

Research Article

The Gendered Apology in the Letters of Sophomores

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Abstract

This paper examined the structures of apology employed in the apology letters written by sophomore pre-service teachers specializing in English in a state-university in Central Luzon. Guided by the five apology strategies proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) such as direct apology (using illocutionary force indicating devices or IFIDs), providing an explanation, acknowledgement of responsibility, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance, 88 letters of apologies were analyzed quantitatively. Findings reveal that apology letters employed the five-step apology strategies in the following order: direct apology (IFIDs) being the most preferred strategy followed by providing an explanation, acknowledgement of responsibility, and offering of repair. The promise of forbearance was the least preferred strategy, with apologies described as Direct apologies. Female participants were more apologetic to parents, males to their friends, gays to past relationships, and bisexuals to their boyfriends.

Keywords: gender, apology, illocutionary force indicating device, apology strategies

INTRODUCTION

*“The mistake I made was in the words I said, not in the heart I hold.
I ask for your forgiveness.” -William Todd Akin*

Language is a system of communication among humans. It holds a crucial role in understanding and expressing the world around and beyond. Because of this crucial importance of language in the social life of humans, it has been investigated from different dimensions such as structure, meaning, sound processes, and culture. The essence of language emanates from the basic unit of society—the family, and extends in the field of education in its dispense of knowledge that help in shaping decisions, influencing peoples’ attitudes and even controlling their values. Since language-use is influenced by factors such as personal, social, political, cultural, educational, religious, and others, including gender, it creates diversity and misunderstanding; thus, conflict becomes a natural and inevitable part of the home and the society. In places like workplace and even at one’s very own home and one’s own family including circle of friends and acquaintances, different opinions, perspectives, and values intersect to create interactions that are challenging and taxing to navigate. Even members of the family and friends differ in opinions, break a rule, or fail to meet ones’ expectations, thus misunderstanding take place. Conflicts begin to shake relationships but a damaged relationship can be repaired and it can be done most often by an appropriate speech act.

Speech Act was first defined by Austin (1962), consequently by Searle (1969) in the Speech Act Theory aimed at explaining the language as a series of actions, which are executed by means of utterances (Yule, 1996). Speech acts enable speakers to perform actions through the utterance of words. In this theory, speech acts are categorized into five main domains according to how listeners and speakers are affected by the communication (Celce - Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). These categories include assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. In various languages, the widespread actions in expressing speech acts are apologies, orders, complaints, promises, commands and requests (Yule, 1996).

Apologies, under the category of expressives in Speech Act Theory, is of extreme importance in human communication as an act of face-saving and politeness. The use of apologies appears in daily conversations at home, in the school, and in the community. The importance placed on apologies is shared by many cultures. Diverse cultures even share a great deal in common when it comes to how apologies are communicated. According to Smith (2016), when adults feel wronged, apologies have been shown to help in a variety of ways. Apologies can reduce retaliation; they can bring about forgiveness and empathy for wrongdoers; and they can aid in the repair of a broken trust. Further, apologies have the physiological effect of lowering blood pressure more quickly especially to those who hold on to anger. Researchers also show that children as young as age four grasp the emotional implications of apology. They understand, for example, that an apology can improve the feelings of someone who’s been upset. Preschoolers also judge apologizing wrongdoers to be more likeable, and more desirable as partners for interaction and cooperation.

Apology is a means used to remove the misunderstanding between speakers. To be able to reach a clearer understanding of apologies, researchers have approached the matter in different ways. Holmes (1990:159) defines apology as a speech act addressed to B's face needs to remedy an offence for which he takes responsibility, and thus, to restore the equilibrium between A and B (A is the apologiser and B is the person offended). Apologies can be seen as a remedial action between the speaker and the hearer after an offence (Schmidt & Richards, 1980 as cited in Selo, 2004). According to Leech's (1983) "tact maxim", apology is a convivial speech act whose goal coincides with the social goal of maintaining harmony between Speaker and Hearer. In Leech's terms, therefore, the realization of an apology benefit for the Hearer is to some degree at cost for the Speaker. Moreover, expressives as speech acts express the psychological attitude or state in the speaker such as joy, sorrow, likes/dislikes, e.g. apologizing, blaming, congratulating, praising, thanking (Huang, 2007). Likewise, apology speech acts hold an important place in human communication as a face saving act of speech. Thus, it is crucial for people to understand what an apology is and how it functions. An act of apology can be considered a remedial act of speech, which means that the speaker is trying to save his or her face because of an action. Cohen and Olshtain (1983) explain apologies as a speech act occurring between two participants in which one of the participants expects or perceives oneself deserving a compensation or explanation because of an offense committed by the other. In that situation, one participant has a choice to apologize or deny the responsibility or the severity of the action. Thus, an apology in that sense plays a role as a politeness strategy. Recent study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences highlights the importance of apology in repairing and strengthening relationships.

