategies in the Malay language and which category that these strategies fall into. Provided below in Table 4.3, showing the frequencies of apology strategies used in relation to the positive or negative politeness:

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	Positive Politeness:		
	(a) Offer of repair	73	22.9
	(b) Showing concern	10	3.1
	(c) Sense of humour	1	0.3
	(d) Use of intensifiers	29	9.2
	(e) Providing justification	91	28.5
	(f) Acknowledgement of responsibility	20	6.3
<b>Total</b>		<b>224</b>	<b>70.3</b>
2	Negative Politeness		

	(a) Promise of non-recurrence	11	3.4
	(b) Denying responsibility	38	11.9
	(c) Avoiding or postponing apology	46	14.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>29.7</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.3: Frequency of apology strategies based on the Negative and positive politeness apology strategy adapted from Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009)

As presented in Table 4.3, the total of apology strategies that falls under the category of positive politeness is 224 out of 319, or 70.3%. These strategies are directed to both interlocutors' positive face as they emphasize the speaker's interest in maintaining the relationship (Ogiermann, 2009).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), positive politeness is an involvement-based approach made by the speaker to ratify, understand, approve of, and admire the positive image of the addressee. So actions that includes involvement from the speaker such as stated in the coding for the adaptation of Negative and positive politeness apology strategy by Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009), "offer of repair", "showing concern", "sense of humour", "use of intensifiers", "providing justification" and "acknowledgment of responsibilities" fall under the category of positive politeness. These strategies are done in order to restore harmony for both parties involved. Provided below are examples of the data under this category. The highest strategy that contributes to this percentage is "providing justification", which is with a total of 28.5%.

Extract 4 (Situation 5, being late to meet a friend):

*Sorry! Saya tertidur awak!*

Sorry! I fell asleep you

Sorry! I fell asleep!

Based on the response above, the strategies are as follows,

"Sorry!" (Direct apology)

*/Saya tertidur awak!/*

“I fell asleep” (Providing justification)

The respondent is explaining that the reason for the lateness is because they accidentally fell asleep, so it was unintentional.

“Offer of repair” follows as the second most used strategy, with a total of 22.9%. When offering repair, the offender “makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage that resulted from the infraction” (Cohen & Olshtain, 1994). An example of a response from this study is shown below:

Extract 5 (Situation 3, spilling the soup):

*Maafkan saya puan saya tolong carikan baju lain*  
forgive I madam I help find blouse different  
*untuk Puan?*  
for madam

“Forgive me madam. I’ll help search for a different blouse for you?”

Based on the response above, the strategies are as follows:

|*Maafkan saya puan,*|

“Forgive me madam,” (direct apology)

|*Saya tolong carikan baju lain untuk puan?*|

“I’ll help search for a different blouse for you?” (offer of repair)

Previously mentioned in Chapter 2 of this study, “offer of repair” is the strategy in which the wrongdoer offers to compensate for the physical or material damage for which he/she is apologizing for (Bataneh & Bataneh, 2008). For this current situation, the damage is done to the hearer’s blouse and in order to compensate for the physical damage done, the participant offered to search for a new blouse to replace the one covered in spilled soup. Awang, Maros, & Ibrahim (2012) concluded in their study that conflict-avoidance and ability to adapt with the values of other ethnic groups are the two elements that greatly

contribute to the harmonious life of the diverse Malaysian people. In order to avoid conflict, Malaysians opt to compensate for the damage that has been caused and restore the harmony between the two parties involved, which supports earlier claims regarding positive politeness.

An example of “showing concern” is presented below:

Extract 6 (Situation 6, stepping someone’s foot):

*Sorry terpijak! Sakit tak?*

Sorry stepped hurt not?

Sorry (I stepped on your foot). (Did it) hurt?

Based on the response above, the strategies are as follows:

“Sorry” (direct apology)

*/Sakit tak?/*

“Did it hurt?” (showing concern)

The respondent is inquiring whether the person is hurt due to his or her offence in accidentally stepping on the person’s foot. Instead of just apologising, the respondent is showing that s/he is concerned with the well being of the hearer.

An example of a data from the strategy of “sense of humour” is provided below.

Extract 7 (Situation 4, unfinished cake):

*Eh tak makcik sedap kek ni (ini) saya*

Oh no aunty delicious cake this I

*Terlampau kagum sampai terberhenti makan*

Extremely impressed until stopped eat

“Oh no aunty, this cake is delicious. I am extremely impressed until I stopped eating.”

Based on the response above, the strategies are as follow:

*|Sedap kek ni saya terlampau kagum sampai terberhenti makan|*

“This cake is delicious, I am extremely impressed until I stopped eating” (sense of humour)

The respondent is trying to lighten up the situation by making a joke that s/he is impressed with the cake until s/he stopped eating instead of saying the real reason which is the sweetness of the cake. This is done to save the face of the aunty as the respondent does not want to offend the hearer.

The next example falls under the category of “use of intensifiers”.

Extract 8 (Situation 5, late to meet a friend):

*Maaf sangat sangat saya lambat*

Sorry really really I late

I am really really sorry, I am late.

Based on the response above, the strategies are as follow:

*/Maaf/*

“Sorry” (Direct apology)

*/Sangat sangat/*

“Really really” (use of intensifiers)

The respondent is emphasizing that s/he is sorry for being late by the use of the word “really”. Instead of just the word “sorry”, they added the intensifier to intensify his or her apology towards the hearer. This is done because s/he realizes the severity of the offence as s/he has wasted another person’s time in waiting for him or her so it is important to show how sorry s/he is.

The last example falls under the category of “acknowledging responsibility”.

Extract 9 (Situation 1, late to an appointment with a professor):

*Maaf salah saya saya patut datang awal*

Sorry wrong I I should come early

Sorry, my fault. I should have come early.

Based on the response above, the strategies are as follow:

[Maaf]

“Sorry” (Direct apology)

[Salah saya]

“My fault. I should have come early” (Acknowledging responsibility)

The respondent is saying “my fault” in order to admit that s/he was wrong. Instead of blaming other factors, s/he claims responsibility by admitting s/he could have come earlier to avoid being late due to finding available parking space. Ahmad, Jalaluddin, & Fadzeli (2012) stated that words indicating “acknowledgment of responsibility” in Malay is when the respondent clearly states that they are responsible for their act such as *saya cuai*, which means I was careless or *saya tersalah orang* which means I have mistaken you for someone else. So the blame is solely on the respondent.

Brown and Levinson (1987), indicated the function of positive politeness strategies as one of minimizing the potential threat of an FTA by assuring the address that the speaker (S) has a positive regard for him or her and wants at least some of the wants of the addressee. So all of the presented examples above show that they are prioritizing the addressee's needs by explaining, offering to compensate, making a joke, emphasising apologies, and acknowledging their mistakes.

