

## A Gender-based Study of Apology Strategies Employed by Indonesian Students

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the apology strategies used by Indonesian university students and examines whether there is any gender difference in the apologies made by these students. The data were collected using Discourse Completion Task (DCT) containing eight situations. The DCT was distributed to 42 English Department students comprising 21 female students and 21 male students. Altogether, 336 apology utterances were collected. The results showed that the students most frequently used a combination of apology strategies (68.4%), especially a combination of Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) and Explanation or Account of Cause (EoC). Furthermore, there seems to be no difference in the types of strategies used by female and students. Both groups tended to use a combination strategies and IFID. However, in terms of intensity, female students tended to apologize more intensely than the males and this was evident from their more frequent use of apology intensifications.

**Keywords:** *apology, apology strategies, DCT, gender difference, speech act.*

### INTRODUCTION

Communication is a way of achieving and maintaining good relationship among individuals. However, when communicating with other people, committing offences and mistakes are unavoidable. One could always, in any way or form, offend other people, either through utterances or actions. When such an offence happens, one usually makes some form of apology. The act of apologizing, according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), is done when there is a breach or violation in social norm and that the speaker is at least partially involved in its cause. An apology intends to appease the hearer from the offences done to them and to restore—and/or

maintain the bond between the speaker and the hearer (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981).

In studying an apology speech act, as with any other speech act, it is important to take into account the rules that govern the use of language in context, one of which is universality, that is, the set of conventions that organize the language 'proper' use. However, the issue of universality has always been a challenge in the studies of pragmatics (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), since every language has its own sets of rules or conventions that organize its use. It is particularly relevant in the perspective of speech act studies. A number of studies in speech acts, mostly those in the cross-cultural pragmatics, have found diversities in the realization of speech acts, especially

if the speakers come from different places and speak different languages (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). In short, there are variables that influence each person's realization of speech acts. These variables may be sociological, cultural, and even personal.

The present research focuses only on the personal variable that may affect one's realization of speech act. To be more specific, this research attempts to examine whether gender variable influences one's production of apology strategies. It is an interesting subject to investigate since there is a claim that women tend to be linguistically politer than men (Holmes, 1995). Lakoff (1973) argued that "the marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of" (p. 45). Apparently, almost all other studies on gender differences in the linguistics field after Lakoff's, including Holmes's (1993; 1995) have led to the same conclusion, that women have the tendency to be politer than men.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many studies regarding apology speech acts (see, for example, Astuti, 2016; Nisa, 2018; Putri, 2017). Astuti (2016) investigated the apology strategies used in short messages by English Department students in Yogyakarta and examined their degree of formality which was measured through the formal/informal use of language. She reported that the students used a combination of direct and indirect strategies and that the degree of formality is likely to be influenced by the social distance and familiarity between the speaker and the hearer.

Nisa (2018) focused on the use of apology strategies by the characters in Harry Potter movies. She examined how social distance and relative power affect the realization of apology strategies used in the movies. Adopting Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) theory to analyze her data, she found that the characters in the movies frequently used an indirect apology strategy by explaining the cause of the offence, and that social distance and relative power affect the characters' linguistic realizations of apology strategies. The characters are likely to create

a lengthy explanation when they apologize to someone with a higher social status and hold more power over the speaker.

Another study by Putri (2017) investigated apology strategies used by English Department students using the theory proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and examined whether social status and gender of the interlocutor influenced the choices of the speaker's apology strategies. She reported that the students frequently used the Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) as their apology strategy, and that social status and gender of the interlocutor do not affect the female students' choice of apology strategy, whereas these two variables affect the use of apology strategy by the male students.

In addition to these studies, some other studies focus on gender differences in the use of apology strategies. Abdolmalaki and Ghani (2016), for example, studied apology strategies used by Iranian postgraduate students in ESL context and the results of this research show that the most frequent strategies used by the respondents are the primary strategies, which are statement of remorse, accounts, reparation, and compensation. It was also found that female respondents are more inclined to use statement of remorse as their apology strategies, whereas the male respondents prefer to use compensation and reparation as their strategies.

