

Exploring Apology Strategies in Intercultural Communication: Focusing on Pashto-speaking Undergraduate Students



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Abstract: *This study delves into Pashto-speaking EFL undergraduate students' the use of apologies among students, practicing Sugimoto's (1997) 10-item questionnaire as the current study framework. Intriguingly, male and female participants employed a shared repertoire of primary apology strategies, including statement of remorse, accounts, compensation, promise not to repeat offense, and reparation. Furthermore, the findings revealed a tendency of using non-apology strategies like; blaming victim and brushing off the incident as unimportant to exonerate themselves from the blame. Given the effect of gender, both the genders of the study differed in the order of the primary strategies that they employed. Additionally, the use of non-apology strategies revealed distinct gender patterns; female respondent used to avoid offensive discussion whereas male respondents tried to shift the blame. This research attempt underscores the intricate tapestry of apologies woven by language, culture, and gender, and emphasizes the need for further exploration of these dynamics in EFL pedagogy to foster cross-cultural understanding and effective communication.*

Keywords: Speech Acts, Apology Strategies, Gender, EFL/ESL learners, Pakistani undergrad students

1.1 Background

Apologies are vital tools in interpersonal as well as intercultural communication; they are employed to repair damaged relationships, maintain social harmony, and rebuild trust. The current study is an attempt to investigate Pashto-speaking undergraduate students' apologies. The researcher, employing a gender perspective, tabulates and compares the strategies employed by male & female students in order to uncover gender differences in the use of the speech act of apology.

The speech act of apologizing has extensively been researched in a variety of contexts including Pakistan (Abbas et.al., 2017; Saleem&Azam, 2015; Saleem et. al., 2014).

Pakistan, however, is more than diverse linguistically. Rahman (2010) believes that the precise number of languages spoken in Pakistan is 61. English, Urdu, Pashto, Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi, and Saraiki are the major languages spoken by a vast majority of the country's populace. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where this study is situated, Pashto is understood and spoken by the majority. Precisely the attempt is made in practice to meet the following questions.

1.2 Research Questions:

This study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What apology strategies are used by Pashto-speaking Pakistani undergraduate students?

2. What are the differences, in apology strategies between male & female respondents?

1.3 Statement of Problem

Amidst the rich tapestry of intercultural communication within Pashto communities, a crucial yet under-investigated facet lies hidden: the art of apology. While studies across cultures have shed light on diverse apology practices, the unique nuances and strategies employed by young adults – specifically, Pashto-speaking Pakistani undergraduate students – less well-investigated. This gap in the literature impedes our understanding of how these students navigate conflict, repair their damaged relationships, and maintain social harmony within they communicate in their cultural context.

Furthermore, the potential influence of gender on apology styles and strategies add another layer of complexity to this unexplored landscape. Do men and women within this demographic exhibit distinct patterns in expressing remorse and seeking reconciliation? This question further underscores the need for a rigorous investigation into the intricate dance of apology within this specific cultural and generational setting.

Therefore, this study aims at shedding light on the previously neglected realm of apology strategies employed by Pashto-speaking Pakistani undergraduate students, addressing both the general spectrum of approaches they employ and potential gender-based variations in their expression. By delving into this hitherto uncharted territory, we can broaden our understanding of cross-cultural communication, offer valuable insights into conflict resolution within Pashto communities, and potentially inform educational and counseling practices aimed at fostering effective and culturally sensitive intercultural interaction among these young adults.

2.1 Theoretical Background

A speech act, defines [Austin \(1962\)](#), is an action performed via utterances. Speech acts whether direct or indirect, serve a variety of

communicative functions such as thanking or apologizing someone. These acts do not only require linguistic competence, but the correct usage of that language in a specific culture in order to minimize the misunderstandings and avoid the gaps in communication ([Hatch, 1992](#)). Moreover, [Celce-Murcia and Olshtain's](#) (2000) claimed the learners are required to be well aware of the current discourse and the actual difference between First Language and Second Language in order to ensure the appropriate acquisition of the pragmatic competence.