The total of apology strategies that falls under the category of negative politeness is 95 out of 319, or 29.7%. Based on the percentage derived from Table 4.3, it can be seen that the respondents are more inclined towards positive politeness, by a difference of 40.5%. This leads to the frequent use of “providing justification”, with a total of 91 times, where they will provide explanations in order to convey one simple message, which is “I apologize.” An example of response for this strategy is provided below:

Extract 10 (Situation 1, late for an appointment with a professor):

<i>saya</i>	<i>mint</i>	<i>maaf</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>lambat</i>	<i>prof</i>	<i>saya</i>
I	ask	sorry	I	late	professor	I
<i>bangun</i>	<i>lambat</i>	<i>jadi</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>sampai</i>	<i>lambat</i>	<i>dan</i>
wake up	late	so	I	arrive	late	and
<i>Takde (tiada)</i>	<i>parking</i>					
no	parking					

“I am sorry I am late Professor. I woke up late so I arrived late and there was no parking.”

The apology strategies for the response are as follows:

|*Saya minta maaf saya lambat Prof.*|

“I am sorry I am late, Professor” (direct apology) and

|*Saya bangun lambat jadi saya sampai lambat dan tiada parking.*|

“I woke up late so I arrived late and there was no parking” (providing justification).

The participant explained the reason for him or her being late is that s/he overslept, which caused him or her to arrive late and the absence of parking space. The participant accompanied the apology with a long explanation.

Negative politeness means respect, the distance speaker – interlocutor, the avoidance of suppositions connected to the interlocutor, impersonalization, avoidance behaviour or that of redressing a difficult situation etc (Brown and Levinson, 1987). This means that it avoids situations that will interfere the addressee’s territory. In doing so, respondents prefer to only apologise by saying it will not happen again, or by avoiding the apology itself, simply trying to not put the burden upon the addressee to be forced to forgive them. Example of the first strategy, “promise of non-recurrence” is provided as follows.



Extract 11:

*sorry lambat takkan (tidak akan) jadi lagi lepas ni (ini)*

sorry late will not happen again after this

Sorry (I'm) late, it will not happen again after this.

The apology strategies for the response are as follows:

*/Sorry lambat/*

“Sorry I'm late” (Direct apology)

*/Takkan jadi lagi lepasni/*

“It will not happen again”

The respondent provided an apology and promised that it will not happen again. As the negative face is represented by the desire to be independent, s/he takes his or her own effort in attempting to apologise by not letting it happen again, instead of wanting the addressee to forgive him or her and to be accepted.

The next example is “denying responsibility”.

Extract 12 (Situation 5, late to meet a friend):

*sorry lambat kenapa tak (tidak) callkejut aku*

sorry late why not call wake I

Sorry (I'm) late, why didn't you call and wake me up?

The apology strategies for the response are as follows:

*/Sorry lambat/*

“Sorry I'm late” (Direct apology)

*/Kenapa tak callkejut aku?/*

“Why didn't you call and wake me up?” (Denying responsibility)

The respondent is implying that s/he is late because the addressee did not call to wake him or her up. S/he puts the blame on others instead of his or her own. So based on

the response, the respondent is being late because his or her friend is the one at fault, by not waking him or her up hence making them come late.

The last strategy is “avoiding apology” altogether. An example of this is shown below.

Extract 13 (Situation 4, unfinished cake):

*saya dah (sudah) kenyang*

I already full

I'm already full.

There is no apology present, only an explanation of the account. When the aunt asked whether s/he does not like the cake, instead of apologising for the probability of offending her by not finishing the cake, s/he simply provides an explanation that s/he is full. It is enough to answer the question by being direct and not wanting to want an extension of intimacy, to imply common ground or sharing of wants (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

To summarize the inclination of Malay apology strategies towards positive and negative politeness strategies, the findings of this study suggest that Malaysians are more inclined to use positive politeness strategies while apologizing. They are prone to positive politeness due to the way they communicate by regularly talking in an indirect manner which includes repeating a word or apologising several times to show emphasis, by providing explanation, and other ways to assure the address that the speaker (S) has a positive regard for him or her and wants at least some of the wants of the addressee (Wagner, 2004).

This is true as individualism and the focus on negative politeness are characteristic of Anglo-Saxon cultures (Ogiermann, 2009), as supported by Kádár & Mills (2011), which stated that Brown and Levinson's model is based on Anglo-Saxon social realities, in particular the notion of the rational individual ('Model Person') who

can act in a way that (s)he judges to be logical. This is the opposite of the Asian culture, which favours a more in-group social harmony as stated in Sugimoto (1997), where the Japanese respondents strived more to save face, stressed the lack of malicious intention yet admitted responsibility for the offense. A study done in Malaysia also resulted in the frequent use of expression of regret because it is common and socially acceptable as an apology (Wan Ismail, Mohd Daud, Ahmad Zaidi, 2017).

A study by Farnia, Abdul Sattar & Mei (2014) states that Malay discourse will move for some time before the real intention is made known, and even then, it will be imparted in an indirect way.

### 4.3 Apologies and Context

This section presents the answers that are gathered and tabulated into 6 different tables that are arranged according to the 6 different context presented in the DCT. The six situations are different in context, where differences lie in who the speakers and hearers are, the offense committed, and the place where it happened. The situations are as follows:

Num.	Situation
1	<p><i>Anda adalah seorang pelajar kolej. Anda telah membuat temujanji dengan pensyarah anda di pejabatnya. Tapi kerana kawasan letak kereta yang terdekat telah penuh, anda sampai lewat 15 minit. Anda ketuk pintu, masuk, dan anda berkata.....</i></p> <p>You are a college student. You made an appointment with your professor at his office. But you were 15 minutes late because the closest parking place was full. You knock on the door, go in, and say to the professor ...</p>
2	<p><i>Anda sedang mengundur kereta dan terlanggar kereta di sebelah dan hasilnya terdapat sedikit kesan kemik. Pemandu kereta itu keluar dan bersemuka dengan anda dengan perasaan yang marah. Pemandu tersebut lebih kurang umur anda. Anda....</i></p> <p>Backing out of a parking place, you run into the side of another car. It was clearly your fault. You dent the side door slightly. The driver gets out and comes over to you angrily. He is an adult, about your age:</p>

