A Critique of the most Prominent Theories of Apology

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Abstract

This study offers an in-depth examination of the leading apology act theories in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The idea is to explore the influence of various such frameworks on apology, i.e., Speech Act Theory and Olshtain and Cohen's Apology Strategy Model, Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory, Trosborg's Taxonomy, the CCSARP model, Holmes's framework on gender and power, and Goffman's ritual theory, on apology studies, whilst trying to consider theoretical and methodological limitations in each of them. It investigates how these models contribute to the understanding of apologies in various cultures and situations and specifically on cross-cultural and interlingual scenarios, particularly relevant for Arabic and Iraqi EFL learners. The empirical results indicate that although each theory reveals valuable insights regarding apology as a linguistic and social institution, it has its deficiencies by being cultural bias, universalist assumptions, underdeveloped emotional, power and gender literacy, of increased emphasis on elicited data instead of naturalistic data. The review highlights the need for innovative, sensitive, contextualized and culturally aware ways for apologizing to be explored in modern pragmatic research.

Keywords

Apology strategies, Cross-cultural pragmatics, Interlanguage pragmatics, Politeness theory, Speech Act Theory

مراجعة نقدية لأبرز النظريات في دراسة فعل الاعتذار

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المستخلص

تقدِّم هذه الدراسة تحليلًا شاملاً لأبرز النظريات المتعلّقة بفعل الاعتذار في مجالي التداولية وعلم اللغة الاجتماعي. وتهدف إلى استكشاف أثر عدد من الأطر النظرية في تفسير ظاهرة الاعتذار، كنظرية أفعال الكلام، ونموذج أولشتاين وكوهين لاستراتيجيات الاعتذار، ونظرية براون وليفنسون في الأدب، وتصنيف تروسبرغ، ومشروع CCSARP ، وإطار هولمز المتعلق بالنوع الاجتماعي والسلطة، ونظرية الطقوس لغوفمان، مع الأخذ بنظر الاعتبار القيود النظرية والمنهجية الكامنة لكل منها. تبحث الدراسة في إسهام هذه النماذج في فهم الاعتذار ضمن ثقافات وسياقات مختلفة، لا سيما في المواقف العابرة للثقافات أو بين اللغات، وهي مجالات ذات صلة خاصة بالمتعلمين العراقيين للّغة الإنجليزية كلغةً أجنبية. وتشير النتائج التحليلية إلى أنّ كل نظرية من هذه النظريات تقدّم رؤى قيّمة حول الاعتذار بوصفه مؤسسة لغوية اجتماعية، غير أنّها لا تخلو من أوجه قصور؛ منها الانحياز الثقافي، وافتراض الطابع الكوني، وضعف الوعي بالجوانب العاطفية وبعلاقات القوة والنوع الاجتماعي، فضلاً عن التركيز المفرط على البيانات المستدرَجة بدلًا من البيانات الطبيعية. وتختتم الدراسة بالتأكيد على الحاجة إلى تبنّي مقاربات بحثية حديثة تتسم بالابتكار والحساسية والسياقية والوعي الثقافي في دراسة أفعال الاعتذار ضمن البحوث التداولية المعاصرة.

الكلمات المفتاحية

استراتيجيات الاعتذار، التداولية عبر الثقافات، التداولية بين اللغات، نظرية الأدب، نظرية أفعال الكلام.

1. Introduction.

Apologies are some of the most commonly investigated speech acts in the pragmatics area since they are vital for sustaining social relations, amending face-threatening acts, and restoring interactional harmony. A number of prominent theories since the mid-twentieth century tried to explain and categorize apology as a linguistic and social phenomenon. Speech Act Theory explained apologies as performative expressions (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1975, 1979); Olshtain and Cohen provided systematic classification of apology strategies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, 1989); Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory placed apologies as face-threatening acts mitigated by politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987); Trosborg's taxonomy provided a framework for analyzing interlanguage realizations of apologies (Trosborg, 2011); and the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) established large comparative databases of requests and apologies across languages (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). Holmes's theory further emphasized gender and power in apology behavior (Holmes, 1990; 1995) while Goffman's Remedial Interchanges Theory emphasized the ritualized aspect of apologies to restore social equilibrium (Goffman, 2017).