An apology is an attempt by the speaker "to make up for a previous action that interfered with the addressee's face-wants" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 187). Thus, the aim of apologizing is "to restore equilibrium between speaker and addressee" (Leech, 1983, p.125). Apologies count as remedial work and have been traditionally regarded as hearer supportive, as they provide some benefit to the addressee at cost to the speaker (Fraser & Nolan, 1981; Goffman, 1972; Leech, 1983). In 2003, Ho lamented that apologies are previously unstudied social institution despite the fact that they are integral in the maintenance of relationships within society, adding that the subject of apologies has a wide-ranging significance. In answer to Ho's lamentation, several podia recognized the importance of apology as expressed in platforms like government, military, and church (e.g. Harris, 2017; Aberin, 2017; Keely, 2019). In terms of linguistic landscape, apologies are recognized to provide rich source of natural language data (though highly mediated through various forms of broadcasting, the press, the internet, and other media sites). These previous studies generated wealth of literature. Yet, the apology as speech act written by adolescents, specifically sophomore students, has been relatively neglected as a research topic.

Aimed at filling the gap in the study of apologies among sophomores, this empirical research was conceptualized to explore the letters of apologies written by sophomore students specializing in English in one university in Central Luzon. Studies on the different

facets of apologies in the field of psychology and language have been conducted to students and children in other countries have been published, but no previous study has been conducted on the apologies made by adolescents to their parents and peers, making this paper a timely endeavor since apologies are all-time part of everyday phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) created a classification of universally occurring apology speech acts. These classifications are generally referred to as taxonomies or coding schemes and are used by many other researchers to further examine apology patterns in languages and provide more consistency across studies.

This study was guided by the framework of five apology strategies proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). The five strategies which make up the speech act set of apology are either general and do not depend on contextual constraints, or situation specific. The explicit expression of an apology which contains the formulaic, routinized apology expressions or the explicit illocutionary force indicating devices (IFID), (I'm sorry, excuse me, I regret . . . etc.) which reflects the speaker's degree of willingness to admit fault includes direct utterances of regret and apology, therefore they are considered to be direct apologies. The explicit expression of an apology and expression of responsibility which relate to "pleas for excusable lack of foresight and pleas for reduced competence and admissions of carelessness" are inherently related to the speaker's willingness to express an apology for a violation and can be used across all situations which require the act of apology. The other strategies such as acknowledgement of responsibility, providing an explanation, the offer of repair and the promise of forbearance are situation specific and will semantically reflect the content of the situation. These are considered indirect apologies. This framework determines the presence of the conditions in the letters of apologies and describe further the directness and indirectness of the apologies written by adolescent-sophomores taking up BSEd major in English in a particular university in Central Luzon.

Given this theoretical framework, this paper addressed the following research questions:

a) What conditions are met in the letter of apologies written by the sophomores in reference to Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) five strategies in apologising such as direct apology (illocutionary force indicating device or IFIDs such as "sorry, i regret, i apologize, etc), providing an explanation, acknowledgement of responsibility, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance?

b) How are the structures of apologies be described in terms of directness and indirectness?

c) How does gender influence the choice of addressees in the letters of apology?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Content and or documentation analysis was employed in the analysis of the data. In particular, the incidence of explicit expressions of an apology was analyzed through simple frequency counts.

Data/Subject

The data consisted of letters of apologies written by sophomore students enrolled in one university in Central Luzon. From the researcher's personal experience as an adviser to college students, it was observed that the sophomores are the most problematic in many areas such as failing grades, disobedience from parents, wrong decisions, adherence to peer pressures, crisis in college life, identity crises, and others. It is also the year level when they are required to choose and pass a qualifying exam to qualify for a major area of discipline, whether English, Biology and Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Filipino, TLE, or Physical Education. In this study, the English majors were purposely chosen since the five apology strategies from which this study was anchored is an area of study in the field of English. The respondents were on equal footing in terms of language use since they were on the same area of discipline having passed a qualifying examination for English majors. The total population consisting of 88 students from two sections participated in the study.