Similarly, Harb (2016) examined whether gender plays a role in the apology strategies employed by Arabic native speakers. The respondents are twenty randomly selected subjects, ten males and ten females, who are native speakers of Arabic. The data are collected via DCTs and classified according to strategy-types by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). The findings show that there are actually more similarities than differences in the choice of apology strategies used by the male and female respondents. They argued that the differences may be attributed to the difference in cultural background, since the respondents are actually using different regional dialects of Arabic: Saudi Arabic, Jordanian Arabic, and Egyptian Arabic. They concluded that gender per se does not play a role in the choice of apology strategy, as there is no statistically significant difference found between the two groups.

The studies mentioned above suggest that the use of an apology speech act is influenced by the social distance and relative power of the speaker and the hearer. The directness and the degree of formality of the apology depends on the hearer's social distance and relative power. However, the study regarding whether gender really does influence the use of apology strategies is still limited and the results often vary, especially since most of the existing research projects do not take into account variables such as cultural and social backgrounds which may also affect the production of apology utterances.

Thus, the present research attempt to investigate apology strategies employed by Indonesian university students using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) taxonomy of apology strategies, and to examine whether there is any gender difference in the production of apology speech acts by the students. In particular, this study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the apology strategies used by the students of English Departments from universities in Yogyakarta?
2. Is there any gender difference in the apologies produced by these English Departments students and if there is any, to what extent?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Speech Acts

Speech acts, generally, are actions performed via utterances (Yule, 1996). Austin (1962) stated that when one is speaking, one performs not only one act, but several acts: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary act refers to the basic act of utterance or the act of producing meaningful linguistic expressions, illocutionary act refers to the function or intention of the speaker's utterance, while perlocutionary act refers to the effect the utterance has on the hearer. However, between these three related acts, the illocutionary act or the speaker's intention is the one which receives most attention. In consequences, many

people narrowly interpret the term 'speech act' only as the illocutionary act of an utterance (Yule, 1996).

Searle (1979) then classifies five general functions of speech act: declarations, representatives, expressives, directives, and commissives. Declarations are the kinds of speech acts that change the world via utterance, they require the speaker to have a special institutional role, such as being a priest, a judge, or even a referee in a football game (Searle, 1979). Declarations are different from representatives, which are the kinds of speech acts that state the speaker's beliefs about the world, whether they are facts, assertions, conclusions, or descriptions. Expressives, on the other hand, are the kinds of speech acts that state what the speaker feels, such as pleasure, pain, likes, dislikes, joy, and sorrow. Such speech acts as apologizing, thanking, complimenting, and complaining belong to this particular category (Searle, 1979). Whereas directives are the speech acts used by the speakers to get someone else to do something. In other words, they express what the speaker wants and their forms are none other than commands, orders, requests, or suggestions (Yule, 1996). They are dissimilar from commissives which express the speaker's intention. They are the kind of speech acts that speakers use to commit themselves to future actions. They come in the form of promises, threats, refusals, or pledges (Yule, 1996).

### Apology

Based on the classification by Searle (1979), an apology speech act belongs to the class of expressive speech acts. As mentioned previously, an apology is an attempt to restore the harmony in relationship between the speaker and the hearer when an offence has been committed by the speaker (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). According to Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), there are three preconditions that have to be met in order for an apology to take place:

1. S (speaker) did X (action/event) or abstained from doing X (or is about to do it).
2. X is perceived by S only, by H (hearer) only, by both S and H, or by a third party as of a social norm.
3. X is perceived by at least one of the parties involved as offending, harming, or affecting H in some way.