3	<p><i>Di sebuah restoren buffet, anda sedang membawa makanan ke meja anda. Namun anda tersadung dan tertumpahkan sup di atas baju seorang wanita yang berumur. Anda....</i></p> <p>At a buffet restaurant, you are carrying your meal to your table. When you are walking between tables, you stumble and your soup spills over an elderly lady's blouse.</p>
4	<p><i>Rakan anda telah menjemput anda kerumahnya. Setibanya di rumah, ibunya menghidangkan kek yang sangat manis. Anda tidak dapat menghabiskannya dan telah meninggalkan separuh dari kek yang dihidangkan kepada anda. Ibunya bertanya jika anda tidak sukakan kek tersebut. Anda...</i></p> <p>A friend invited you to his parents' house. You visit them. His mother serves a very sweet cake. You cannot eat it, and leave half of it. His mother asked if you don't like the cake. You...</p>
5	<p><i>Anda sepatutnya bertemu dengan rakan anda di hadapan café namun anda telah lewat 15 minit kerana tertidur. Anda...</i></p> <p>You were supposed to meet your friend in front of a café but you were 15 minutes late because you had taken a nap.</p>
6	<p><i>Dalam lif yang penuh, anda telah terpijak kaki seseorang yang berumur lebih kurang anda. Anda...</i></p> <p>In a crowded elevator, you step on somebody's (adult-your age) foot.</p>

Table 4.4: Six situations adapted from Maros' (2006) DCT questionnaire

The DCT displayed in Table 4.4 was designed to elicit apology responses from the participants. So based on the differences of people involved, severity of offense, and the place where the events occurred, the apology strategies used were noted, tabulated and presented in 6 tables respectively. Frequencies were counted and analysed by the researcher in order to see whether the differences in context affect the choices of apology strategies used. With this data, the researcher can observe whether the participants prefer to use "direct apology" and "providing justification" for all of the offenses committed according to the different situations (i.e. context). The tables presented below consist of the apology strategies, frequencies, and percentages based on the different situations respectively.

### 4.3.1 Situation 1:

You are a college student. You made an appointment with your professor at his office. But you were 15 minutes late because the closest parking place was full. You knock on the door, go in, and say to the professor ...

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	<b>Direct apology</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17.5</b>
2	Direct apology + promise of non-recurrence	3	7.5
3	Direct apology + acknowledgement of responsibility	3	7.5
4	<b>Direct apology + denying responsibility</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>42.5</b>
5	Direct apology + use of intensifiers + denying responsibility	2	5.0
6	Direct apology + providing justification + promise of non-recurrence	1	2.5
7	Direct apology + providing justification + use of intensifiers	2	5.0
8	Direct apology + denying responsibility + promise of non-recurrence	1	2.5
9	Direct apology + providing justification + acknowledgement of responsibility + promise of non-recurrence	2	5.0
10	Direct apology + use of intensifiers + acknowledgement of responsibility + promise of non-recurrence	1	2.5
11	Direct apology + denying responsibility + <b>showing concern</b>	1	2.5
	Total	40	100

Table 4.5: Situation 1

Based on the first situation, it can be observed that the most frequent strategy is the combination of “direct apology” and “denying responsibility” (no. 4, marked in Table 4.5), which has a total of 17 out of 40 responses. An example from the response is as follows:

Extract 14:

Maaf      Saya      lambat.      car park      penuh.  
 sorry      I      late      car park      full

“Sorry I’m late. The car park is full.”

Instead of admitting the mistake, such as s/he should have arrived earlier, etc., the respondent provided an excuse to explain his or her mistake which, in this case, is lateness. The reason why the researcher placed this under the category of “denying responsibility” instead of “providing justification” is because firstly the respondent is the one who had set up the appointment. Once a time is set, it is up to his or her responsibility to weigh all the factors and be there on time. Even for a dentist appointment, car service appointment, or an examination, the client or candidate is supposed to be at the venue few minutes ahead before time just in case things like ‘no nearby carpark is present’ to occur.

The second most frequently used strategy is “direct apology”. Majority of the respondents answered in English for this part. As stated earlier in the code-switching section, Malaysian students tend to code-switch a lot in their daily conversation, hence the reason for answering this part in English. An example of this response is provided below:

Extract 15:

*Sorry Prof*

Sorry professor

Based on the above response, it can be seen that the respondent used the “direct apology” strategy without accompanied by other strategies and this shows that s/he prefers to provide a short response. This is why the respondent code-switch, as the expression “sorry” is shorter than saying *minta maaf* which means “sorry” in Malay. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, Holmes (2008) stated that one of the reasons why people code-switch is due to the participants’ solidarity and status. In this current situation, the participants involved are a lecturer and a student, hence the differences in social status.

Apart from the listed apology strategies mentioned earlier, there is also another response that does not fall in any category used in the framework for this study, which is a new strategy referred to as “Showing concern”. The example is shown below:

Extract 16:

Maafkan	saya,	Prof	Prof	marah	saya?
forgive	I	professor	professor	angry	I

“Forgive me, Prof. Are you angry with me Prof?”

Based on the above response, the respondent asked whether the Professor is mad at him or her for being late. The respondent is trying to show that s/he is concerned about the Professor’s feelings about them being late by not just apologizing, but including a question to further understand the addressee’s situation. This question falls under a new strategy which is “showing concern” because besides just apologizing and then considering that the process of apologizing has been completed, the respondent did not just dismiss the hearer’s state of mind but continued by asking a question to make sure that s/he is really forgiven or that s/he did not offend the hearer any further. It shows that the respondent is concern with the after effect of their offense, by wanting to know of the addressees feelings. Examples of questions that could be asked which falls under the same category are as follows: *|Masih boleh jumpa lagi|* which means “Can I still see you”, *|Prof nak jumpa lain waktu?|* which means “Would you prefer to meet some other time?” and so on which shows the concern the respondent has towards the professor’s time.

Based on this situation, the apology strategies that are frequently used are “direct apology” and “denying responsibility” because in trying to apologize to a person of a higher rank in a context where the person committed a mistake by being late, it is better to keep the apology short and concise in order to not offend the hearer further by giving excuses or unnecessary remarks. Kádár & Mills (2011) stated that in an ordinary

conversation native Japanese students cannot freely decide what they want to say because the power difference between teacher and student necessitates the use of the second honorific utterance. This is supported by Goddard (2002), where Malays are trained to cultivate speech etiquette that includes an array of alternative pronouns and other terms of address, using a soft tone, not saying too much, careful attention to choice of words, and avoidance of sensitive topics.

#### 4.3.2 Situation 2:

Backing out of a parking place, you ran into the side of another car. It was clearly your fault. You dented the side door slightly. The driver got out and came over to you angrily. He is an adult, about your age...