But in addition to their valuable insights, these frameworks are also heavily criticized. Many of the models have been criticized for being restricted by assumptions of universality, Western orientation, and for basing their methods on the elicited data of task performance in discourse (e.g., Golato, 2003; Wierzbicka, 2003). Others emphasize their neglect for crucial sociolinguistic aspects: power, social status, emotionality, gender and cultural difference (Matsumoto, 1988; Mills, 2003; Cameron, 2007).These criticisms demonstrate a persistent research void: the extant theories usually overlook the active, site- and context-specific nature of apology and

how these are negotiated for the context and for the culture of speakers, which are not always located in the West, as in cases such as in Arabic-speaking communities or Iraqi EFL learners (Nureddeen, 2008; Al-Zumor, 2010; Ugla & Abidin, 2016; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017).

This study is important for reviewing these theories as a group to better understand their positive and negative aspects in the face of more recent research in cross-language and cross-cultural pragmatics. In drawing upon critiques, the review highlights the need to look beyond rigid taxonomies and towards discursive, embedded culturally grounded approaches, which more fully capture apology as a complex social practice (Locher & Watts, 2005; Kádár & Haugh, 2013).

2. Theories of Apology

2.1 Speech Act Theory

The Speech Act Theory views speech as an action rather than mere information. It seems to indicate that when we speak, we take action, such as apologizing, asking, or promising. Austin (1962) conceptualized speech in terms of three levels: locutionary (to say something), illocutionary (to do something by saying it), and perlocutionary (to affect the listener). Searle (1975, 1979) went further and classified acts into five types: 'assertives,' 'directives,' 'commissives,', 'expressives' (such as apologies) and 'declaration'. It is also relevant for understanding the ways in which apologies are socially expressive devices when using Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) such as "I'm sorry" or "Forgive me." We have evidence for the appearance of both apology-giving and apology-reciting with Iraqi EFL learners, both in Arabic and English. According to another theory, apologies are intended to

correct perceived problems and repair relationships, which is valuable in analyzing language learner apologetic processing. But Speech Act Theory has been criticized for being general and abstract. It fails to account for cultural or situational contexts and fails to recognize how people from various backgrounds apologize differently (Searle, 1969; Ugla & Abidin, 2016; Alzeebaree & Yavuz, 2017). This theory does not explain many expressions that Iraqi students resort to, for instance, "Wallahi" for religious reasons or "I blame myself" for emotional states.

As pointed out by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), a part of the CCSARP project (The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project: A large-scale research project initiated by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989) for systematically investigating how speech acts such as requests and apologies are realized in different languages and cultures. There is no uniformity as the basis of the speech acts in different languages which contradicts one central theory's emphasis. They further claim that Speech Act Theory disregards indirectness, non-verbal language and cultural differences (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, 1989). The theory suggests that speech acts must be complete sentences. In simple terms, the theory assumes that people follow the same rules (i.e., felicity conditions) to successfully communicate. However, in fact, these rules do not always apply. For example, people often administer instructions where they have little authority, specifically when talking to friends or family members (Labov & Fenshel, 1977; Ervin-Tripp, 1976 cited in Blum-Kulka et al.). Searle's theory is also overly individualistic, ignoring the importance of the listener. Eemeren & Grootendorst (2010), perceive the communication process as interactively engaging the listener in active participation. They say that the theory fails to take into account perlocutionary

actions like persuasion, or a process of convincing someone through speech (Eemeren & Grootendorst 2010).

Moreover, Searle does not explain how to eliminate unintended consequences. Sometimes a speech act can accidentally offend someone, but the theory fails to do this adequately. Eemeren and Grootendorst (2010) also claim that only intended effects should accompany the act, and unintended effects are hard to include. Finally, the theory is unable to explain how second language learners, such as Iraqi EFL students, integrate their native language with English in the apology process. It conveniently misses their grammatical and pragmatic mistakes, such as "I sorry" instead of "I'm sorry." It is therefore that Speech Act Theory does continue to be relevant for explaining what apologies are and how they actually function theoretically. But this is not enough to explain why these forms are used properly, as they are, especially in cross-cultural and interlanguage situations. Researchers recommend mixing it with additional sociolinguistic and cultural theories that account for emotions, religion, power, and social status.