By performing the speech act of apology, the speaker acknowledges that s/he is, at least, partially involved in a violation or breach of social norm which results in H being offended or harmed in a way (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Through apology, the speaker states his regret or remorse for a certain act or event and wishes to placate the offended party and mend the bond between the speaker and the hearer (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) argued that the act of apologizing can take two basic forms, or a combination of both:

- a) The direct way is done via an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), which selects a routinized, formulaic expression of regret that contain six performative verbs: (be) 'sorry', 'apologize', 'regret', 'excuse', 'forgive', 'regret', and 'pardon'. The IFID fulfills the function of signaling regret on the speaker's part for X and thus intended to placate the hearer.
- b) Another way, which is more indirect than IFID, to perform an apology—whether it is with or without an IFID—is to use an utterance to one or more elements from a closed set of specified propositions. There are four potential strategies in which one can perform apology through this form:
  - 1) Explanation of the cause that brought about the offence.
  - 2) Expression of the speaker's responsibility for the offence. It has three sub-categories:
    - S expresses trait of self-deficiency,
    - Explicit self-blame,
    - Denial of fault (thus rejecting the need to apologize).
  - 3) Offer of repair.
  - 4) Promise of forbearance.

The IFID and the four additional strategies are not mutually exclusive. Hence, the IFID can go together with one of the four strategies, or it can stand alone.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) also stated that an apology can be intensified with any of the following devices:

- 1) An intensifying expression within the IFID, such as *very*, *terribly*, etc.

- 2) Expressing explicit concern for the hearer, which is external to the IFID
- 3) Using multiple strategies ( $\pm$  IFIDs and any one or more of the four other strategies)

These manners of intensification are not mutually exclusive and could all be used simultaneously.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) also proposed three different variables which may affect the realization of a speech act, which also include the act of apologizing. These variables include:

- a) Sociological variables: These variables include social distance and relative power. Social distance, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), refers to the symmetrical relation between the participants. Generally, it is assessed from the frequency of their interaction. In other words, social distance is a differing degree of familiarity between S and H. Relative power, on the other hand, is an asymmetric social dimension between S and H. Relative power between the interlocutors may be influenced by material control, whether over economic distribution and/or physical force, and metaphysical control over the actions of others (Brown & Levinson, 1987).
- b) Cultural variables: One culture may have differing perception regarding the norms of behavior, and consequently, this may also affect the realization of an apology speech act. In short, people of varying nationalities or ethnicities may express their regret or remorse in differing ways because they possess different standards of norms.
- c) Personal variables: Personal variables refer to the aspects possessed by each individual. Personal variables allow for differing apology act realization between individuals in one society and/or one culture. This variable includes gender, age, and level of education. In terms of gender differences in the use of apologies, Cohen and Olshtain (1981) reported that women apparently offer more apologies than men and that women's apologies tend to be more intense than those of men. However, Holmes (1989) argued that there is no significant difference in apology strategy preferences between men and women.

Additionally, there is one other factor which influences the choice of one's apology strategy, that

is, the severity of the violations or offences. However, the degree of violation or offence may also be influenced by the three other variables. Therefore, this factor is dependent on the situation, socio-cultural, and personal aspects of the participants.

## METHODS

### Instrument

The present research used Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to collect data. The DCT was modelled after Cohen and Olshtain (1981) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). The DCT contained eight situations which were designed to be as close as possible to real-life situations, in the hope that the respondents produce apology utterances as naturally as possible.

Situations 1-6 contain explicit information about the hearers' gender. These six situations were designed to assess whether the offended party's gender influenced the respondents' realization of apology speech acts. In the first and second situations, the respondents were positioned as the hearer's friend, meaning, S and H were supposed to be equal in terms of social status. The degree of offence in the first two situations were similar; both were considered as serious offences. The third and fourth situations positioned the respondents and the hearer as acquaintances, with the respondents as the upperclassmen, which meant that the respondent possessed higher relative power and could be considered as having a higher status than that of the hearer in this particular context. The offence in Situation 3 was more serious than the one in Situation 4. Meanwhile, the fifth and the sixth situations were the opposite of the previous two situations. The respondents were positioned as students, while the hearer was a lecturer. Consequently, this meant that H had a higher social status than the respondents and possessed a higher relative power. The offence in Situation 5 was less serious than the one in Situation 6.