Procedure

After seeking proper procedure and consent from the Dean, Department Chair, faculty, and students, one of the researchers personally attended the class. As a motivation or mood setting, an article about restoring broken relationship was distributed to all the respondents and they were given time to read the article. Afterwards, they were asked to reflect on their own life specifically the mistakes they committed or shortcomings they have done against a loved one. Subsequently, they were given a paper on which to write an apology to a person whom they have offended and would wish to be reconciled with. They were given freedom to choose their addressees. One (1) hour was allotted for the writing activity.

Data Analysis

The data analysis of the current study was based on the classification of apologies suggested by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). The raw data were analyzed and classified according to the semantic formulas included in each text. The classifications are as follows:

Five apology strategies:

- a. direct apology (IFIDs): “sorry,” “excuse,” “forgive,” “i regret” etc.
- b. providing an explanation: nonspecific (There has been a lot going on in my life), and specific (I could not catch the bus.)
- c. acknowledgement of responsibility: implicit (I was sure I did it right.), lack of intent (I did not mean to.), self deficiency (How could I be so blind.), and self-blame (It is my fault.)
- d. offer of repair: unspecified (How can I fix that?), and specified (Let me buy a new computer for you.)
- e. promise of forbearance: such as, “It won’t happen again.”

The classification and description are shown in a table where the appropriate text of apologies from the data are filled-in to match the description. This coding scheme was the parameter used in the analysis.

Apologies Strategies	Description
IFID	direct apology (IFIDs): “sorry,” “excuse,” “forgive,” “I regret”etc.
Explanation	explanation: nonspecific (There has been a lot going on in my life), and and specific (I could not catch the bus.)
Responsibility	implicit (I was sure I did it right.), lack of intent (I did not mean to.), self-deficiency (How could I be so blind?), and self-blame (It is my fault)
Repair	unspecified (How can I fix that?), and specified (Let me buy a new computer for you.)
Forbearance	promise of forbearance: such as, “It won’t happen again.”

Two college professors from the English Department in the university were requested to analyze the structure of the 88 apology letters coded as R1-R88. This is in relation to the inter-coding techniques employed by previous researchers (i.e., Torres et al., 2021, 2020; Astrero & Torres, 2020; Torres & Flores, 2017; Torres & Medrano, 2020). As professors of English, they are experts in the field and they teach the lesson on apology strategies. The participation of these two interraters contributed to the reliability and determined the validity of the analysis of the researcher. A 90% reliability was established.

Limitation of the study

Since the letters were written inside the classroom and the level of motivation or internalization of the story might have had a varying effect from one student to another, the mood of the respondents and the contexts from which they were coming from might have had affected the natural richness of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Structure of Letters of Apologies by total respondents

Apology Strategies	Description	Female n=67	Male n=10	LGBT n=11	Total 88(100%)
IFID	direct apology (IFIDs): “sorry,” “excuse,” “forgive,” “I regret” etc.	64	10	11	85 (96.60%)
Explanation	explanation: nonspecific (There has been a lot going on in my life), and specific (I could not catch the bus.)	63	10	11	84 (95.46%)
Responsibility	implicit (I was sure I did it right.), lack of intent (I did not mean to.), self-deficiency (How could I be so blind?), and self-blame (It is my fault)	49	9	8	66 (75.00%)
Repair	unspecified (How can I fix that?), and specified (Let me buy a new computer for you.)	45	4	4	53 (60.23%)
Forbearance	promise of forbearance: such as, “It won’t happen again.”	23	2	2	27 (30.68%)

Table 1 summarizes the five strategies which make up the speech act set of apology (Olshtain & Cohen 1983). Interestingly, data reveal that 85 or 96.60% of the apologies were expressed using the IFID strategy where the explicit expression of an apology contains the formulaic, routinized apology expressions (I'm sorry, excuse me, I regret . . . etc.) and the expression of responsibility which reflects the Speakers' degree of willingness to admit to fault for Hearers. The IFIDs contain the explicit, performative verbs which express an apology in each language. It is important to note that the

sophomores' use of IFID was employed by explicitly writing "sorry", "very/really, terribly sorry" and "I apologize (deeply) (very deeply)".

Table 1 also reveals that the participants offered explanation at 84 or 95.46%, a strategy which ranked second to the IFID strategy. This suggests that the participants tried to justify their actions and tried to put the blame on things beyond their physical control. The explanations offered were "many requirements in school, shortage of allowance, and no intention but forced by circumstances". This may also explain why the strategy on promise of forbearance was the least (27 or 30.68%) fulfilled among the strategies. This suggests that they cannot promise forbearance because things are beyond their control, as stated in their explanations.