2.2 Olshtain & Cohen's (1983, 1989) Apology Strategy Model.

Olshtain and Cohen's Apology Strategy Model (1983, 1989) is among the most significant research theories in the interlanguage pragmatics literature based on how the second language learners attempt to execute this expression. Inspired by earlier works in speech act theory, the model argues that apologies are a speech act set and consist in a constellation of possible strategies, as opposed to a single linguistic formula. The model has five main strategies: Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), such as "I'm sorry" or "I apologize"; taking responsibility for the offense; providing an explanation or account; offering repair or compensation; and promising

non-repetition of the act. By laying down these categories the framework has equipped researchers with a uniform and replicable instrument for classifying apology realizations among different learners and cultural contexts (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, 1989). This clarity and organization make it possible for the model to be used widely in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. As one example, Hasan's (2025) study of Iraqi EFL learners utilized the framework to code or categorize students' written and spoken apologies.

The model assisted in comparisons and identified patterns of learners' use of apology strategies. However, Hasan's study also found many Iraqi students were creating forms that could not be easily identified by the five categories. These included combinations of strategies (e.g., IFIDs with explanatory explanations), a higher amount of repetition for emphasis (e.g., "I'm very very sorry"), and religious references ("I swear to God"). Such practices embody the cultural and language backgrounds of learners, but they are difficult to classify in the model's relatively rigid framework. In subsequent critiques there has been much criticism of this point. For instance, Al-Zumor (2010) studied statements of apology and concluded that belief in God and what it means to believe are key forces in apologizing. Arab learners' apologies are not necessarily made in deviation from native-speaker norms but are reflections of culturally-embedded norms that such as honor and respect help to define acceptable explanations of mistakes.

Nureddeen (2008) found a similar pattern in their exploration of sincere apologies, where apologies from Sudanese Arabic speakers are generally avoided as speech of blame when they experience a serious offense due to concerns of individual expression and face preservation. Rather, they resort to behind-the-scenes acts of responsibility-taking, indirectness, excuses or religious understatements to express

their apology. Such practices fall far below and under standardization with apology theorized around Western norms or which may mischaracterize or oversimplify sincere apologies in non-Western contexts. A significant criticism is the approach taken in the model when it comes to contextual and sociolinguistic aspects. Even though apologies are relational and context specific, the fixed categories from the model do not seem to make explicit sense of power relationships, social distance or gender. For instance, in Hasan's data Iraqi students compared how they used deferential language and also more complex strategies apologizing to people of higher status versus the way they expressed more casual or short apologies to peers. These changes in pragmatic preference manifest the context specific and situational aspect of apologizing strategies.

Olshtain and Cohen's model minimizes these variations, due to views of individual categories in isolation, contextually, as if they were individual choices (Eelen, 1999). This absence resonates with wider criticisms of early speech act research, and reflects in some articles the tendency of such research to prioritize universal taxonomies over small, interactive tests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). The model also assumes that such strategies can easily be partitioned, yet numerous empirical studies, including those on language apology, demonstrate that apologies are a rather mixed and evolving process. Many speakers employ a multiplicity of strategies simultaneously, either repairing while apologizing themselves, or situating apologies within broader constructions and structures of discourse. These are some aspects of the art we might invoke when we are moving toward an apology model we can trust and that can't be imposed into rigid categories that run the risk of losing touch with apology practice, which are in contrast dynamic social negotiated as opposed to a checklist of verbal choices. Researchers in these limitations call for adaptation or

extension of Olshtain and Cohen's model. New works suggest more culturally situated approaches to apology than earlier universalist taxonomies.

Ja'afreh (2023), for example, demonstrates that religious belief is not peripheral but a part and parcel of apology practices in Jordanian Arabic. Finally, the study of Iraqi Arabic (not only does this one have a unique context, but also shares socio-religious worldview and the collectivist values) indicates that this value and attitude affect apology behavior and includes indirectness, apologizing for certain behaviors. More generally, discourse-oriented and sociocultural orientations to pragmatics argue about apologizing not as discrete forms of speech but as socially embedded performances that address wider power relations and cultural ideologies, and negotiate cultural identities of others (Mills, 2003; Holmes, 1995).