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	Direct apology	3	7.5
2	Direct apology + providing justification	2	5.0
3	<b>Direct apology + offer of repair</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>25.0</b>
4	Direct apology + denying responsibility	2	5.0
5	Avoiding apology + offer of repair	5	12.5
6	Direct apology + providing justification + offer of repair	3	7.5
7	Direct apology + providing justification + acknowledgement of responsibility	1	2.5
8	<b>Direct apology + acknowledgement of responsibility + offer to repair</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15.0</b>
9	Direct apology + use intensifiers + offer of repair	3	7.5
10	Direct apology + providing justification + acknowledgement of responsibility + offer of repair	2	5.0
11	Direct apology + providing justification + use of intensifiers + offer of repair	2	5.0
12	Direct apology + acknowledgment of responsibility + use of intensifiers + offer of repair	1	2.5
	Total	40	100

Table 4.6: Situation 2

The second situation shows “direct apology” and “offer of repair” (no. 3, marked in Table 4.6) as a combination that is more frequently used. An example of response is shown as follows:



Extract 17:

*Maafkan saya saya akan bayar ganti rugi.*

forgive I I will pay damages

“Forgive me; I’ll pay for the damage (caused).”

Based on the response above, the respondent offers to pay the cost, as a way of apologizing for the damage that s/he has caused. This could be seen as the most appropriate apology strategy for this situation because the mistake caused had brought serious inconvenience to the other party in terms of money. A “direct apology” without an “offer of repair” would be seen as very rude in this context. The severity of the offence is too high to just escape with a simple direct apology without any compensation.

The next most frequent apology strategy is a combination of “direct apology”, “acknowledgment of responsibility”, and “offer of repair”. Provided below is an example of the response for this category:

Extract 18

*Saya mengaku salah saya Tolong maafkan saya saya*

I admit fault I please forgive I I

*akan bayar untuk semua kerusakan*

will pay for all damage

“I admit it is my fault. Please forgive me. I will pay for all the damages (caused)”

Based on this response, the respondent did not only apologize and offers to pay for the damages caused, but also admitted to his or her mistake by claiming responsibility when s/he said |*Saya mengaku salah saya*| which means “I admit it is my fault”. S/he did

not create any excuses whatsoever. By claiming his or her responsibility, it is done in order to lessen the hearer's discomfort with the offense committed.

Based on this second situation, the offense committed is severe. Therefore the use of "offer of repair" is the most frequently used strategy here. There could be no other way to gain forgiveness from this type of offence without offering compensation. An apology, although combined with any other strategy, will not be enough to repair the situation as it involves more than just the hearer's feelings. Regardless of age, gender, or social status the hearer is, the offense committed in this situation requires the person to compensate to accompany the apology.

### 4.3.3 Situation 3

At a buffet restaurant, you are carrying your meal to your table. When you are walking between tables, you stumble and your soup spills over an elderly lady's blouse.

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	Direct apology	3	7.5
2	Avoiding apology	3	7.5
<b>3</b>	<b><u>Direct apology + offer of repair</u></b>	<b><u>11</u></b>	<b><u>27.5</u></b>
4	Direct apology + use of intensifiers	5	12.5
5	Direct apology + providing justification	6	15.0
6	Avoiding apology + offer of repair	2	5.0
<b>7</b>	<b><u>Direct apology + use of intensifiers + offer of repair</u></b>	<b><u>6</u></b>	<b><u>15.0</u></b>
8	Direct apology + use of intensifiers + offer of repair + acknowledgement of responsibility	2	5.0
9	Direct apology + showing concern	2	5.0
	Total	40	100

Table 4.7: Situation 3

Situation 3 shares the same result as Situation 2 in that "direct apology" and "offer of repair" (no. 3, marked in Table 4.7) is the highest chosen combination of apology strategies. The reason is also the same: the seriousness of the offense committed costs inconvenience to the other party. Therefore "offer of repair" should be used. An answer is shown in Extract 19:

Extract 19:

<i>Maaf</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>cuai.</i>	<i>Saya</i>	<i>akan</i>	<i>gantikan</i>	<i>baju</i>
sorry	I	careless	I	will	replace	blouse
<i>puan</i>	<i>atau</i>	<i>Bayar</i>	<i>ganti rugi</i>	<i>baju</i>	<i>itu</i>	
madam	or	pay	damages	blouse	that	

“Sorry I was careless. I will replace your blouse or pay for the damages caused.”

As stated in the response, both “offer of repair” strategies could be provided, be it by replacing the blouse or pay for the cost of the damage. This could be done either by paying the cost of washing the stain or by replacing the blouse itself. Some respondents even answered by offering tissues or cloth to wipe up the spilled soup. The act of offering to help reduces the difficulty faced by the other party resulted from the offense committed is considered as a type of “offer of repair.”

The second highest apology strategies used for Situation 3 is the combination of “direct apology”, “use of intensifiers” and “offer of repair”. Provided below is a response representing the combination of the strategies:

Extract 20:

<i>Minta</i>	<i>maaf</i>	<i>sangat</i>	<i>puan</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>tak (tidak)</i>
ask	sorry	really	madam	I	not
<i>sengaja</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>akan</i>	<i>cuba</i>	<i>carikan</i>	<i>baju</i>
deliberate	I	will	try	to find	blouse
<i>lain</i>	<i>untuk</i>	<i>puan</i>			
other	for	madam			

“I am so sorry Madam. I did not do it on purpose. I will try to find a different blouse for you.”

The response above is basically almost the same as the most used combination strategy for this situation. The only addition to it is the “use of intensifiers,” the addition of the word *sangat* which means “really”, that put emphasis to the expression. Besides apologizing and offering to repair the situation, the respondent added an intensifier to put more emphasis in apologizing. The offence committed is in a restaurant so adding long details to justify the act or admitting responsibility would be time consuming, hence adding intensifiers shows the respondent’s earnestness in apologizing without combining with other apology strategies.

#### 4.3.4 Situation 4

A friend invited you to his parents’ house. You visited them. His mother served a very sweet cake. You could not eat it, and left half of it. His mother asked if you don’t like the cake.

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	Avoiding apology	1	2.5
<b>2</b>	<b><u>Avoiding apology + providing justification</u></b>	<b>26</b>	<b>65.0</b>
<b>3</b>	<b><u>Direct apology and providing justification</u></b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20.0</b>
4	Direct apology and providing justification + use intensifiers	2	5.0
5	Avoiding apology + providing justification + showing concern	2	5.0
6	Avoiding apology + Sense of humour	1	2.5
	Total	40	100

Table 4.8: Results for Situation 4

Situation 4 carries a different answer. Respondents opt to avoid apology more. As shown in the table above, the combination of “avoiding apology” and “providing justification” (no. 2, marked in Table 4.8) is the most frequent choice. The following is a sample from the data collected:

Extract 21:

*Kek ni sedap tapi saya kenyang terima kasih*  
 cake this delicious but I full thank you

“This cake is delicious but I’m full. Thank you.”