Acknowledgement of responsibility ranked only third among the strategies at 66 or 75%. This may be attributed to the bigger number of female respondents who employed this strategy at 49 or 73% only, but it is worth mentioning that 9 or 90% of the male respondents employed this strategy. Goffman (1967 as cited by Owen, 1983), claims that responsibility contains sub-strategies which relate to pleas for excusable lack of foresight and pleas for reduced competence and admissions of carelessness. Moreover, 53 or 60.23% offered repair of the misunderstanding. These two strategies (acknowledgement of responsibility and offer of repair) which are inherently related to the Speakers' willingness to express an apology for a violation can be used across all situations which require the act of apology.

Table 2. Structure of letter of apologies by Gender

Apology Strategies	Description	Female n=67	%	Male n=10	%	LGBT n=11	%
IFID	direct apology (IFIDs): "sorry," "excuse," "forgive," "I regret" etc.	64	95.52%	10	100%	11	100%
Explanation	explanation: nonspecific (There has been a lot going on in my life), and and specific (I could not catch the bus.)	63	94.03%	10	100%	11	100%

Responsibility	implicit (I was sure I did it right.), lack of intent (I did not mean to.), self-deficiency (How could I be so blind?), and self-blame (It is my fault)	49	73.13%	9	90%	8	72.73%
Repair	unspecified (How can I fix that?), and specified (Let me buy a new computer for you.)	45	67.16%	4	40%	4	36.36%
Forbearance	promise of forbearance: such as, "It won't happen again."	23	34.33%	2	20%	2	18.18%

Table 2 presents the structures of the letters of apologies written by the participants according to Gender. Sixty-four (64) out of 67 females or 95.52 % and 100% of both males (10) and LGBTs (5 Gays and 6 Bisexuals) expressed their apologies using IFID. The explicit expression of an apology which contains the formulaic, routinized apology expressions (I'm sorry, excuse me, I regret . . . etc.) or IFIDs were present in the letters. The IFIDs contain performative verbs which express an apology in each language. "I am sorry for my failing grade, for not giving attention to your calls, for not helping in the household chores, for complaining" were the typical situations in which sophomores asked for apology from parents. For friends, peers, girlfriends, boyfriends, typical lines were " sorry for being jealous, sorry for not giving time for our friendship to grow, sorry for not spending time with you, sorry for not texting/ calling".

Explanation was offered by 63 females or 94.03%, 100% of both males (10) and LGBTs (11). "I am busy with my school assignment, I am tired, I don't have enough allowance, I am lazy, I have many things in mind," were some of the explanations in the letters of apology.

Forty-nine (49) females or 73.13% managed to acknowledge responsibility why the shortcomings were committed, but only 67.16% or 45 were willing to offer a repair

and only 23 or 34.33% made a promise not to repeat the same mistake. The male participants scored highest among the three genders in acknowledging responsibility at 9 or 90%, but only 4 or 40% was willing to repair and 2 or 20% made a promise never to do it again. The LGBTs on the other hand, showed the lowest percentages among the three genders in responsibility, repair, and forbearance at 72.73% (8), 36.36% (4), and 18.18% (2) respectively. The expression of responsibility by self-deficiency and self-blame were reflected in the words of the female respondents such as "I am not a good daughter, I did not pay attention, I was so blind to see, It is my fault". Male participants acknowledged their responsibility by words such as "It was a lapse in judgment, I was wrong, I was so fool, I take full responsibility for my actions". The LGBTs capitalized on admitting their responsibility by "I am only human, I am a victim of love, I was mistaken by your actions, I am not worthy of your love".

The other three strategies, the explanation, the offer of repair and the promise of forbearance are situation specific. Since apology is done to maintain or restore harmony, and implies the importance of relationship and guarding others' feelings, the table reveals that 67.16% or 45 females were willing to offer a repair and only 23 or 34.33% made a promise not to repeat the same mistake again. The males who scored highest among the three genders in acknowledging responsibility at 90% (9), only 4 or 40% was willing to repair and 2 or 20% made a promise never to do it again. The LGBTs on the other hand, showed the lowest percentages among the three genders in responsibility, repair, and forbearance at 72.73% (8), 36.36% (4), and 18.18% (2), respectively. In attempt to offer repair, respondents wrote "I will try to do some chores, I will consider your feelings, I will try to be more understanding, I'll stand by your side, What can I do to ease your burden? Can we at least be friends if we cannot be lovers?". As a promise of forbearance and as a promise of reconciliation by not repeating the same mistake, participants wrote, "I promise to be a better daughter, friend, by not repeating the same mistakes again".