Olshtain and Cohen's Apology Strategy Model is now a leading theoretical framework for pragmatics that is often cited for its clarity and consistency (Trosborg, 2011). However, its broad definition and cross-cultural application are limited by a normativity rooted in an English context, lack of consideration for sociolinguistic diversity, and rigid dichotomy. Future academic work, centered on apologies, not only in EFL but also in other cultures, would thus stand to benefit from utilizing both model and context to the advantage of greater flexibility, sensitivity, and awareness to the interactional contexts that construct apologies in practice.

2.3 Brown & Levinson's Politeness Theory (1987).

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory is one of the most influential and recognized models of language and interpersonal communication among the two general theories. It is predicated upon the notion that all communication threatens to undermine the person's "face" that is, their public image or social identity, which is

public or a certain representation of themselves. This theory differentiates two kinds of face, the positive face, the desire to be liked, approved of or respected by others, and the negative face, the wish to be free from 44 imposition (anomalies). For example, Brown and Levinson classify speech acts such as requests, orders, criticisms and apologies as face-threatening acts (FTAs). They suggest speakers use a range of politeness strategies such as bald on-record, positive politeness, negative politeness, and off-record to limit the potential damage to face as far as they can. Though widely adopted across pragmatics and sociolinguistics, this framework has been widely criticized. For its assumption of universality, its proclivity toward Western norms, its failure to account for major sociolinguistic factors or its formulae.

One major criticism concerns the universality of Brown and Levinson's style was that the strategies are universal across cultures. Blum-Kulka, Held and Wierzbicka insisted on the notion that politeness in one culture is polite and not necessarily polite in another, so that politeness cannot be the same in all countries based on the same strategies (Wierzbicka, 1985). Meier (1995) further cautions that in cross-cultural comparisons, use of words such as "polite," "impolite," "direct," and "indirect" are too frequently used, which is quite misleading since interpretations according to culture differ in terms of linguistic construct. The second prominent concern is the Western cultural bias of the theory and its value on individualism. Matsumoto (1988), Ide (1989), Gu (1990), Nwoye (1992) and Mao (1994) have argued that through Brown and Levinson's model, values prevalent in English-speaking societies are better appreciated in that society emphasizes individual autonomy and personal identity. Politeness in non-Western cultures is, in practice, more of a matter of maintaining group consensus and meeting social needs than saving face. For instance, in Japanese culture, Ide (1989) argues that politeness is often a result of

discerning oneself by remaining under certain rigid social norms and hierarchies and less of an individual-choice. Here, the speaker's linguistic practice is governed more by prescribed honorifics and obligatory forms than by voluntary strategic politeness.

It has also been criticized for oversimplifying the dynamics that influence politeness. For Holmes (2013), formality is a critical dimension that Brown and Levinson tend to overlook. She writes that speakers will employ negative politeness in formal settings, including courtrooms, and positive politeness in informal environments. Holmes gives an example of two brothers who are both lawyers who refer to each other in court as "my learned colleague" to keep formal decorum, despite having a personal relationship. Examples like these illustrate that situational formality can override personal familiarity, which, as noted above, is not fully integrated into Brown and Levinson's framework. Also, the theory fails to account for the affective aspect of interaction; so, their criticism lacks of consideration for emotions in interaction. Slugoski and Turnbull (1988) argue that emotions such as sympathy, irritation, or friendliness have powerful influence on the way speaker's manifest politeness. These emotional dimensions were, however, absent in Brown and Levinson's analysis. In failing to measure affect, the theory fails to take into account the complexity of language use today because emotions affect decisions about language as much as social distance or power relations do.

The model has also been accused of rigidity. According to Fraser (1990), politeness is an ongoing process and can be diverse through interaction taking into account the development of conversation and the responses that interlocutors make to one another. He suggests the Conversational Contract model as a flexible one; one that permits change of politeness as per the individual agreement with their mates of one another and a changing conversation. Under this theory, politeness is done on the

spot, and is not contingent on the presence of existing social variables. Wolfson's (1988) Bulge Theory compounds the challenge to Brown and Levinson's assumptions. She dismisses as a truism their claim that the more distant one is from other people, the more polite they are. Instead, her research shows that when friends, strangers and acquaintances are engaging with each other, speakers use negative politeness; those with whom they interact will use more positive politeness for familiar bonds that are neither very close nor very distant.