Speech acts, according to Searle's (1969) theoretical framework, are typically performed through the utterances with specific constitutive principles. He went beyond Austin's "cataloguing stage" by offering a theoretical framework that integrates the three elements of speech into a logical whole; they include utterance, meaning and action. In addition to these, Searle (1979), while proposing his theory of speech acts, identified and elaborate the five general functions of speech acts: *declarations* (e.g. *I now pronounce you husband and wife*), *representatives* (e.g. *it was a warm sunny day*), *expressives* (e.g. *I'm really sorry*), *directives* (e.g. *don't leave anything behind*), and *commissives* (e.g. *we'll not disturb you*). Among these categories, the speech act of apology falls under the *expressives*.

Apologies, according to Goffman (1971), are remedial exchanges meant to re-establish social harmony following a perceived or actual offense. He asserts that an offender needs to acknowledge their wrongdoing, accept responsibility for it, and offer some form of compensation or atonement before an apology can be considered sincere. Olshtain (1989:156–157) defines an apology as "a speech act intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially harmed by a violation." For the speaker, offering an apology is both a face-saving and a face-threatening move since it demonstrates a readiness to be humble. Márquez Reiter (2000:44) goes on to define an apology as "a compensatory action for an offense committed by the speaker which has affected the hearer."

2.1.1 Sugimoto's classification of apology strategies

Strategy Type	Strategy	Description
Primary	Statement of Remorse	The wrongdoer acknowledges that they have done something wrong.
	Accounts	The wrongdoer explains what happened, noting that this account is highly subjective and depends on how the story is told and the role the wrongdoer played in it.
	Description of Damage	The wrongdoer describes the changes or repercussions of the deed on the object or others.
	Reparation	The wrongdoer tries to repair the damage inflicted by offering words to help the harm be forgotten.
Secondary	Compensation	The wrongdoer offers to replace or pay for the damaged object, which differs from reparation.
	Promise Not to Repeat Offense	The wrongdoer assures the injured party that the offense will not happen again in the future.
Seldom Used	Explicit Assessment of Responsibility	The wrongdoer attempts to describe their role and responsibility in what happened.
	Contextualization	The wrongdoer describes the context and details of the incident to help the injured party see the whole picture.
	Self-Castigation	The wrongdoer takes responsibility and is harsh on themselves for what happened.
	Gratitude	The wrongdoer expresses thankfulness that the offended party is willing to give them a chance to explain and be forgiven.

While several categories have been taken into account, the researchers have chosen to base their analysis of the data on Sugimoto's (1997) categorization of apology strategies. The current study is likely notable since, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, not much research has been done on intercultural pragmatics specifically for this subject and target audience. The study aims to bridge an existing research gap, further intercultural pragmatics, and evaluate the findings of previous studies on apology approaches.

2.2 Studies on Apology: An overview

Sugimoto (1997), while examining the apologies of 200 college students—79 men and 121 women from America and 181 men and 99 women from Japan—who answered an open-ended questionnaire on situations that called for an apology. Sugimoto (1997) documented the subsequent strategies as tabulated above.

In Iraqi context, Latif & Zainol (2016) investigated how EFL students used apologies as a speech act, focusing on pragmatic

approaches, apology strategies employed in English, and Iraqi Arabic. To achieve the study ends, data was collected from the students of University of Diyala and Al-Yarmouk University College. The results showed the range of apology strategies as employed by the students. Interestingly, the findings offered a new classification system of apology strategies.. Additionally, the study demonstrated that Iraqi EFL students were proficient in employing a range of apology strategies and were well aware of how to choose the appropriate apology to meet the needs of specific situations and relationships.

Saleem et al. (2014) used the frameworks developed by Holmes (1990) and Blum-Kulka (1989) to study apologetic tactics used by Pakistani students studying English. The research revealed that of the 106 participants, almost all of them (105), utilized "explanation or account" (for example, "there was terrible traffic"), and 97 of them used "explicit apology" (for example, "sorry"). Furthermore, 76 and 64

respondents, respectively, reported using "expressing self-deficiency" (e.g., "I forgot; I was confused") and "intensifiers of apology" (e.g., "I'm very sorry"). None mentioned employing "acknowledgment of responsibility" or "recognizing the hearer as deserving of an apology." The survey discovered no discernible variations in apologizing tactics between respondents who identified as male and female.