Moreover, Table 2 reveals that not all female participants explicitly used IFID nor apologized directly because of specific situations, as experienced by three (3) females who wrote apology letters to their fathers who left them for another family. This contradicts Tannen's claim (1999, p. 67 as cited by Schuman, 2010) that "there is ample evidence that women are more inclined to offer expressions of contrition than men". Likewise, Rettner (2010) added that women apologized more. In this study, 100% or 10 of the male respondents (and LGBTs at 100% or 11, too) explicitly apologized while females scored only 95.52% or 64.

Table 3. Summary of Direct and Indirect Apologies

Apology Strategies	Female (67)	Male (10)	LGBT (11)	Total (88)	Percentage (100)
Direct (IFID)	64	10	10	85	96.60%
Indirect (Explanation, Responsibility, Repair, Forbearance)	45	6	6	57	64.77%

Table 3 describes the structure of apologies by sophomores as Direct (85 or 96.60%) significantly far from Indirect Structure at 64.77% or 57. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) categorized the indirect apologies in the following ways: providing an explanation, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance. Providing an explanation for an action could be a strategy for apologizing in an indirect manner. In the case of a formula, the offender of the action uses an explanation for the offence. For example, to apologize for being late for the class, a student could provide an explanation by stating that the tire of the public vehicle exploded on the way.

Table 4. Comparison of addressees chosen by respondents according to gender

	Female (67)	Male (10)	Gay (5)	Bisexual (6)	Total (88)	Percentage
PARENTS					33	37.50%
Both father & mother	7	1		1		
Father	5					
Mother	18					
Step mother				1		
FRIEND	25	4			29	32.96%
BOYFRIEND	2		2	2	6	6.82%
GIRLFRIEND		1			1	1.15%
EX	7	4	3	2	16	18.18%
HUSBAND	1				1	1.14%
SIBLING	2				2	2.28%
Total	67	10	5	6	88	

Table 4 presents an interesting result from the data. Respondents were given freedom to choose whom to send their apologies and surprisingly, different addressees were revealed. Thirty-three (33) or 37.50% of the letters of apologies were sent to parents (with mother as the most addressed) by female respondents. Not even one gay wrote a

letter of apology to parent, while two bisexuals wrote to one parent and one step mother. Both female and male respondents apologized to friends at 32.96% or 29, and again nobody from the gays and bisexuals felt apologetic to friends. Letters addressed to ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends at 18.18% or 16 reveal that sophomores were affected by past or broken relationships. The seven females and four males who wrote letters of apologies to their exes wanted to repair the broken relationship, but the three gays and two bisexuals who also wrote apology to their ex or past relationships did not signify any intention to repair and did not promise forbearance. This may be attributed to the fact that the three gays actually did not have a formal and open relationship with the males they considered their ex's. They just wrote the fact that they have accepted that males are for females and not for males, too. Consequently, the two bisexuals likewise did not offer repair and forbearance since they stated that they realized that they were bisexuals and thus they were confused of whom they really want to have a relationship with.

Discussion

Among the five strategies which make up the speech act set of apology (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983), interestingly, data revealed that 85 or 96.60% of the apologies were expressed using the IFID strategy where the explicit expression of an apology contains the formulaic, routinized apology expressions (I'm sorry, excuse me, I regret . . . etc.) and the expression of responsibility which reflects the Speakers' degree of willingness to admit to fault for Hearers. Potentially, the expression of an apology and/or the expression of Speakers' responsibility could realize an apology act in any situation. The IFIDs contain the explicit, performative verbs which express an apology in each language. It is important to note that the participants' use of IFID were employed by explicitly writing "sorry", "very/really, terribly sorry" and "i apologize (deeply) (very deeply)" Interestingly, these apologies were intensified by the use of intensifiers such as very, really, terribly, deeply and others. This is explained by Olshtain and Cohen (1983):

"that there are additions to the main strategies which make up the speech act set, there are ways in which the speaker can modify the apology by either intensifying it or by downgrading it. An intensification would make the apology stronger, creating even more support for Hearer and more humiliation for Speaker. The routinized intensification usually occurs internally to the apology expression (internal modification) in the form of a conventional intensifier such as very, really, terribly, deeply and others. External modification can take the form of a comment with added concern for the Hearer which intensifies the apology since it expresses stronger interest on the part of Speaker to placate Hearer. External modification which downgrades the apology, lessening its strength or sincerity, can take the form of a comment which minimizes either the offence or the harm it may have caused. Thus a "downgraded" apology may sound less sincere and may not be accepted as an apology" (p.47).