Avoiding apology is the absence of words or expressions that expresses direct apology such as *sorry* or *forgive me*. Based on the above response, the respondent does not apologize for not eating the cake. There is no indication of words representing apology in the response. Instead, they provide an explanation of being full in order to politely decline eating the other half of the cake. It can be seen from Table 4.8 that the majority of the respondents opted to avoid apology with an added combination of other strategies. The reason for the frequent use of avoiding apology in this situation is because the participants believe that they have done nothing wrong and are not at fault. No harm or pain has been inflicted towards the hearer, so there is no need to apologize.

There are however those who did apologize via the strategy combination of “direct apology” and “providing justification”, which is the second highest strategy used. This combination was provided by 8 of the respondents. An example of the response is provided below:

Extract 22:

<i>Maaf</i>	<i>kalau</i>	<i>puan</i>	<i>tersinggung</i>	<i>tapi</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>masih</i>
sorry	if	madam	offended	but	I	still
<i>kenyang</i>						
full						

“Sorry if you’re offended madam but I’m still full.”

Based on the above response, the respondent provided an explanation of being full as to why the cake is not finished, which is similar to the previous response. However, this time the respondent apologized for not finishing the cake by saying sorry, unlike the previous response. Based on the situation given, the hearer asked if the respondent did not like the cake. Worried that the hearer is offended by his or her action of not finishing the cake, s/he apologized, accompanied by their justification. Apart from that, another

interesting response emerged during the collection of data, which is the use of “sense of humour.” This strategy is not present in the framework used in this study. Provided below is the response for this strategy used. It is combined with “avoiding apology.”

Extract 23:

<i>Eh</i>	<i>tak</i>	<i>makcik</i>	<i>sedap</i>	<i>kek</i>	<i>ni (ini)</i>	<i>saya</i>
Oh	no	aunty	delicious	cake	this	I
<i>Terlampau</i>	<i>kagum</i>	<i>sampai</i>	<i>terberhenti</i>	<i>makan</i>		
Extremely	impressed	until	stopped	eat		

“Oh no aunty, this cake is delicious. I am extremely impressed that I stopped eating.”

Based on the response, the respondent did not apologize and tried to make a joke out of the situation. This was done to lighten up the situation in order to not offend the hearer. Apparently, wrong-doers seemed to think that once the offender was tricked into laughing, it became easier for him/her to forget the gravity of the offence (Jebahi, 2011). Not thinking that there is a need to apologize, the respondent simply added some humour to the response.

Further studies indicate that humour helps to lessen tension and conflicts as well as reduces the social distance between members in a group (Awang, Maros & Ibrahim, 2012). Malaysians value their identity among the members in a group, hence wanting to maintain a pleasant interaction with each other all the time. The use of code-switch, humour, and excuses are all just to reduce the conflicts between each other and to maintain harmony.

#### 4.3.5 Situation 5

You were supposed to meet your friend in front of a café but you were 15 minutes late because you had taken a nap.

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
1	Direct apology	4	10.0

2	Avoiding apology	2	5.0
3	Direct apology + providing justification	5	12.5
<b>4</b>	<b>Direct apology + offer of repair</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15.0</b>
5	Direct apology + denying responsibility	5	12.5
6	Avoiding apology + denying responsibility	2	5.0
7	Direct apology + providing justification + promise of non-recurrence	2	5.0
<b>8</b>	<b>Direct apology + providing justification + offer of repair</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20.0</b>
9	Direct apology + providing justification + acknowledgement of responsibility	1	2.5
10	Direct apology + use of intensifiers + providing justification + offer of repair	2	5.0
11	Direct apology + offer of repair + providing justification + promise of non-recurrence	1	2.5
12	Direct apology + providing justification + offer of repair + acknowledgement of responsibility	1	2.5
13	Direct apology + showing concern	1	2.5
	Total	40	100

Table 4.9: Results for Situation 5

Situation 5 provides a more diverse set of answers. The most frequently used combination of apology strategies comprises of “direct apology”, “providing justification”, and “offer of repair”. An example of a response is provided below:

Extract 24:

*Sorry lambat. Aku tertidur harini makan aku belanja*  
 sorry late I fell asleep today eat I treat

“Sorry I’m late. I fell asleep. Today I’ll pay for (our) meal.”

Based on the response above, the respondent accompanied his or her apology with an explanation of being late, which in this case is falling asleep. S/he did not create any excuse whatsoever and even offered to pay for food. This is done in order to redeem him or herself for making his or her friend wait. The least s/he could do is to pay for food in order to make up for the lateness. The second most frequent strategy for this situation is the combination of “direct apology” and “offer of repair”. S/he apologized for what had happened and offered to repair the situation. An example is provided below:

Extract 25:

*Maaf saya lambat Saya belanja makan okay*  
sorry I late I treat eat okay

“Sorry I’m late. I’ll pay for the food okay.”

Based on this response, once apologized, s/he immediately offered to pay for food.

Extract 26:

*Weh sorry lambat ala chill aku belanja*  
Hey sorry late come on chill I treat

“Hey, sorry (I’m) late. Come on, chill, I’ll pay (for lunch)”

The response in the above extract sounds less formal and this shows the intimacy between the two friends. Again, the apology is accompanied by “offer of repair”, without providing any justification of why they are late.

To summarize the two most frequent responses for this situation, “offer of repair” is the most used strategy. This is because based on the context where the situation happened, the offense committed is towards a friend and it happened in a café. So the most convenient act the respondent could do in order to accompany his or her apology with is by paying for the food since s/he had caused the hearer to wait. Paying for food after being late is considered as a norm based on the result of this study. This is due to the fact that the respondents wanted to redeem themselves by not prolonging the issue and just simply paying for lunch, as a compensation for wasting the hearer’s time. The reason behind it happening could be further investigate in a more thorough or in depth study by interviewing them.



### 4.3.6 Situation 6

In a crowded elevator, you step on somebody's (your age) foot.

	Category	Frequency (participants)	Percentage (%)
<b>1</b>	<b><u>Direct apology</u></b>	<b><u>20</u></b>	<b><u>50.0</u></b>
2	Avoiding apology	2	5.0
<b>3</b>	<b><u>Direct apology + providing justification</u></b>	<b><u>8</u></b>	<b><u>20.0</u></b>
4	Direct apology + denying responsibility	4	10.0
5	Direct apology + use of intensifiers	2	5.0
6	Direct apology + showing concern	4	10.0
	Total	40	100

Table 4.10: Situation 6

“Direct apology” is the most used apology strategy for Situation 6, with almost 50% of the response. Generally, the answers range from *Maaf*, which means sorry, or the expression of sorry. Other answers provided by the participants consist of a direct apology combined with other strategies in generally short phrases.

Extract 27:

*Maaf, orang belakang tolak*

sorry people back push

“Sorry, people at the back pushed (me).”

