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**INVESTIGATING KAZAKH EFL LEARNERS APOLOGY SPEECH ACT STRATEGIES  
AND THEIR L2 PRODUCTIONS**

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## **Introduction**

Pragmatics is the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms. In this three-part distinction, only pragmatics allows human into the analysis. The advantages of studying language via pragmatics is that one can talk about people intended meaning, their assumptions, their purposes or goals, and the kinds of actions that they are performing when they speak [1].

According to Thomas model of pragmatic failure cross cultural communication refers to the message transmitted between two or more interlocutors who do or do not share a common culture or linguistic background. In other words, pragmatics goes beyond the meaning of syntactic form and semantic or as cited by Grice " the overt meaning differs from the implied [2]".

Different scholars define apologies in different ways: *Olshtain and Cohen (1983)* perceived apology as a social event and they believed that it will be performed when social norms are violated. *Brown and Levinson (1987)* considered apology as a face threatening act which damages, to some degree, the speaker's positive face, since in doing it, the speaker admits that he or she has done a transgression [3].

It aims to obtain a better understanding on the type of apology speech act strategies which Kazakh EFL learners at different proficiency levels use in their L2 productions and to discover whether there are any significant differences between the participants' apology strategies with respect to their proficiency levels. Furthermore, it is intended to compare the learners' apology strategies they use far their L1 and L2 based on apology frameworks in Kazakh and English to see whether they are similar or different.

The research questions: What type of apology speech act strategies do Kazakh EFL learners at different proficiency levels use in their L2 productions? How L1 apology speech act patterns used by EFL learners are different from their L2 productions?

The participants in this study are 11 (4 males and 7 females) Kazakh students at Eurasian National University. They are 4 year students who are studying 2 Foreign Languages: English and Chinese/German/French. The participants' age is 18-22 year old students. English is regarded as a foreign language for all of them. In this study the gender of the participants was not taken into consideration as there were an unequal number of male and female participants, but the proficiency level was the variable, the role of which was to be examined.

The data collection methods which are used in the present study are the quick placement test to determine the proficiency level of the participants and 8 questions in English and Kazakh that English one was a modified version of "Discourse Completion Test" and its Kazakh translation. With the help of Survey Monkey we collected our data. Then we sent it via What's App. English version was sent firstly and a week later we sent Kazakh version to our participants.

## **Coding scheme**

In this study the apology strategies were coded according scheme developed by Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP)

### ***Speech act of apologizing***

#### **1. Illocutionary Force Indicating Device**

- 1.1. I'm sorry
- 1.2. I apologize
- 1.3. Forgive me
- 1.4. Excuse me
- 1.5. Pardon me for...
- 1.6. I'm afraid...
- 1.7. I regret that...

#### **2. Acknowledgement of Responsibility**

- 2.1. Explicit self-blame
- 2.2. Lack of intent
- 2.3. Justifying hearer
- 2.4. Expression of self-deficiency
- 2.5. Concern for the hearer
- 2.6. Statement of offence
- 2.7. Refusal to acknowledge guilt
- 2.8. Expression of embarrassment
3. Explanation or Account
- 4. Offer of Repair**
- 5. Promise of Forbearance**
- 6. Intensifiers**
  - 6.1. Intensifying adverbials
  - 6.2. Emotional expressions
  - 6.3. Expressions marked for register
  - 6.4. Double intensifier/repetition
  - 6.5. The use of the word 'please'
  - 6.6. Hope for forgiveness
  - 6.7. Swearing
  - 6.8. Stressing exceptionality
- 7. Downgrading the offence**
  - 7.1. Query precondition
  - 7.2. Act innocently
  - 7.3. Future task-oriented remark
  - 7.4. Humor/ Phatic communion
  - 7.5. Appeaser
- 8. Alerters**
  - 8.1. Title/ role
  - 8.2. Surname
  - 8.3. First name
  - 8.4. Nickname
  - 8.5. Endearment Term
  - 8.6. Offensive term

In this study, the quick placement test by <http://www.stgeorges.co.uk/online-english/online-english-test> was used as a widely recognized reliable and valid test to determine proficiency levels of university participants. The quick placement test had 40 questions are mostly examination of English grammar issues, but also their knowledge of vocabulary, some phrasal verbs and idioms are put to the test. Every question is a multiple-choice format with 4 possible answers; there is only one correct solution on each occasion.

The DCT used in this study included a brief description of the situation. The questionnaire included 4 fixed discourse situations, which a university student was likely to encounter in his/her daily language interactions. Each situation consisted of a brief description of the addressee's characteristics, namely, social distance (degree of familiarity between the interlocutors), social dominance (the relative degree of the social power of the interlocutors over each other), and finally the offence being committed. Then, the students reading each situation were then supposed to identify themselves with the people committing the offenses in the situations and write down their normal language reaction in such situations [4].

Two main social factors included in these situations were not considered as they did not serve the purpose of the present study, and the only valued variable of this study was the proficiency levels of participants. In addition to a questionnaire in English, the participants were given a questionnaire in Kazakh one week later. This questionnaire was a translated version of the previous

one into Kazakh which was used to compare the apology strategies the participants used for their L1 and L2 to see whether they are similar or different, and also to examine the extent to which Kazakh learners of English at different proficiency levels transfer their L1 apology speech act patterns in their L2 production.