Similarly, in Pakistan, Saleem et.al (2014) used the framework developed by Holmes (1990) and Blum-Kulka (1989) to study apology strategies employed by Pakistani students studying English at university level. The study revealed that of the 106 participants, almost all of them (105), used "explanation or account", and 97 of them used "explicit apology". Furthermore, 76 and 64 respondents, respectively, reported using "expressing self-deficiency" and "intensifiers of apology". None mentioned employing "acknowledgment of responsibility" or "recognizing the hearer as deserving of an apology." Last but not the least, the study found no statistically significant gender-based differences in the use of apology strategies.

Exploring Apology strategies of Pashto-speaking Pakistani EFL learners is a promising and unexplored area within the larger realm of intercultural communication. While there is existing research on the speech act of apologizing across various linguistic and cultural contexts, there is a noticeable gap when considering the specific linguistic and cultural intricacies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. This study aims to fill this gap by examining how these learners navigate Apology strategies, contributing a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of communication. Furthermore, the insufficient literature in this particular area emphasizes the significance and timeliness of this research.

3.1 Population, sample, and instrumentation

The population of the current study consists of undergraduate EFL students at Government Postgraduate College Swabi (GPGC Swabi). The sample carried on 100 students (male & female), who were randomly selected from the Department of English. The respondents of the

study, in terms of cultural background, are homogeneous; they are all Pashtuns. Similarly, with respect to their academic as well as linguistic experiences, they are homogeneous too; they are undergrads majoring in English, 19- to 22-year- old. The researchers designed a questionnaire based on [Sugimoto's \(1997\) study of](#) that compared the apology strategies used by male & female students. Only gender was examined as a variable. The researcher visited classes at GPGC Swabi to administer the questionnaire. From their personal contact with the respondents, the researchers judge them to be of intermediate to high-intermediate English proficiency.

3.2 Data Analysis

Following the identification of the strategies employed by the participants, the researchers classified them according to Sugimoto's (1997) taxonomy of apology strategies. As indicated earlier, these strategies were divided into three categories: primary, secondary, and seldom used. Following this, the data collected was tabulated in order to identify the strategies used by the participants of the current study. It helped clarify two key aspects of the study: whether Pakistani EFL learners' use of apology strategies align with Sugimoto's (1997) results, and whether or not gender affects the choice of the speech act of apology. Moreover, the analysis also helped identify the most common strategies employed by Pashto-speaking Pakistani respondents. Furthermore, the researchers moved beyond just tallying the percentages, they did calculate and compare the percentages in order to investigate potential gender-based differences. By employing this detailed approach, the researcher aimed to uncover nuanced gender differences in apology strategies and provide a richer understanding of the ways Pashto-speaking EFL learners express remorse in and navigate interpersonal relationships through language.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Apology strategies: male respondents

The respondents of the study, as the data revealed, opted for the following strategies:

Statement of Remorse: The data shown, as illustrated below, Men who responded to the survey apologized in a variety of ways: Their use of more than one expressions/ apology strategy along with one or more intensifiers to express their regret. While some respondents seemed to believe that only an expression of apology was sufficient, others seemed to believe that no

apology was needed at all. It should be highlighted that no overt expression of regret was found in 42.2% of the responses (n = 211). The table, given below, summarizes the speech act choices of the male respondent of the study.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentages of the statement of remorse used by male respondents

Type of expression	Items										Total	Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
One expression of apology	31	26	27	18	23	22	23	13	23	28	235	47
Two expressions of apology	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0.4
One expression of apology + one intensifier	5	6	2	7	2	2	1	10	3	2	40	8
One expression of apology + two intensifiers	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	6	1.2
One expression of apology + three intensifiers	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0.2
Two expressions of apology + one intensifier	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	5	1
Nothing	11	19	22	19	26	24	28	19	26	17	211	42.2

The table above reveals that ‘One expression of apology’ was the most frequently used expression; it was opted by 47% of the respondents. ‘One expression of apology+ one intensifier’ stood second in terms favor given; 8% of the respondents chose this expression of remorse. Moreover, ‘One expression of apology+ two intensifiers’ was the next in the row: 1.2% of the respondents expressed their

using this expression. The rest of the expression were opted by almost insignificant number of the respondents.