The last two situations were intended to assess the respondents' intensity in expressing apology, as

the two situations were designed with differing degrees of offence, one being lesser than the other. Situation 7 was designed to be between relatives, while Situation 8 was between strangers. However, the gender and the social status of the victim or the hearer in these last two situations were undisclosed and the respondents were free to assume the gender and the social status of the hearer.

### Respondents

The respondents chosen for this research were 42 students (21 female and 21 male) of the English Departments from various universities in Yogyakarta. The chosen universities include Universitas Gadjah Mada (12 students), Universitas Sanata Dharma (10 students), Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Yogyakarta (10 students), and Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga (10 students).

These respondents were chosen not only because of convenience, but also because they had studied English for more than one year in college and they might even use it regularly in college. They had been exposed to the English language more than any other students from other departments in their universities. Therefore, they should be able to make apologies in English better than any other students from other departments.

Another specific criterion was that the students had to be of native Javanese or at the very least, have spent more than 10 years of their life in Yogyakarta. The reason for this particular criterion was to reduce the possibility of influences caused by variables other than gender—such as ethnicity or nationality—on the respondents' choice of apology strategies. In addition, since the chosen respondents were university students, their social status and level of education were assumed to be equal and/or, at least, at the same level and thus, specific criteria to control these three variables were not necessary.

### Procedure

The DCT forms were put on an online website and the respondents were given access to the form using the following link: [ugm.id/Apology](http://ugm.id/Apology). The link was first distributed to social media or online accounts belonging to the English Departments where the students study, and from there, the students could

access to the DCT. The respondents who met the criteria mentioned above were required to fill in the necessary information. After that, they could write their apologies in response to the given situations. The respondents were asked to respond as they would in actual situations.

After the data were collected, they were first classified according to the apology strategies proposed by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Following Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), the general procedure for identifying each apology utterance into its own strategy-type was based on the answers to these series of independent questions:

- (1) Does the utterance in question contain an IFID?
- (2) Does it contain an explanation?
- (3) Does it express speaker's responsibility?
- (4) Does it convey an offer of repair?
- (5) Does it contain a promise of forbearance?
- (6) Does it contain a combination of an IFID and any of the other four strategies?

After each utterance had been classified into its rightful category, a table was created to help in determining the frequency of every strategy. Afterwards, six other tables were drawn to determine the frequency and distribution of each strategy across situations. Detailed descriptions were given underneath each table and examples for every situation, which were taken directly from the data, would also be given. The apology intensification was also examined along the way.

A general table was drawn in the next subsection, containing frequency of each apology strategy according to the gender of the speaker. From there, it was easier to discern how each gender chose to deliver their apology acts in various situations. A general conclusion was drawn after examining and analyzing all of the findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the distributed DCTs which contain eight situations that require the students to write their apologetic responses, 336 apology utterances were collected. The first 168 utterances were produced by

female students, while the other 168 by male students.

Table 1 below presents the frequency and distribution of apology strategies employed by the students across the situations. It is important to note, however, that other than the Combination of Strategies—which, as its name suggests, consists of several strategies in one occurrence of apology—the classification of the apologies is based on the individual presence of the strategies within an utterance. That is, for an utterance to be classified as either Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Explanation or Account of Cause (EoC), Taking on Responsibility (ToR), Offer of Repair (OoR), or Promise of Forbearance (PoF), it has to employ only one strategy from the five apology strategies. If an utterance employs more than one strategy at the same time, it is classified as belonging to the category of Combination of Strategies (CoS).

As shown in the table below, from a total of 336 apology utterances, 98 (29.2%) of them belong to the IFID category, while the EoC, ToR, and OoR strategies were used 4 times (1.2%), 3 (0.9%) and 1 (0.1%) respectively. Most utterances (230 or 68.4%) contained a combination of strategies and no utterances was found containing the PoF strategy. This seems to suggest that the students tend to use a combination of strategies to apologize any offence they make. This is in line with Hussein and Hammouri (1998) who reported that the combination of strategies was the most common strategy employed by their Jordanian and American respondents. However, it contradicts Maulana and Hardjanto (2019) who found that the characters in the *Crown* TV series opted for a more direct strategy. In the following subsection, each of the strategy is discussed in more detail.

### Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)

The Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) strategy is considered as a direct apology strategy. For an apology to be classified as this category, it has to employ performative verbs that signal regret on the speaker's behalf, such as *sorry* and *apologize*. Apparently, IFID is often used in situations where the offences are viewed by the students as not very serious, such as forgetting to return a pen to a junior (Situation 4), accidentally stepping on a lecturer's

foot (Situation 5), and making fun of a relative as a joke (Situation 7), respectively. Below are some examples illustrating the use of this strategy by the students.

- (1) Shoot! I'm sorry, here you go. (S4, F1)
- (2) Oh, I apologize, Sir (S5, M5)
- (3) I didn't mean anything, I'm sorry. (S7, F9)

Table 1. Frequency of apology strategies employed the students

No.	Strategy	Token	(%)
1.	Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)	98	29.2
2.	Explanation or Account of Cause (EoC)	4	1.2
3.	Taking on Responsibility (ToR)	3	0.9
4.	Offer of Repair (OoR)	1	0.3
5.	Promise of Forbearance (PoF)	0	0
6.	Combination of Strategies (CoS)	230	68.4
Total		336	100.0

Notice the use of the performative verb *sorry* in (1) and (3) and *apologize* in (2). In (2), the more formal performative verb *apologize* is used rather than the usual *sorry*, probably because the apology is addressed to someone with a higher social status. Table 2 below presents the frequency and distribution of the use of the IFID strategy across the eight situations.

### Explanation or Account of Cause (EoC)

The Explanation or Account of Cause (EoC) strategy is an indirect apology strategy because it does not employ any performative verb that indicates regret. An apology utterance can be classified as employing this strategy when the apologetic utterance provides an explanation of the cause of the offence or violation. As shown in Table 1, the students rarely employed this strategy. Only 4 out of 336 apologies were expressed using this strategy. Below are two examples.

- (4) Hey! I overslept hehe (S1, F19)
- (5) Oops, I forgot! You came back just in time, though! Here's your pen. (S4, M10)

Table 2. Frequency of the use of IFID across situations

No.	Situation	N	(%)
1.	Situation 1	4	4.1
2.	Situation 2	1	1
3.	Situation 3	4	4.1
4.	Situation 4	17	17.3
5.	Situation 5	32	32.7
6.	Situation 6	2	2
7.	Situation 7	33	33.7
8.	Situation 8	5	5.1
Total		98	100

In the examples above, the students indirectly express their apologies by explaining the cause of the offence they have caused, that is, oversleeping in (4) and forgetting to return a pen in (5). This strategy is used, primarily because the speakers are of equal status with the interlocutors (4) or have a higher social status than the interlocutors (5).

### Taking on Responsibility (ToR)

Similar to the EoC strategy, The ToR strategy is also rarely used by the students. Only three apologies were expressed using this strategy, all being responses to Situation 7, where the speakers committed an offence against one of their relatives. The examples below illustrate the use of this strategy to express apologies.

- (6) Nothing, it was only a joke. (S7, F20)
- (7) I meant nothing. You got it wrong. (S7, M14)

In the examples above, the students actually employ a substrategy called Denial of Fault (DoF), a subcategory of ToR that shows how the students reject the need to apologize, since they merely give answers to the hearer's query without inserting any performative verb signaling regret, explanation, offer for repair, or even a promise not to do it again. Thus, by employing this substrategy, they refuse to take any responsibility for the offences they have committed.

This strategy was used probably because the students view the offence as something minor or even inconsequential. They may even view the

offence as merely a slip of the tongue. In addition, the close social distance between the speakers and the hearers might also contribute to the use of this strategy.

**Offer of Repair (OoR)**

The OoR strategy together with the Promise of Forbearance (PoF) is hardly used at all by the students to express apologies. Only one apology was expressed using the OoR strategy and none using the PoF strategy. Below is the one apology expressed using this strategy.