The respondent explained the person at the back had pushed him or her, which resulted in the respondent stepping on the other party's foot. This is a combination of a “direct apology” and “providing justification.” In a situation like this, “direct apology” is the most suitable strategy because the place is crowded and people are in a hurry. Accompanying apology with other strategy such as “offer of repair” would be inappropriate in that situation since they would not have the time to provide any “offer of repair”, or “promise of non-recurrence” as they would not even meet each other next time therefore promising that it would not happen again is unnecessary.

Extract 28:

*Sorry, sakit tak?*

sorry hurt not?

“Sorry, does it hurt?”

Based on the extract above, the respondent asked a quick question to show concern to the hearer, how s/he is aware of the effect of the offense, and in order to lessen the tension felt by the hearer if s/he is in pain.

Similar with the previous situation, in this situation, the respondents apply code-switching by uttering the apology expression, which is sorry, in English. Apparently, based on the findings of this study, it can be observed that Malaysians are more likely to use the expression of sorry for making a direct apology compared to *minta maaf* or *maafkan saya* as it more concise and is easier to be accompanied by other apology strategies afterwards. As mentioned in a previous study by Morais (1995), code-switching in Malaysia is often practiced to show group identification of various ethnic groups, specifically to show the speaker's identity. Basically, the data has been presented and discussed in three sections of this chapter, which are

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

### 5.1 Summary

This chapter discusses the findings of the current study, in addressing the three research questions that are mentioned in Chapter 1 previously.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be seen that the most frequently used strategy, both as a standalone or combined with other strategy, is “direct apology”. How it is combined is usually by uttering an apology expression, such as “sorry”, to initiate the process of apologizing. As stated in previous chapters, the data collected for this section, which looks into the frequencies of apology, is done by distributing DCTs adopted from the DCT employed in the study by Maros (2006). The DCTs were then collected and grouped into the strategies adapted from Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Trosborg (1987).

The next most frequently used Malay apology strategies are “providing justification” (17.9%) and “offer of repair” (14.4%). Although the results showed that students opt for different apology strategies for different situations, these two strategies appear several times among the six situations. This shows that Malaysians do apologise, as opposed to the claim made by previous authors that Malaysians rarely apologise. Instead of simply stating “*sorry*”, the respondents of this study prefer to justify their actions or by redeeming themselves in offering repair. The reason being is that they reflect the culture of how Malaysians speak, as stated in Chapter 2. Directness in Malay discourse could be considered impolite and uncouth, even in warning a child (Farnia, Abdul Sattar & Mei, 2014). Therefore, by apologizing directly without justifying oneself might appear rude to some people in the country. Hence, the reason the participants are attuned to providing justifications and to offer repair in the given situations are in hopes that they could be forgiven and appear more polite. Though these actions can be seen as indirect forms of apology, some people might fail to comprehend it.

This leads to the next discussion, which is regarding apology and the types of politeness. The data was coded using the Negative and Politeness Strategy instrument adapted from Wagner (2004) and Ogiermann (2009). Based on the findings in Chapter 4, it can be seen that the behaviour of the respondents of this study shows that they are more inclined in using the positive politeness strategy.

Although results from Wagner (2004), showed that native English-speaking informants preferred a negative-politeness approach, another study conducted by Filimonova (2016), revealed that Western cultures are more prone to exhibit positive politeness in speech and this also resonates with the type of politeness depicted in Russian and Spanish apology strategies, which also show positive politeness in their speech. These are two different languages and cultures, but findings show more similarities in the aspect of politeness compared to the differences in other aspects (Filimonova, 2016).

Based on the statements above, it can be seen that there are several stands regarding the issue, although in this study Malaysians prefer positive politeness strategies, Wagner (2004) claimed English speakers prefer negative politeness strategies, Filimonova (2016) disagrees. So no general statements like the Asians prefer negative or positive politeness strategies can be made because there are other factors contributing towards the inclination. This is why research in different places or languages or dialects should always be conducted as it provides richer results and understanding of any issues.

In addressing the next section, the findings from this study show that context does play an important role in the choices of apology strategies used. The data from this section was derived from the same DCT but were analysed according to the six different situations that were prepared to elicit apology strategies. Context is the general environment of the offense committed, which includes the action, and the people and the place involved. Different combinations of apology strategies were used in the six

situations. It is clear that some strategies are frequently used in one context compared to another. Some contexts require different strategies so that the person can be more polite, whereas in other contexts the person is satisfied with only a direct apology. For example: Situation 3 caused serious damage as a car is slightly dented by the offense committed. The most appropriate strategy would be to pay for the damage, hence “offer of repair.” Not doing so would be rude and could possibly be felonious. In Situation 6, the respondent accidentally stepped on a person’s foot. Here, it is more appropriate to use a direct apology that is short and concise, rather than the use of “offer of repair” such as to prepare for a foot rub, or to replace a new shoe for the one stepped on. It would not be rude for not opting for “offer of repair” in this context as it would consume time to apologize in a crowded place, such as in an elevator, and it may seem inappropriate when the damages committed are not physically severe, such as being late for an appointment. It can be deduced that based on this study and several other studies done on related topics, the choices of strategies depend strongly on the context given. The findings from a study done by Muthusamy & Farashaiyan (2016) show that the three social or contextual factors that the study focused on (which are the imposition, power, and distance) did not have strong influences on the students’ choices of strategies, the cultural and other situational factors that may affect this matter. This shows that context plays an important role in determining the choice of strategies opted for.

This chapter concludes with implications and suggestions for further study in similar fields/topics.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

The aim of this study is to examine the types of strategies that Malaysian speakers use to apologize and to determine which of these strategies they are more inclined to employ based on the types of politeness suggested in Brown & Levinson’s (1987)

politeness theory, as well as how context influences the choices of apology strategies chosen.

Findings from this study show that Malaysians prefer to use “providing justification” and “offer of repair” strategies the most, which suggests that Malaysians value face saving. Through these strategies, they will try to justify their actions and minimize the inconvenience caused towards the hearer. As stated earlier, the Malay culture values the display of respect, consideration and concern for each other, and in being sensitive to and anticipating the interests of the other (Goddard, 2006). The findings for the current study is similar to the findings in Paramasivam & Mohamed Nor (2013), which found that the most frequently used apology strategies are offer of repair, expression of apology with explanation, and the combination of expression of apology with explanation and offer of repair. This can be concluded that Malaysians will try their best to show consideration and to repair the situation after the mistakes committed.

It can be deduced, from the current study, that the actions which correspond to the preferred apology strategies show that Malaysians prefer the positive politeness strategies. These findings correspond with Brown and Levinson’s (1978) notion of positive politeness where there is a sense of avoiding unpleasant situations by not mistreat other people’s comfort as much as possible. The findings from this study also resonate with many other studies on the politeness type portrayed in the Eastern context. However, despite the similarities that Eastern countries share with regard to the preferred politeness type, there are nuances that are unique to each culture.