In Persian, male speakers perform their apologies most often in a direct way (IFID) which is in harmony with other languages in which IFIDs had been reported (Olshtain &

Cohen, 1983, 1981; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) to be the most frequent apology strategy.

The participants offered explanation at 95.46% (84), a strategy which ranked second to the IFID strategy. The strategy using explanation somehow is a technique a speaker employs to give a picture of how the situation came about and indirectly saying that the fault committed is not entirely his intention but because of some situations that came across. This suggests that sophomores tried to justify their actions and tried to put the blame on things beyond their physical control. The explanations offered were “many requirements in school, shortage of allowance, no intention but forced by circumstances”. Brooks, Dai, and Schweitzer (2013) emphasized that individuals often apologize for circumstances for which they are obviously not culpable (e.g., heavy traffic or bad weather) and defined superfluous apologies as expressions of regret for an undesirable circumstance for which the apologizer is clearly not responsible. This may also explain why the strategy on promise of forbearance was the least fulfilled among the strategies (30.68%). This suggests that they cannot promise forbearance because things were beyond their control, as stated in their explanations. This study contradicts Schuman’s study (2010) that men aren’t actively apologizing because they think it will make them appear weak or because they don’t want to take responsibility for their actions.

Grabmeier (2016) found that the most important component in an apology is an acknowledgement of responsibility by saying it is your fault, that you made a mistake. However, in this study, acknowledgement of responsibility ranked only third among the strategies at 75%. This may be attributed to the bigger number of female respondents who employed this strategy at 73% only, but it is worth mentioning that 9 or 90% of the male respondents employed this strategy. This is congruent with the culture that responsibility rests on the shoulders of Filipino men and marks their state of being gentlemen. Goffman (1967, cited by Owen, 1983), responsibility contains sub-strategies which relate to “pleas for excusable lack of foresight and pleas for reduced competence and admissions of carelessness”. Moreover, 60.23% offered repair of the misunderstanding. These two strategies (Acknowledgement of responsibility and offer of repair) which are inherently related to the Speakers’ willingness to express an apology for a violation can be used across all situations which require the act of apology. On the other hand, although not covered in the study, the least effective element of an apology is a request for forgiveness, the one that can be left out (Grabmeier, 2016).

The structures of the letters of apologies written by the participants according to gender was presented in Table 2. Sixty-four (64) out of 67 females or 95.52 % and 100% of both males (10) and LGBTs (5 Gays and 6 Bisexuals) expressed their apologies using IFID. The explicit expression of an apology which contains the formulaic, routinized apology expressions (I’m sorry, excuse me, I regret . . . etc.) or IFIDs were present in the letters. The IFIDs contain performative verbs which express an apology in each language. “I am sorry for my failing grade” (R54-67, R79-84) for not giving attention to your calls (R68-70), for not helping in the household chores (R1-50, R85-88), for complaining” (R71-78) were the typical situations in which sophomores asked for apology from parents. It can be noted that these shortcomings are typical among adolescents. For friends, peers,

girlfriends, boyfriends, typical lines were “sorry for being jealous, sorry for not giving time for our friendship to grow, sorry for not spending time with you, sorry for not texting/calling”.

Explanation was written in the letters of 63 or 94.03% females, and 100% of both males and LGBTs saying they were busy with their school assignment, tired, not enough allowance, lazy, and had many things in mind. In the Philippine culture, Filipinos offer explanation in their attempt to mend a seemingly ‘broken’ relationship. Filipinos put value to clear out issues, and never allow *‘pagtatampo’* (hurting) to be treasured for a long time. It is always important for a Filipino to know that he is understood.

Forty-nine (49) females or 73.13% managed to acknowledge responsibility why the shortcomings were committed, but only 67.16% or 45 were willing to offer a repair and only 23 or 34.33% made a promise not to repeat the same mistake again. The males scored highest among the three genders in acknowledging responsibility at 90%, expressing their Filipino culture of being ‘responsible and gentlemen’. While 90% was brave enough to acknowledge responsibility, only 40% was willing to repair and 20% made a promise never to do it again. The LGBTs on the other hand, showed the lowest percentages among the three genders in responsibility, repair, and forbearance at 72.73%, 36.36%, and 18.18% respectively.