Male respondents used some other apology strategies by their response to the 10 item Sugimoto’s based questionnaire.

Table 2: Apology strategies used by male respondents

Strategy	Items										Total	Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Accounts	11	15	16	13	32	17	17	0	4	12	137	36.4
Reparation	0	0	1	11	0	1	3	19	1	3	39	10.4
Compensation	26	22	0	0	0	1	0	0	25	0	74	19.7
Promise not to repeat offense	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	1.6
Assessment of responsibility Negative	11	0	2	2	2	2	2	0	2	0	23	6.1
Positive	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.5
Self-castigation	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	2	0	1	7	1.9
Thanking	0	1	2	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	6	1.6
Avoidance of discussion or person	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	2	0	0	7	1.9
Brushing off incident as not important	0	1	3	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	11	2.9
Promise of better times to come	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.5
Offending victim	0	2	1	0	2	1	2	0	1	0	9	2.5
Asking victim not to be angry	1	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	1.3
Showing lack of intent to do harm	8	1	6	3	1	1	0	4	2	0	26	6.9
Blaming victim	1	0	1	2	0	4	6	1	2	2	19	5.1

Denial	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	1.1
Invoking Allah's (God's) name	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	0.8
Refusal to compensate	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.5
Proverbs and sayings (better late than never)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.3

The table above shows that in 36.4% of the speech events, Pashto-speaking Pakistani EFL learners, in their attempt to perform the speech act of apology, opted for 'accounts'. The data came up with responses like these:

"The wind was too strong, it broke your umbrella". Item I

Illustration made here, "Compensation" was favored in 19.7% of the situations (n = 74), the word compensation used by the male respondent wrongdoers try to replace it. Items 1, 9, 2 and 6 item on the questionnaire elicited the use of compensation.

"Here is a new umbrella; I got you to replace yours". Item II

Reparation followed the above mentioned apology strategies in the row; in 10.4% of the situation (n = 39), the male participants responded with reparation, indicating the damages to be repaired. One of them apologized this way:

"I did not mean to be late. Let us have juice on me". Item III

In a significant number of situations the denial

came from the respondents and their intentions were not to harm. One of the responses is quoted below:

"I did not mean to break your umbrella. I will buy you another." Item IV

In addition to these, assessment of responsibility was found as one of the frequently used strategies. Quite interestingly, negative assessment was used in 6.1% of the speech events. However, the respondents used positive assessment of responsibility used in 0.5% of the situations.

4.2

Apology Strategies: Female Respondents

The apology strategies of the female respondent through questionnaire are as under" In terms of the *Statement of remorse*, as illustrated in [Table 3](#), the participants of the study used a variety of expressions. The participants used expressions of apology combined with the intensifiers. A sum of the respondents did not deem it necessary to express apology overtly, which resulted in the absence of any statement of remorse in 36% of the responses (n = 180).

Table 3: Frequency and Percentages of the statement of remorse used by female respondents

Types of expressions	Items											Total	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
One expression of apology	30	25	25	25	30	24	22	17	30	26	254	50.8	
Two expressions of apology	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	6	1.2	
One expression of apology + one intensifier	8	5	8	2	2	4	5	9	1	4	48	9.6	
One expression of apology + two intensifiers	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	1	9	1.8	
One expression of apology + three intensifiers	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0.6	
Nothing	9	20	15	21	22	17	25	14	22	15	180	36	

Just like their male counterparts, the female

participants of the study showed a greater

tendency to use ‘*One expression of apology*’ as their favorite expression of remorse; in 50.8% of the situations, they opted for this expression. It was followed by ‘*One expression of apology+ one intensifier*’; opted in 9.6% speech events. The respondents, however, in a fraction of speech events, felt the need to express their

remorse using two words apology, or one word with two or more intensifiers.

Female respondents, of the current study, however, used a host of other apology strategies. The summary of their choices has been illustrated in the table given below.