- (8) Oh my God, can we make the meeting up another day? (S2, M12)

The question “... *can we make the meeting up another day?*” in (8) above is used as an offer of repair, a solution for the offence done against the hearer. In this case the speaker offers his compensation in a general manner, intending it as an apology. It may be implied that he is offering his availability should the hearer decide that they can meet up at another time. The student probably chooses this strategy because in Situation 2 it is possible to offer compensation without needing to utter any IFID.

**Promise of Forbearance (PoF)**

As mentioned above, no apology was expressed using this strategy. One usually delivers a direct apology through IFID and/or gives an explanation first before pledging themselves into avoiding committing the same offence in the future. It is rare for one to apologize merely through “I promise I won’t do it again”, though it is certainly not impossible. After all, by employing PoF, the speaker is acknowledging their responsibility for the offence without necessarily confirming it explicitly (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

**Combination of Strategies (CoS)**

This particular strategy is the most common strategy employed by the students. This strategy combines more than one strategy to express an apology. A strategy may also be used twice within a combination alongside one or more different strategies. Table 3 below presents the frequency of and distribution of the use of this strategy across the eight situations.

Table 3 shows that the students employed the CoS strategy in all situations with equal frequencies except for Situations 5 and 7. This strategy is usually employed when the offences are viewed as quite serious, such as coming late to a meeting, late in returning a lecturer’s book, or damaging someone’s vehicle. In these cases, the students may respond with a combination of strategies to make their apologies more intense. After all, combining multiple strategies in one apology utterance may be considered as apology intensification. Not only that, the students may also employ adverbial intensifiers. In other words, the main variable that affects the intensity of one’s apology is the degree of offence. Other than the degree of offence, the hearer’s relative power and social distance may also play a part.

Table 3. Frequency of the use of CoS across situations

No.	Situation	N	(%)
1.	Situation 1	37	16.1
2.	Situation 2	39	17.0
3.	Situation 3	38	16.5
4.	Situation 4	23	10.0
5.	Situation 5	10	4.3
6.	Situation 6	40	17.4
7.	Situation 7	6	2.6
8.	Situation 8	37	16.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>230</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The data analysis revealed 26 possible combinations. However, the most frequent combinations are the combination of IFID + EoC, IFID + OoR, and IFID + EoC + OoR.

***A Combination of IFID + EoC***

90 apology utterances were expressed using this combination. However, the use of this combination was mostly found in Situations 1 (31%), 3 (36), and 4 (19). Below are some examples illustrating the use of this strategy combination.

- (9) Goodness! I’m really sorry. I overslept and woke up late (S1, F17)



- (10) Sorry to have kept you waiting. Got a flat tire. Might seem like I'm lying, but trust me dude. (S3, M14)
- (11) Yeah, sorry. I totally forgot about your pen. (S4, M20-HF)

### ***A Combination of IFID + OoR***

A total of 22 apology utterances were expressed using this strategy combination, most of which was found in Situation 8 (73%). The primary reason for the dominant use of this strategy in Situation 8 is that the students believed that the offence done here deserves a compensation. Presented below are some examples showing the use of this strategy.

- (12) I'm really sorry for not being careful. If you don't mind, I'll call a mechanic and pay for your broken rear-view mirror. (S8, F3)
- (13) I'm so sorry! It was an accident. Let me pay for the damage. (S8, M5)

### ***A Combination of IFID + EoC + OoR***

A total of 41 apologies were expressed using this strategy combination. This combination was most frequently employed in Situations 2 (39%) and 6 (39%). For Situation 1, only five (12%) apology utterances were expressed using this combination and for Situation 8, only four (10%) utterances. Below are two examples showing the use of this strategy

- (14) I'm sorry. I forget that we have a plan. How about we go out tomorrow and I'll treat you food? (S2, F12)
- (15) Excuse me, Ma'am. I would like to apologize to you because I cannot return your book today for I have forgotten to bring it, but I will definitely return it tomorrow! I hope you understand. (S6, M8)

Situations 2 and 6 present not only offences that are viewed as quite serious in the students' eyes, but also circumstances that may have instigated the students' need to readily offer compensations. Additionally, the causes for these offences are also something that can be circumvented and probably causing the students to feel a more pressing need to explain themselves. Hence it is understandable why the

combination of IFID + EoC + OoR is commonly employed in these two situations.