This "bulge" in politeness occurs when speakers feel less sure of themselves about how to reach out to acquaintances and, then, take immense care to be as respectful, not disrespectful or misunderstood. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory has shown us a whole lot about how people manage face in a single interaction; however, it does have its shortcomings of course. It has been opposed on the basis that its strategies are not generalizable, in that it disregards factors in cultural diversity, whereas individual autonomy is overemphasized, and not enough is provided for emotions in conversation. Moreover, findings like those by Wolfson demonstrate that the typology of politeness is not always linear predictions from the model. These critiques suggest that politeness models of the future must be culturally relevant, socially situated and flexible, in order to enjoy the rich range of human communicative action.

2.4 Trosborg's Taxonomy of Apology Strategies.

Trosborg's (2011) taxonomy of apology strategies, in "Interlanguage Pragmatics: Requests, Complaints, and Apologies," is a common reference for pragmatics research. Her model takes into account a range of apology strategies adopted, including Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), explanations,

acknowledgment of responsibility, offers of repair, and promises of forbearance or future prevention. Importantly, interlanguage and cross-linguistic variation play a key role in making apologies realized as Trosborg emphasizes, when it comes to L1, learners' pragmatic choices are just as much shaped by culture as they are language. The important part of this orientation is that there is a shift away from former models, such as Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) classification that had treated apology strategies as discrete and stable.

 In contrast, Trosborg's taxonomy demonstrates that apologies are slippery, situational, and dependent on power relations, situational expectations or constraints, and the speaker's interlanguage competence. This remains to be an important article but recent scholarship has raised important criticisms of it. A major limitation is the overemphasis on shape over function of the model. In Trosborg's taxonomical classification, apologies are grouped mainly based on the surface linguistic features of text, such as the presence of explicit apology markers (e.g., "I am sorry" and "sorry") or explanations. Although this coding system enables researchers to categorize data, it could lead to a reductionist categorization of apologies that often carry multiple interpersonal attributes, including control over identity, reconciling relationships, and the negotiation of social roles (Haugh, 2007). The same phrase "I'm sorry," for example, might do different things depending on whether it's offered for the sake of group harmony, for conflict relief, or to demonstrate empathy. An interest in linguistic form, then, underestimates the pragmatic richness of apologies in real conversation. Western bias in cultural assumptions underpinning the taxonomy has also been of concern. Though Trosborg builds up her data collection from native and non-native English speakers, the

majority of her taxonomies are taken from Western versions of individual responsibility and politeness.

As Wierzbicka (2003) suggests, because of this tendency for certain orientations, we may have the effect of codifying Western communicative norms and obscuring local apologetic rituals. For example, in a collectivistic culture, an apology may emphasize humility in preserving honor or group unity, rather than simply saying that someone is failing. Such orientations are difficult to embed in Trosborg's taxonomy which makes it less applicable when analyzing apology strategies in diverse sociocultural contexts. Interlanguage data have also been a subject of criticism, although the framework has been implemented. Trosborg has, for instance, consistently compared second-language learners' apologies to those of native speakers while taking native norms as the appropriate measure of pragmatic competence. This perspective overlooks creativity and adaptability of learners, argues Kasper (1999). For non-native speakers, they could substitute first-language transfer or innovate new strategies that work in their own right.