There is a need to identify the type of politeness a certain culture prefers because as stated in Chapter 2, the speech act apology is culture and context-oriented. Therefore, if one were to use a strategy that seems appropriate in their cultural norm, it may not be so in a different culture. As there is a dearth of study in the Malay language regarding apology strategies, people wanting to learn the language will find the findings from this

study and others that focuses on this topic useful. This is because in order to be competent in a language, one cannot just master only the grammar and vocabulary components, but also the sentence structure and other linguistic skills that come with it.

Furthermore, the way in which politeness is expressed is very much determined by the students' strategies in apologizing by taking into consideration the seriousness of the contexts or involvement in view of personal space and rights as suggested by Brown and Levinson (1978). Findings from several studies have found that there are several factors that will affect the choices of strategies. In respect of context, some studies such as Jamuna (2015), Sugimoto (1997), Bataineh & Bataineh (2008), have shown that it does not affect the choices. This is because the respondents are not fully competent in the target language; hence there are repeated uses of the same apology strategies for most of the responses. This is supported by Sugimoto (1997), which stated that naturally their ability to produce appropriate apology messages in English decreases: they would often simply repeat the few formulas already known to them. When looking into the native language, it is shown that context does play a role in the choices of apology strategy.

Again, the importance to know the role of context would enable one to understand the need to apologize differently according to the place and time. It is important to use the most appropriate sets of apology strategies in order to make the apology as successful as can be in order to maintain the harmony between the two parties involved. As Malaysians are known to be polite, based on previous claims, they are expected to live up to the expectations by acting in that manner. Hence, parents and educators are expected to teach or instil politeness to children and students since their early age, similar in the Japanese context. A study by Tsakona (2016) stated that politeness should be taught at an early age, i.e. in kindergarten, through role plays via service encounters. The proposed teaching model used for the study is designed for kindergarten children, as speakers

would acquire pragmatic skills at an early age (Tsakona, 2016). If this type of teaching model is used in Malaysia, it could also enhance politeness among the people.

In the general view of pragmatics, one must not neglect the concept of politeness and context as they are interconnected in several different ways. They are related to one another and, to an extent, affected by different factors. According to the findings from this study, Malaysians prefer to use “direct apology” and “providing justification”, which is the combination of several strategies, and they are more inclined to positive politeness. Their choices are also context-dependent, whereby they express different apology strategies based on different aspects of certain situations. Findings from this study can be compared to other studies done in the same language or different languages to understand the Eastern culture better.

### **5.3 Implications and recommendations**

Some implications could be drawn from this current study. One of them is that the findings from this current study help contribute to the knowledge of how apologies are produced in different languages, apart from the languages used in Western countries such as English that is also widely used all around the world. This is necessary to help people have a better understanding on how speech acts work across languages and cultures.

Other than that, the findings of this study help in adding to the already present data in supporting the fact and raising that awareness that Malaysians do apologize, even if it might not seem to be the case in certain situations. Technically, one cannot make a claim that generalizes that Malaysians rarely apologize, as mentioned by Rosli (2009) as based on this study and several other studies such as Maros (2006), Paramasivam & Mohamed Nor (2013), Al-Shboul, Maros, & Mohd Yasin (2012), they do apologise. The data the studies mentioned shows that Malaysians apologise in different ways based on the strategies proposed earlier. Adding a sense of humour is also one of the apology strategies, though certain people can view it as impolite. However, this can be entirely



circumstantial as politeness is context and culture-dependent. Therefore, it is difficult to differentiate between being polite or otherwise, as it would gloss over the different cultural nuances that affect the perception of each strategy.

Although the findings from this study could be used as a guide in providing a general idea regarding the apology strategies employed by Malaysians, more studies is needed before any generalization can be made and to have a better understanding regarding this topic. The first step would be to triangulate the methods of the study in order to gain a richer data. Adding interviews and observations can provide a natural occurrence data for further studies. This would require a longer period time for analysis and a larger population for the sample, but this may provide more insight on the matter.

Apart from that, other variables could be looked into that may affect the choices of apology strategies used by Malaysians. Instead of generally considering context as a strong influence on the choices of strategies, the variables can be further categorized into gender, severity of offence, social distance, etc. It can also be noted if some variables affect the choices of strategies more than others. Furthermore, diversifying the sample of the study could also aid in distinguishing the choices of strategies made by different groups. In the Malaysian context, a study could take place that considers the comparison between the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, i.e. Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Findings from further studies on this topic would allow for a better understanding of different strategies of apologizing according to the differing cultural backgrounds that are within the Malaysian context.

## INDEX

- Abdul Hamid, 34, 2  
Abdul Kadir, 34, 2  
Abdul Sattar, 13  
Abdullah, 37, 55, 57, 2  
Ad-Darraji, 16  
Ahmad, 51, 54, 2, 4  
Akinwotu, 14  
Alfattah, 21, 57, 2  
Al-Shboul, 5, 14, 39, 40, 2  
Anglo-Saxon, 66  
apology, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 4, 5, 6  
avoiding, 21, 31, 33, 48, 57, 64, 65, 75, 76, 77, 85  
Direct, 10, 22, 23, 29, 48, 51, 52, 53, 55, 57, 60, 61, 63, 65, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 80, 82, 84, 87  
postponing, 21, 32, 44, 45, 51, 52, 57, 58  
strategies, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 2, 4, 5, 6  
Arabic, 31, 2, 5  
Auer, 36, 2  
Austin, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 2  
Awang, 5, 6, 13, 33, 37, 60, 77, 2  
Azhari, 37, 2  
Bataineh, 5, 17, 58, 60, 2  
Blum-Kulka, 7, 11, 27, 28, 37, 40, 2, 5  
Bonikowska, 30  
Brown, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 59, 63, 64, 65, 85, 86, 2, 3  
Charmani, 17  
Che Lah, 8, 13, 14, 25, 37, 3  
Chinese, 5, 6, 34, 38, 39, 88  
code-switching, 33, 34, 35, 36, 69, 77, 80, 2, 4  
Cohen, 4, 17, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 43, 45, 46, 59, 82, 3  
communication, 8, 14, 34, 5  
compensation, 72, 73  
conflict, 6, 60, 5  
content-independent, 36  
context-sensitive, 36  
Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act  
Realization Patterns, 28  
Culpeper, 19, 3  
culture, 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 17, 18, 20, 29, 33, 37, 51, 57, 66, 82, 85, 86, 87, 88  
Daud, 37, 57, 3  
David, 23, 34, 36, 3  
discourse, 14, 24, 28, 30, 47, 66, 82, 4  
Discourse Completion Test, 9, 11, 24, 38  
DCT, 9, 11, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 66, 67, 82, 84  
Dumanig, 23, 34, 36, 3  
empathy, 17  
English, 5, 19, 20, 26, 27, 29, 30, 34, 36, 42, 43, 44, 53, 69, 80, 83, 87, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7  
ethnographic, 26, 40  
face, 6, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 31, 33, 51, 58, 61, 64, 85, 5, 6  
Fadzeli, 51, 2, 7  
Farashaiyan, 8, 47, 84, 5  
Farnia, 8, 18, 66, 82, 3  
felicity, 15  
Filimonova, 83, 3  
Fraser, 10, 22, 31, 32  
Gilks, 19, 3  
Goddard, 6, 8, 85  
Goffman, 17, 20  
González-Cruz, 13, 3  
Hadei, 35, 36, 3  
Halliday, 22, 3  
Hamzah, 6, 4  
Helmreich, 5  
Holmes, 10, 21, 22, 26, 27, 35, 70, 4  
Holtgraves, 20, 4  
Hornsey, 5  
House, 27, 37, 2  
Hua, 8  
Hungarian, 29, 6  
Hymes, 14  
Ibrahim, 5, 6, 13, 33, 37, 60, 77, 2  
image, 11, 37, 59  
impoliteness, 18, 19, 3  
Indian, 5, 6, 28, 88  
individualism, 66  
intensifiers, 21, 27, 32, 44, 45, 51, 52, 55, 56, 58, 59, 61, 62, 68, 71, 73, 74, 75, 78, 80  
interactants, 22, 23  
interactions, 4, 7, 14, 20, 39  
intimacy, 65  
Jaafar, 33, 51, 54, 7  
Jalaluddin, 51, 54, 2  
Jamuna, 14, 28, 31  
Japanese, 19, 20, 27, 83, 87, 5, 7