Table 4: Apology strategies used by female respondents

Strategy	Items										Total	Percent
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Accounts	5	17	15	12	40	13	16	3	2	17	139	25.6
Reparation	0	1	1	13	1	6	3	26	4	13	68	12.5
Compensation	31	23	1	0	1	2	1	0	29	2	90	16.5
Promise not to repeat offense	1	2	4	0	1	4	0	1	0	1	13	2.4
Assessment of responsibility Negative	14	4	7	0	3	3	3	1	9	2	45	8.3
Positive	1	0	2	5	0	1	0	1	2	0	12	2.2
Self-castigation	2	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	8	1.5
Thanking	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0.6
Avoidance of discussion or person	0	0	2	1	1	1	1	4	3	0	13	2.4
Brushing off incident as not important	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	1	3	1	12	2.2
Promise of better times to come	0	5	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	10	1.8
Offending victim	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	5	0.9
Asking victim not to be angry	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	1	2	8	1.5
Showing lack of intent to do harm	3	1	3	4	2	1	2	1	3	0	20	2.8
Blaming victim	6	1	2	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	15	2.8
Denial	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.2
Proverbs or sayings	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0.4

The illustration of the data reveals ‘*Accounts*’ as the most frequently used strategy across the speech events; it was used in 25.6% of the situation. This strategies is evident in utterances like: “*I am too busy to go. I will go to the next concert*” (Item 2).Moreover, ‘*Promise not to repeat offence*’ was also employed in a significant number of the situations. They promised not to repeat the act while they wereapologizingforin20.6%ofthesituations, as shown in the following examples: *It was a mistake: “I won’t play with your computer again”* (Item 8).Furthermore, ‘*Reparation*’ was another frequently opted strategy used in 12.5 % of the situations. The use of this type of strategy is evident in utterances such as: *I will make it up to you* (Item 3).The respondents, however, used the negative assessment of responsibility more

frequently than the positive; in 8.3% of the events, negative assessment of responsibility was opted compared to 2.2% positive assessment of responsibility. The rest of the strategies, as illustrated, were used in an insignificant number of situations.

4.3 Gender-based differences in the use of apology strategies

Table 5, and 6, as illustrated below, provides summaries of the number and percentages of the strategies employed by both the genders of the study’s respondents.

Table 5: A summary showing apology choices of both the genders

Type of expression	Group			
	Males		Females	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
One expression of apology	236	47.1	253	50.7
Two expressions of apology	3	0.6	5	1
One expression of apology + one intensifier	39	7.8	49	9.8
One expression of apology + two intensifiers	5	1	10	2
One expression of apology + three intensifiers	2	0.4	2	0.4
Two expressions of apology + one intensifier	4	0.8	1	0.2
Nothing	210	42	181	36.2

Table 6: A summary of the number and percentages of the types of apology strategies used by male and female respondents

Type of expression	Groups			
	Males		Females	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Accounts	136	27.2	137	27.4
Reparation	38	7.6	64	12.8
Compensation	73	14.6	89	17.8
Promise not to repeat offense	7	1.4	99	19.8
Assessment of responsibility Negative	22	4.4	9	1.8
Positive	3	0.6	1	0.2
Self-castigation	7	1.4	8	1.6
Thanking	6	1.2	3	0.6
Avoidance of discussion or person	8	1.6	14	2.8
Brushing off incident as not important	12	2.4	13	2.6
Promise of better times to come	4	0.8	10	2
Offending victim	11	2.2	5	1
Asking victim not to be angry	6	1.2	8	1.6
Showing lack of intent to do harm	27	5.4	20	4
Blaming victim	20	4	15	3
Denial	6	1.2	3	0.6
Invoking Allah's (God's) name	4	0.8	0	0
Refusal to compensate	3	0.6	0	0
Proverbs and sayings	1	0.2	2	0.4

According to the figures, as illustrated above, both the genders of Pashto-speaking students differed in their use of expression of remorse and

strategies. Though both the genders used a variety of manifestations to express their apology using “*statement of remorse*”, however

this has been clarified that female respondents used this strategy more, opting for the various manifestations of the expression of remorse in 63.8% as compare to the male respondents' 58%. The study has proved that females show greater tendency to apologize more for their wrongs than male.(cf., for example, [Brown and Attardo, 2000](#); [Holmes, 1995](#)).The findings, moreover, are also in line with research showing that people's use of speech acts in general and apologies in particular is influenced by their gender (cf. Lukasik, 2000).