Classifying these as "deviations" is a potentially pathological treatment of learner behavior itself and misses the adaptive and dynamic nature of interlanguage pragmatics. Another limitation in theory concerns the static and universalistic nature of the taxonomy. Since they have fixed types of apologies, the apologies may be categorized consistently in different contexts. Discursive lenses also offer an alternative to this view that considers apologies in the context of emergent and contested practice that is built across relational, social, and cultural spaces (Locher & Watts, 2005; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). For example, expressions of empathy or acceptance of harm will likely be present across two categories or more, undermining the neat divisions of the kind suggested by Trosborg. Such rigidity also

constrains the model's ability to accommodate the flexible and adaptable reality of real-life apologies. Third, there have been methodological caveats when it comes to Trosborg's reliance on elicited data. Most of her analysis relies on Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) and fictional contexts. While DCTs can facilitate the cross-linguistic comparison of various utterances, they may not be indicative of actual conversational behavior. Golato (2003) also theorizes that data elicited results in less emotional than spoken apologies, and in fact are frequently reduced to the less complicated and thus less emotional patterns of responding, particularly by hesitation, repair and negotiation. As such, this dependence does raise the issue of ecological validity, that is to say: do elicited responses truly represent how people actually apologize in real life, at all.

Many of these critics had also criticized the CCSARP framework (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989) for being analogous in these methodological inadequacies. To conclude, Trosborg's (2011) taxonomy represents a groundbreaking contribution to the field of interlanguage pragmatics scholarship by being among the first systematic instruments of apology research to examine apology behavior across languages. However, this framework also suffers from significant limitations: It relies more heavily on form-based than function-based designs, underrepresents cultural variability, relies too heavily on native speaker conventions, assigns far more dynamic interactional practices a rigid role, and relies on elicited versus natural data. Critiques of this type suggest that while Trosborg's model is valuable as a useful framework, contemporary research would benefit more from a discursive dynamic and understanding of apology that considers relational and contextual levels.

2.5 The CCSARP Model.

A Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), a product of Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), is a notable milestone. One of the first systematic attempts had been one of the first systematic attempts of comparing speech performances in languages and developed a database for requests and apologies that changed the practice of cross-cultural pragmatics. Nevertheless, CCSARP has been heavily criticized most notably in terms of methodological approaches, implicit biases and bias for theory. But by laying the groundwork for comparative research the project has been criticized as limiting pragmatic behavior and understudying apology strategies across cultures and intercultural interactions. It is another methodological limitation of the project that it predominantly uses Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) with which to collect requests and apologies. DCTs made it possible to gather large and similar data, but capturing spontaneous and emotional and real conversations is not realistic. Apologies in DCTs are not significant, as Eelen (2014) pointed out, interactional elements that underpin sincerity and authentic communication: hesitations, repetitions, negotiations, and intensity of emotions. In this way, DCTs don't just represent reality speakers' "appropriate" behaviors, they reflect what speakers consider "appropriate."

Later research validated these limitations. Golato (2003) for example provided evidence of very real inconsistencies of DCT-initiated apologies and such naturally occurring apologies, especially if the apology consisted of a more intense level of emotion or interpersonal stakes. We now consider whether or not the CCSARP analysis was correct is the reality of communicative behavior. In addition to methodological deficiencies, CCSARP has been accused of cultural mis comprehensibility. In fact, its scenarios, Wierzbicka (2003) says, reflect Western

norms of authority and accountability over Western values more than authority and accountability. This may not be the same as it is how folks apologize from a broader cultural perspective. In regions where the Middle East is concerned or East Asia, ideals like honor, face and relational solidarity play a significant role in communication. In these types of contexts, apologies are often embedded within broader strategies of relationship keeping, which CCSARP's role-plays do not really illustrate (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008). Such challenges raise concerns about CCSARP being used as a cross-cultural comparison tool. An additional problem is the coding scheme for analyzing apologies. Only a few CCSARP categories could CCSARP identify as apology was the Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), explanations, offers of repair and promises of forbearance. That was a useful point of departure, but it oversimplifies the nuance of apology behavior to surface forms. Critics say that overlooks the broader social and emotional functions of apologies.

Expressions of empathy or acknowledgment of shared responsibility, for instance, cannot easily be fit into CCSARP categories but are important to signal sincerity and repair relationships (Haugh, 2007). By only analyzing form, and not function, the model neglects key aspects of how apologies operate in specific contexts. Finally, CCSARP has been criticized as universalist. It assumes that by coming up with one framework through which to account for apologies and requests across languages, one can disentangle pragmatic strategies from their cultural context and analyze them directly. Yet other scholars, like Eelen (1999) and Mills (2004), do not fall into the trap of considering politeness and apology based on cultural (and ideological) considerations. What is perceived as "polite" or "appropriate" in one culture may differ in another. Subsequent (and related) discursive perspectives highlight that apologies are not inherent structures, but negotiated acts within a particular cultural

and interactional context (Locher & Watts, 2005; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). For instance, in some cultures the abstention from stating explicit apology markers can come across as disingenuous whereas in others, an indirect form of apology might be considered as a mode of solidarity or saving face.