The expression of responsibility by self-deficiency and self-blame were reflected in the words of the female respondents such as “I am not a good daughter (R21-30), I did not pay attention (R1-20), I was so blind to see (R58-66), It is my fault” (R40-45,31,33,47, 49). Filipinas are expected to conform to society’s expectation—that is to live by the ‘good behavior’ defined by Filipina mothers as being tamed and apologetic to every shortcoming. This conforms to Schumann and Ross (2018) claim that girls are increasingly asked to conform to “set of standards”, and likewise conditioned to be more attuned to—and responsible for—how their behavior affects others. Male respondents acknowledged their responsibility by words such as “It was a lapse in judgment (R68,70), I was wrong (R69,75) I was so fool (R71), I take full responsibility for my actions” (R72,73,74, 78). A Filipino gentleman is typically considered head of the family and is therefore trained to be responsible even in admittance of a shortcoming. LGBTs capitalized on admitting their responsibility by “I am only human” (R79,80, 81,88), “I am a victim of love” (R82,83), “I was mistaken by your actions” (R84), “I am not worthy of your love” (R87). These characterize self-blame, self-pity, and confusion.

Strategy involving responsibility reflects the Speaker’s degree of willingness to admit fault (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). The expression of an apology and/or the expression of speaker’s responsibility could realize an apology act in any situation. Olshtain (1983) added that the expression of responsibility contains sub-strategies which relate to “pleas for excusable lack of foresight and pleas for reduced competence and admissions of carelessness”. The other three strategies, the explanation, the offer of repair and the promise of forbearance are situation specific. Since apology is done to maintain or restore harmony, and implies the importance of relationship and guarding others’ feelings, the table reveals that 67.16% or 45 females were willing to offer a repair and only 23 or

34.33% made a promise not to repeat the same mistake again. The males who scored highest among the three genders in acknowledging responsibility at 90%, only 40% was willing to repair and 20% made a promise never to do it again. The LGBTs on the other hand, showed the lowest percentages among the three genders in responsibility, repair, and forbearance at 72.73%, 36.36%, and 18.18% respectively. In attempt to offer repair, respondents wrote “I will try to do some chores” (R1-43), “I will consider your feelings”(R68,78), “I will try to be more understanding”(R45, R69), “I’ll stand by your side”(R74), “What can I do to ease your burden”(R44), Can we at least be friends if we cannot be lovers?” (R 79,81,82,88). As a promise of forbearance and as a promise of reconciliation by not repeating the same mistake again, 23 female respondents promised to be a better daughter while two males and 2 LGBTs promised to be better friends by not repeating the same mistakes again.

Apology can be seen further as a form of emotional labor, part of the work of managing feelings. Willingness to perform emotional labor is one of the most basic things cast in a caring role (like ‘mother’)- of which, daughters are trained to become. Filipino women are expected to pay attention to others’ feelings and are final arbiters when harmony is threatened. They’re expected both to apologize when others are or could be offended, and to forgive when others have offended them. This table, although contradicts the study of Schumann et al. (2010) conducted to two studies to see if genders do indeed differ in how often they apologize, in this study, not all female respondents directly apologized because of specific situation. The fact that the three (3) females who wrote apology letters to their fathers who left them for another family did not explicitly use IFID in writing an apology to their fathers is understandable. Rettner (2010) added that women apologized more and reported committing more offensive acts, Tannen (1999, cited by Schuman, 2010) stated that there is ample evidence that women are more inclined to offer expressions of contrition than men. In this study, 100% of the male respondents (and LGBTs at 100%, too) explicitly apologized while females scored only 95.52%.

The structure of apologies by sophomores is direct (96.60%) significantly far from Indirect structure at 64.77%. This contradicts the idea of Kaplan (1966, cited by Connor, 2001) that oriental writing (where Philippines belong) is marked by what may be called an approach by indirection. The circles or gyres turn around the subject and the subject is never looked at directly. The Oriental writing’s “beating around the bush” is not evident in the study. These findings coincide with the case of English where studies have shown that direct apologies are the most widely used apology strategies of all. Holmes (1990) mentions apology strategies used in New Zealand English, by using an ethnographic study in which she composed a corpus based on ethnographic methodology by collecting data based on naturally occurring conversations and apology exchanges with the help of college students. Completing the study, she found out that almost exactly half of the apologies included an expression of apology, especially expressing regret for an action.