To sum it up, the students in the present research seem to prefer to use a combination of strategies when expressing their apologies, rather than simply utilizing one strategy exclusively. This is especially true when the degrees of offences are considered as quite serious and/or where the hearer possesses higher relative power and/or the social distance between the students and the hearer is positive.

### **Realization of Apology Strategies by Female and Male Students**

This subsection examines whether gender affects the production of apology speech acts. For this purpose, a comparison was made between the apologies employed by female students and those by male students. However, this sub-section begins with the discussions of whether female and male students produce apology speech acts differently.

In order to discern whether the hearer's gender really affects the realization of students' apologies, the data collected mainly from Situations One and Two were examined more closely, considering that in these two situations, the degrees of offences are similar and the hearers also possess similar relative power and social distance to the students. The only thing that differentiates these two situations were the hearer's gender: male in Situation One and female Situation Two. The remaining situations have differing degrees of offences, so the data taken from the other situations are difficult to compare.

Table 4 below displays the occurrences of apology strategies used by male and female students. Table 4 indicates that both genders tend to use CoS, with the male students even more so. 70.24% of CoS can be ascribed to the male students. In addition, the female students produce 112 utterances (66.67%) of CoS. The second most frequently used strategy is IFID, though the total number does not even reach half of the total CoS. Female students used IFID in 52 utterances or 30.95%, while male students used IFID in 46 utterances or 27.38. The EoC is only employed in three utterances produced by the female students and there is only one utterance by a male student that uses EoC. As for ToR, it is only used once by a female student and twice by male students. OoR, on the

other hand, only occurs one time and it is employed by a male student.

Table 4. Frequency of apology strategies based on gender

No	Apology Strategies	Gender			
		Female		Male	
		N	(%)	N	(%)
1.	IFID	52	30.95	46	27.38
2.	EoC	3	1.79	1	0.60
3.	ToR	1	0.60	2	1.19
4.	OoR	0	0	1	0.60
5.	PoF	0	0	0	0
6.	CoS	112	66.67	118	70.24
<b>Total</b>		<b>168</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 4 above shows that there is no big difference, in terms of the preference for apology strategies, between female students and male students. It shows that female students seem to use IFID more than males, but the difference in number is still quite small that it may be just pure chance. This supports Holmes (1989) who found that there is no significant difference in preference for apology strategies between men and women. Lakoff (1973) states that the way females are expected to speak reflect their marginality and powerlessness in society. But with things the way they are in most of the current societies where females are not being persecuted simply because they are female, it is plausible that now, females may speak more similarly to males, as can be seen from the examples below.

- (16) I apologize for my carelessness, Sir/Ma'am. I'll take the responsibility for fixing its rear-view mirror. (S8, M2)
- (17) I'm really sorry for not being careful. If you don't mind, I'll call a mechanic and pay for your broken rear-view mirror. (S8, F3)

The chosen respondents in this research are students who possess similar sociological variables, the only variable that is supposed to differentiate between them is their gender, and based on the results reported above, it seems that females and males are

actually much more similar when using apology strategies.

Furthermore, Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) argue that females tend to produce more intense apologies than males. To check if this is the case with the present research, another comparison was made. The present research found that apparently the male students seem to prefer using a combination of two strategies. 83 utterances were produced by male students that use combinations containing two strategies, while only 65 utterances that use combinations with two strategies were produced female students. Compared to the males, female students can be found using combinations containing three or four strategies more often. For the combinations with three strategies, females employ them in 41 utterances whereas males in 31 utterances. The combinations containing four strategies are not really popular among male and female students, but still females use them more often than males. In this research, there are five utterances produced by female students that use four strategies combination while there are only four utterances of this combination produced by male students. It is safe to say that females may tend to apologize more intensely than males, considering that females are often found using combinations containing three and four strategies.