CCSARP is a start-up project, set the stage for cross-cultural pragmatics, and apologies data should be treated with caution. This use of DCTs departs from the credibility of the data because its hypothetical scenarios are based on Western cultural practices, its coding is simplistic in its representation of complex processes and culture, and its universalism cannot accommodate cultural diversity. Yet subsequent studies have centered naturally occurring data and culturally informed representations in which apologies are seen as discursive and contextual practices negotiated in the space. Accordingly, CCSARP should be an essential and necessary preliminary step, while simultaneously providing avenues for new research directions, and is one that should continually be adapted to measure the nuances and multidimensions of apology behavior across cultures. in pragmatics. It was among the first systematic studies aimed at examining how different peoples perform speech acts in different languages, and this investigation produced a comprehensive catalog of requests and apologies; that study had a strong impact on cross-pragmatics.

 While CCSARP has attracted significant criticism, particularly with respect to its methodology, cultural assumptions and theoretical orientation. The project has enabled the possibility of comparative enquiry, yet it also oversimplifies pragmatic behavior and overlooks the messiness of apologetic strategies across cultures and interpersonal relations. A key methodological critique is how they used Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) to collect requests and apologies for the project. With the DCTs we can gather high-quality data at scale and at the same time, but they cannot

approximate the spontaneity and emotional intensity of face-to-face discussion. According to Eelen (2014), Apologies in DCTs fail to account for other critical elements of interaction including hesitation, repetition, negotiation, and emotional intensity, which are the major indicators of sincerity for authentic communication. DCTs effectively are as to what speakers consider acceptable forms of expression rather than something that can be performed in real life. It was later confirmed through studies that this is a problematic limitation. As Golato (2003) has documented, DCT-induced apologies do not look the same as natural apologies in highly emotional or interpersonally fraught situations. This suggests an inability to tell if the CCSARP study's findings really are the true face of people's communication. Though methodology has drawbacks, CCSARP came under criticism for its cultural stereotypes. Wierzbicka (2003) observes that many are traditional Western notions of authority and responsibility, which are perhaps not how apology is perceived in another culture. Among cultures such as the Middle East or East Asia honor, face and relational solidarity are critical in communicating with others. In these matters, apologies are frequently embedded in general relationship behaviors, and the role–plays in CCSARP cannot sufficiently contribute in this regard (Félix–Brasdefer, 2008). This challenges the effectiveness of CCSARP as a cross-cultural comparison tool. Another consideration is that of the coding tool to examine apologies. CCSARP classifies apologies into fairly small types, such as Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), explanations, offers of repair, and promises of forbearance. Although such an approach was a useful starting point, it shrinks apology behaviors down into something superficial.

Critics argue that this method overlooks the deeper social and emotional functions of apology, and their accompanying social construction. For instance, claims of

empathy or the acknowledgment of shared responsibility may not necessarily fall neatly within the CCSARP categories, yet are important in embodying sincerity, but also in repairing relationships (Haugh, 2007). But, by focusing on form rather than function, the model fails to consider much about how apologies function in context. Finally, CCSARP has been criticized for being universalist. This approach assumes that such pragmatic strategies divorced from cultural context can be directly compared simply by proposing one model for analyzing apologies and requests across languages.