Jebahi, 23, 40, 77, 4  
 Jianda, 47, 4  
 Jie, 35, 36, 3  
 John Langshaw Austin, 5  
 Joong-Nam, 20, 4  
 justification, 21, 23, 26, 32, 44, 45, 47, 48,  
     51, 52, 54, 57, 58, 59, 63, 64, 68, 69, 71,  
     73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 82, 85, 87  
 Kádár, 8, 18, 20, 4  
 Kadhim, 23, 34, 36, 3  
 Kasper, 19, 37, 2, 4  
 Khaksar, 17  
 Kim, 24, 34, 38, 4  
 Kitao, 5  
 Kumar, 35, 36, 3  
 Labov, 22, 4  
 Lakoff, 19, 28, 4  
 Leech, 17, 21, 4  
 Levenston, 11, 24, 4  
 Levinson, 9, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 59, 63,  
     64, 65, 85, 86, 2, 3  
 lexical items, 34  
 linguistic, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 20, 22, 29,  
     47, 86  
 Lumayag, 23, 34, 36, 3  
 Malay, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 27, 29, 33,  
     34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 44, 46, 47, 50, 51,  
     55, 57, 58, 66, 70, 82, 85, 86, 88, 2, 3, 5,  
     6, 7  
 Maros, 5, 6, 8, 13, 14, 27, 30, 33, 34, 39,  
     40, 41, 47, 51, 60, 67, 77, 82, 2, 5, 7  
 Martínez-Flor, 11, 5  
 Marzuki, 29, 5  
 Mat Hassan, 6, 4  
 Md Adama, 6, 4  
 Mei, 8, 18, 66, 82, 3  
 Mills, 8, 18, 20, 4  
 Mohamed Nor, 5, 13, 85, 6  
 Mohd Ali, 57  
 Mohd Yasin, 5, 14, 39, 40  
 Mohd. Ali, 33, 5  
 Morais, 77, 5  
 Murad, 5  
 Muthusamy, 34, 47, 84, 5  
 Nemer, 15  
 Nureddeen, 22, 25, 31, 5  
 offer of repair, 21, 31, 48, 55, 59, 60, 71,  
     72, 73, 74, 78, 79, 82, 84, 85  
 Ogiemann, 13, 21, 23, 40, 45, 58, 59, 66,  
     83, 5  
 Olshtain, 17, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 43, 44,  
     45, 46, 59, 82, 3, 5  
 Page, 21  
 Paramasivam, 5, 13, 85, 6  
 Persian, 29, 3  
 Philpot, 5  
 poems, 34  
 Polish, 29, 6  
 politeness, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19,  
     20, 21, 22, 26, 28, 31, 33, 37, 40, 43, 45,  
     48, 50, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 66, 83, 85,  
     86, 87, 88, 4, 6  
     Negative, 11, 45, 58, 59, 64, 83, 5  
     Positive, 11, 45, 58, 5, 7  
     Positive and negative, 11  
 Politeness Strategy instrument, 83  
 promise of non-recurrence, 21, 51, 64, 68,  
     78, 80  
 Raja Suleiman, 8, 13, 14, 25, 3  
 responsibility, 10, 21, 23, 26, 31, 32, 44,  
     45, 48, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58, 62, 65,  
     68, 69, 71, 72, 73, 75, 78, 80  
 rituals, 20  
 Rosli, 6, 7, 56, 4  
 Sattar, 8, 14, 18, 25, 66, 82, 3  
 Searle, 5, 10, 15, 16  
 semantic, 22, 24, 26, 40, 43  
 sense of humour, 59, 61, 77, 88  
 Shariati, 17  
 sociolinguistic, 26, 27, 47  
 Soon, 53, 54, 6  
 speech, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17,  
     19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 40, 83, 86, 87,  
     3, 5, 6  
     act, 5, 40  
 Spencer-Oatey, 18, 6  
 Sudanese, 31, 5  
 Sugimoto, 5, 21, 6  
 Suszczyrska, 29, 6  
 syntactic, 26  
 Tai-Hyun, 33, 6  
 Takimoto, 41, 6  
 Tamil, 5, 19  
 Tran, 40, 6  
 Trosborg, 30, 31, 32, 33, 40, 43, 44, 45, 46,  
     82, 6  
 Tsakona, 87, 6  
 Tzeltal, 19  
 Usó-Juan, 11, 5  
 Vilkki, 19, 6  
 Wagner, 21, 45, 58, 59, 66, 83  
 Walter, 29, 5  
 Watanabe, 18  
 Wierzbicka, 29, 6  
 Wilson, 5, 27, 28, 30, 7  
 Wohl, 5  
 Wouk, 22, 30  
 Yousofi, 17  
 Yule, 14, 7  
 Yusof, 33, 51, 7  
 Zamani, 33, 7  
 Zawawi, 6, 33, 7

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