To reach the objectives of the present study, the learners took the proficiency test. The students were placed in three groups of intermediate (N=3), upper intermediate (N=6), and advanced (N=2) regarding the scores which were obtained. To determine the proficiency levels of participants, Online English Test was conducted.

The first question was to investigate whether the apology strategies are used by EFL learners at three levels of proficiency were the same or different.

**Table 1.** The comparison of English Apology Head Act Formulas Used by participants at 3 levels of Proficiency.

Level	IFID	EXPL	RESP	REPR	FORB	Total
Intermediate	10 41%	2 8.3%	9 37.5%	2 8.3%	1 4.1%	24 100%
Upper- intermediate	19 54.2%	7 20%	3 8.5%	6 17.1%	- -	35 100%
Advanced	8 50%	3 18.75%	3 18.75%	2 12.5%	- -	16 100%

As it was indicated in Table 1, among five apology head-act formulas, IFID was the most frequent apology formula used in English productions by intermediate level participants. Out of 24 answers provided by intermediate level participants, 10 or 41% included the use of an IFID expression. This was 37.5% for second main apology head act formula, namely, RESP. Intermediate level participants also used EXPL and REPR with a same frequency of 8.3% as the least frequent apology head act formula.

The most frequent apology formula used in English productions by upper-intermediate level participants was an IFID formula. Out of 35 answers provided by upper-intermediate level participants 19 or 54.2% of them was an IFID formula. This was 20% for EXPL as the second main apology head act formula. None of upper-intermediate participants used FORB as the main apology head act formula.

High level participants used IFID formula as the most frequent apology head-act formula. Out of 16 answers provided by high level participants, 8 or 50% of them was an IFID formula. This was 18.75% for the second main apology head act formula, namely, EXPL and RESP. RESP 12.5% was the least frequent apology head act formula at this level. FORB was not used by advanced level participants as the main apology head act formula.

The second question was to investigate whether participants' L1 productions were different from their L2 productions or not. Participants were asked to complete the second questionnaire, too. This questionnaire was a translated version of the previous one into Kazakh which was used to compare the apology strategies the participants used for their L1 to see whether they were similar or different.

**Table2.** Shows the frequencies and percentages of five apology head act formulas produced by intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced levels participants in their Kazakh productions.

Level	IFID	EXPL	RESP	REPR	FORB	Total
Intermediate	8 36.36%	4 18.18%	3 13.63%	6 27.27%	1 4.5%	22 100%
Upper- Intermediate	18 58%	2 6.4%	2 6.4%	8 25.8%	1 3.2%	31 100%
Advanced	7 53.8%	1 7.69%	1 7.69%	3 23%	1 7.69%	13 100%

Among five apology head-act formulas, IFID was the most frequent apology formula used in Kazakh productions by intermediate level participants. Out of 22 answers provided by low level participants, 8 or 36.36% included the use of an IFID expression. This was 27.27% for second main apology head act formula, namely, REPR. Low level participants also used RESP and EXPL with a little difference 13.63% and 18.18%, respectively. For example, Кешірші (I am sorry) or Мен байқаусызда заттарды түсіріп алдым (I accidentally took things off) were examples of IFID and EXPL formulas in Kazakh. Бұл менің кінәм (It is my fault) and Кешікпеуге тырысасын (I promise not to be late) were reasons of RESP and FORB.

The most frequent apology formula used in Kazakh productions by upper-intermediate level participants was an IFID formula. Out of 31 answers provided by upper-intermediate participants 18 or 58% of them was an IFID formula. This was 25.8% for RESP as the second main apology head act formula. Upper-intermediate level participants also used RESP and EXPL with a same frequency of 6.4% as less frequent apology act formula. As the least frequent apology act formula among upper-intermediate level participants was FORB 3.2%.

Advanced level participants used IFID formula as the most frequent apology head-act formula. Out of 13 answers provided by high level participants, 7 or 53.8% of them was an IFID formula. This was 7.69% for the second main apology head act formula, namely, EXPL, RESP and FORB. REPR 2.3% was the least frequent apology head act formula among advanced level participants.

### **Conclusion**

This study intended to analyze apology strategies which were used by EFL students at three levels of proficiency and also to contrast apology strategies between their L1 and L2 productions. The analyses of the data demonstrated that IFID was the most used formula in participants' productions in three levels of proficiency. Kazakh EFL learners used IFID formula with some added strategies in some situations they used intensifiers. Most participants in three levels of proficiency used the similar and repetitive use of English apology as I'm sorry.

This study also found that regarding the main apology head act formulas, all participants at three levels of proficiency used moderately similar apology formulas in their L1 and L2 productions. The use of IFID as the first and second most frequently used head act formula in both English and Kazakh indicated that given the same offence in the same context of Kazakh and English, EFL learners apologize more or less the same way. The emergence of EXPL was less frequently used formula by intermediate and upper-intermediate learners for both first and second languages among five main apology head act formulas. This is an advanced level participants used FORB formula as the least apology formulas in their L1 and L2 productions.

### **Literature**

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