Table 5. Frequency of adverbial intensifiers based on gender

No	Adverbial Intensifiers	Gender			
		Female		Male	
		N	%	N	%
1.	So	35	53.03	9	33.33
2.	Really	22	33.33	11	40.74
3.	Truly	4	6.06	0	0.00
4.	Terribly	2	3.03	6	22.22
5.	Very	0	0.00	1	3.70
6.	So & Really	2	3.03	0	0.00
7.	So & Truly	1	1.52	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 5 presents the frequency of utterances containing adverbial intensifiers. It should be noted that the number of occurrences provided in the table are not based on how many adverbial intensifiers are used, but how many utterances that can be found

using them. So, if an utterance contains two adverbials intensifiers, it was counted as one occurrence, since the occurrences of the intensifiers are found in one utterance.

Table 5 shows that female students employ adverbial intensifiers in 66 utterances, while male students employ them in only 27 utterances. This seems to be quite a significant difference. This finding supports Cohen and Olshtain (1981) who argue that females have more inclination to produce more intense apologies than males.

Furthermore, female students used the adverbial intensifier *so* in 35 utterances, while the male students only use it in nine utterances. Moreover, female students produced 22 utterances containing the intensifier *really*, and only 11 of such utterances were produced by male students. The adverbial intensifier *truly* was used in four and *terribly* in two utterances produced by the female students. Although no male student used *truly* as an intensifier, there are actually six utterances that contain the adverbial intensifier of *terribly* produced by male students. A male student also employed *very* as an intensification for his IFID, although none of the female students used this intensifier. Additionally, there are also three utterances that contain two different adverbial intensifiers; two of these utterances contain the adverbial intensifiers *so* and *really* while another utterance contains the adverbial intensifiers *so* and *truly*. These three utterances were all produced by female students. However, it should be noted that there are several occurrences where one adverbial intensifier may be used twice within one apology utterance and almost all of these occurrences can be found in apology utterances produced by the female students. Presented below are some examples illustrating the use of the adverbial intensifiers.

- (18) I'm **so** sorry. Is there any task that I can help?  
I overslept, that's why I'm late. **So** sorry. (S1, F8)
- (19) I am **really** sorry, Ma'am. I forgot to bring the book I borrowed from you. I promise I'll bring it tomorrow. I am **really** sorry once again. (S6, F2)

## CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the students involved in this study commonly use a combination of apology strategies, especially a combination of the IFID + EoC strategies. It can also be concluded that both female and male students are quite similar in their preference for the use of apology strategies. They frequently use a combination of strategies in situations where the degree of offence is considered quite serious and/or where the hearer possesses higher relative power and/or the social distance between the speaker and the hearer is positive. The employment of isolated IFID is normally found in situations where the offence is not considered serious and/or where the hearer possesses lower relative power and/or the social distance between the speaker and the hearer is negative. Therefore, there seems to be no gender difference in terms of preference for apology strategy, considering that both genders have similar preference.

However, this research also finds that female students, apparently, tend to apologize more intensely than their male counterparts. This can be seen from the preference of female students for combinations that contain more than two strategies. They also frequently use adverbial intensifiers within their IFIDs. This suggests that the gender difference in the apologies employed by the respondents in this study of the English Departments can be found in their intensity in which female students express their apologies more intensely than male students. Thus, the present research confirms not only Holmes's (1989) argument that there is no significant difference in preference for apology strategies between male and female speakers, but also Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) argument that female speakers' apologies tend to be more intense than those of male speakers.

On another note, the present research is limited in the sense that the respondents recruited for the present research only include English Department students from various universities in Yogyakarta. A larger number of respondents including students from universities all across Indonesia may yield different results. The present research also does not examine politeness other

variables that may influence the use of apologies in natural environment. Therefore, future research might explore these issues.

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