Indirect apologies were employed at 64.77%. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) categorized the indirect apologies in the following ways: providing an explanation, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance. Providing an explanation for an action could be a strategy for apologizing in an indirect manner. In

the case of a formula, the offender of the action uses an explanation for the offence. For example, to apologize for being late for the class, a student could provide an explanation by stating that the public transportation met mechanical problem. This particular apology strategy could be acceptable or not according to the contextual factors; culture, severity of action, age, gender, the particular situation, and other various factors. Holmes (1990) states that providing an explanation for the action was the second dominant apology strategy used in New Zealand English, and the most used is indirect apology strategy. Another indirect way to convey an apology is “acknowledgment of responsibility” which includes acceptance of the fault or responsibility by the speaker. The speaker can use different sub-sets to convey the meaning of responsibility or even deny the responsibility. These subsets can be listed as follows: accepting the blame, e.g. “It is my fault,” expressing self-deficiency, e.g. “I was confused,” recognizing the other person’s deserving of an apology, e.g. “You are right!” and expressing lack of intent, “I didn’t mean to” (Cohen & Olshtain, 1983). In other situations, speakers could offer to repair the damage caused by his or her action. In a given context, repairing might include repairing or replacing the damaged good by the offender, or repairing the inconvenience caused by the action.

An interesting result was revealed from the data. Respondents were given freedom to choose whom to send their apologies and surprisingly, different addressees were revealed. Thirty-three or 37.50% of the apology letters were sent to parents (with mother as the most addressed) by female respondents. Not even one gay wrote a letter of apology to parent, while two bisexuals wrote to one parent and one step mother. Both female and male respondents apologized to friends at 32.96%, and again nobody from the gays and bisexuals felt apologetic to friends. This reveals the Filipino culture of strong family ties. The letters of apology to parents signify that sophomores value the relationship in the family. Letters addressed to ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends at 18.18% reveal that sophomores were affected by past or broken relationships. The seven females and four males who wrote letters of apologies to their exes wanted to repair the broken relationship, but the three gays and two bisexuals who also wrote apology to their ex or past relationships did not signify any intention to repair and did not promise forbearance. This may be attributed to the fact that the three gays actually did not have a formal and open relationship with the males they considered their ex’s. They just wrote the fact that they have accepted that males are for females and not for males, too. Consequently, the two (2) bisexuals likewise did not offer repair and forbearance since they stated that they realized that they were bisexuals and thus they were confused of who they really want to have a relationship with. This may be attributed to the interlocking traits of Filipinos on language, gender, and culture, where LGBTs remained to be reserved at a certain point, accepting the fact that same sex is not yet on open relationship, hence creating confusion whether to be or not to be firm in deciding what gender to embrace.

Major Findings

Drawing mainly from the eighty eight (88) letters of apologies written by sophomore students enrolled as BSEd Major in English in a university in Nueva Ecija, and analysed using the five strategies of apology proposed by Olshtain and Cohen

(1983), the data revealed that apologies by sophomores employ the five-step apology strategies in the following order: direct apology (IFIDs) at 96.60%; offering of an explanation at 95.46%; acknowledgement of responsibility at 75%, offering of repair at 60.23%; and promise of forbearance at 30.68%.

The apologies are further described as Direct apologies (96.60%) and Indirect (Explanation, Responsibility, Repair, Forbearance) at 64.77%. This uncovers that adolescents nowadays have become more open with their feelings as may have been the result of parents who treat their children with more liberty and freedom.

Sophomores put high importance to mending relationships with their family by choosing their parents as addressees at 37.50%. Meanwhile, 32.96% opted to write apologies to their friends. These findings bare that family and friends are the relationships Filipinos value most.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that participants' apologies employ the five strategies, IFID being the most preferred strategy and forbearance being the least preferred strategy.

Directness is the word which describes apologies among participants, as opposed to digressiveness which is a characteristic of writings of Oriental writers. The participants do not beat around the bush when apologizing although apologies come with explanation.

The participants put most value to repairing relationships with family members. This reveals the Filipino values on close family ties.

Implications

The speech act of apologizing is a shared speech act and behavior among the three genders. It is a form of strategy for understanding between and among adolescents and participants as a form of reconciliation for harmonious relationship and as a form of reconciliation. Its appropriate use may be considered for inclusion in textbooks as one area of learning a language that establishes relationships with others.

The explicit use of IFID in writing letters of apology among the respondents implies that saying sorry or expressing an apology is a shared culture in the Philippine society.

Conflict of Interest:
None.

Ethical Clearance:
This study was approved by the institution.

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