The male respondents of the study, as shown in figures, employed accounts, compensation, reparation, demonstrating lack of intent to do harm, and promising not to repeat offense as their top five strategies (27.2%, 14.6%, 7.6%, 5.4%, and 1.4%, respectively), while women employed promises not to repeat offense, accounts, compensation, reparation, and demonstrating lack of intent to do harm (27.8%, 20.6%, 18%, 13.6%, and 4%, respectively). Moreover, when they apologized, only the male participants of the study invoked the name of Allah. The researcher was expecting that since this is a common speech practice among Pakistanis.

Furthermore, compared to 10.4% of male respondents, female respondents used a non-apology strategy 13.2%. Male respondents shown a greater inclination to offend or place blame on the victim, but female respondents were more prone to brush the incident under the rug and avoid the topic or person. This demonstrated that, despite neither gender feeling the need to apologize, women were less confrontational than men. Whereas women tended to sidestep the issue or the offended party completely in order to prevent conflict, men regularly attacked the offended party in an effort to put them on the defensive.

The most common strategies used by the male participants in the survey were Accounts (27.2%), Compensation (14.6%), Reparation (7.6%), demonstrating lack of intent to do harm (5.2%), and promising not to repeat offense (1.4%). Female respondents of the study on the other hand made use of accounts (27.4%), reparations (12.8%), promise not to repeat the

offense (19.8%), compensation (17.88%), and demonstrating lack of intent to do harm (4%). These strategies accounted for 82% of the strategies used by respondents who were female and 56% of those who were male. This implies that female respondents tended to rely more on primary strategies than their male counterparts, which is in line with other research findings (see, e.g., Holmes, 1995).

In addition to these, the female respondents demonstrated greater tendency to assign responsibility to themselves, compared the male participants of the current research respondents (11.4% versus 5%). One possible explanation for this could be that female respondents were more likely than male respondents to make sure that the person they were apologizing to was understanding the situation.

Last but not the least, compared to the male respondents, females employed a higher percentage of non-apology strategy (13.2% versus 10.4%). The male respondents, on the other hand, showed a greater tendency toward offending or placing blame on the victim, whilst female respondents focused more on dismissing the occurrence as unimportant and avoiding the conversation or person. This demonstrated that while the genders lacked the audacity to apologize, women were less bold than men because, while the former avoided the conversation or offended party in order to prevent a confrontation, the latter attacked the offended party in an effort to place them on the defensive as opposed to the offensive.

5. Conclusion

The study was an attempt to explore the speech act of apologizing as performed by Pashto-speaking EFL learners. The findings revealed intricate nuances in the apology strategies as employed by male and female respondents, shedding light on cultural influences, gender-specific communication patterns, and diverse strategies employed in expressing remorse. The analysis of the data showcased distinct differences in apology strategies between male and female respondents of the study. Females tended to exhibit a higher frequency of employing 'Statement of remorse', reflecting a

cultural tendency for females to apologize more frequently. They also utilized a more diverse range of primary strategies compared to males, emphasizing a comprehensive approach to expressing remorse. Moreover, the female respondents were more inclined to assign responsibility, either for themselves or others, indicating a greater concern for ensuring understanding or resolution. Intriguingly, only male respondents invoked the name of Allah in their apologies, suggesting potential variations in the sincerity or habitual use of certain expressions between genders. Furthermore, the male respondents showed a tendency toward offensive behaviors or blaming the victim, while females leaned toward non-apology strategies or avoidance. This contrast underscores distinct approaches to conflict resolution or confrontation, with males exhibiting more confrontational behaviors and females opting for avoidance or dismissal of the situation.

In a nutshell, the study highlights the significant impact of cultural norms, gender socialization, and individual communication styles on the choice and execution of apology strategies among Pashto-speaking Pakistani EFL learners. It underscores the complexity of intercultural dynamics within this cultural context and provides valuable insights into cross-gender communication patterns and conflict resolution strategies.

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