But in the view of scholars like Eelen (1999) and Mills (2004) this overlooks the cultural and ideological aspects of politeness and apology. What is "polite" or "appropriate" in one culture might not be in another. Later-discursive perspectives of apologies show that they are not fixed categories; they are practices negotiated in particular cultural contexts and interactional settings (Locher & Watts, 2005; Kádár & Haugh, 2013). For instance, in some societies, there could be perceived insincerity in not employing explicit apology labels, while in others indirectness can be a way to show solidarity or to save face, depending on the culture. To put it simply, CCSARP was a pioneering effort in helping to establish the area of cross-cultural pragmatics, such results for apologies are nevertheless should be approached with skepticism. It can be said that the fact that it uses DCTs diminishes naturalistic nature of data, its scenarios are based on Western cultural norms, it simplifies complex behaviors in its coding system, and it has a universalist view of culture. So newer research has turned to naturally occurring data and culturally-embedded understandings of apologies as discursive practices which depend on contextual negotiation. As a result, CCSARP is considered a very important and critical first

step that has opened up new avenues of research but that needs more studies to address the complexity of apology behavior interculturally.

2.6 Holmes's Framework on Gender and Power in Apologies.

Janet Holmes, apologies and gender (1990, 1995), and its sociolinguistics importance. In respect of New Zealand English, Holmes (1990) explored whether apology could be a pragmatic means of social intercourse. She showed that apologies usually don't just involve regret, they're about reducing conflict and preserving harmony. Holmes then argued again in *Women, Men and Politeness* (1995) that women are more attentive to politeness norms than men, and that her claim was true: women are more likely than men to use apologies, as she points out that women tend to apologize to men when they are in different social roles at different times of day because "what women are likely to make an apology may indeed reflect their more solidarity, relational orientation." Much of her research has become known as a reminder of how gender can shape the everyday usage of apologies. Still, Holmes's studies were innovative, and recent scholarship has examined her theoretical foundations as well as her findings as well as empirical generalizations.

As scholars pointed out, if women and men are treated as uniform groups we risk oversimplifying the complex social dynamics of language use. One of the criticisms has been from feminist pragmatics. Mills (2003), argues that Holmes' framework is also a "difference model" of gender – that men and women use language in contrast to each other. Mills (2003) argues that politeness and apology practices are not structural properties among genders, but rather, vary according to context of interaction, who (between) the speakers are in the roles, playing at point in time. She suggests that politeness should be understood as a 'situated practice' shaped by

gender in relation to other social phenomena including personal social status, an institutional context and common norms. In this line of thinking, Holmes is also misleading in assuming that women's conduct is more polite or apologetic, since it doesn't account for the heterogeneity and flexibility of communicative behavior (Mills 2003).

Further, Cameron (2007) attacks the idea that gender-related language differences are simply a reflection of deep or universal contrasts. She criticizes the literature which exaggerate the contrast between male and female communication styles in her book, The Myth of Mars and Venus. Cameron demonstrates that much of the popular fiction in scientific literature, like the statement "women apologizing more frequently than men" is not backed up in all respects by empirical observations, but can actually be cultural prejudice. Language, she claims, should not be a universal expression of biological sex; language should be interpreted more as a means to perform identities including these associated with gender identities. Holmes's research into women's increased usage of apologies in New Zealand English in this context is valid but should not be interpreted as evidence that men and women differ universally. Collectively, these criticisms make visible in my reading a key limitation of Holmes's lens: treatment of gender as a stable category rather than a socially constructed identity negotiated. The second critique is based on methodology.

Holmes's (1990) work was limited to a relatively small corpus of naturally occurring apologies in New Zealand English. As a data set, however useful, it does not provide the broadest conceivable perspective of the various scenarios in which apologies may be appropriate. In a corpus-based study of British English, Deutschmann (2003) found that apologies served a number of overlapping functions such as diffusing minor offenses, controlling turn-taking or saving politeness in informal exchanges.

He argues that one should use smaller corpora or elicited data, such as Holmes's does, which risks neglecting these routines and common larger-than-life uses of apology. Deutschmann's findings suggest that apologies depend on more than gender is apparent. the case in Holmes's schema. Situational factors like the scale of the offense or the relationship between speakers tends to prevail the sex difference. Yet, a second major criticism is concerned with the cultural context of Holmes's claims. Despite the fact that her research is all research into New Zealand English, her results for this case have also occasionally been cited in less general terms as testimony to it. use of apologies is widespread among both men and women. But cross-cultural research has discovered that the gender role is very different in languages, not just within a certain gender. For example, small differences between men and women were observed in comparing the use of apology strategy by American college students (Bataineh and Bataineh, 2005). It can be observed that both men and women from both groups used the same strategies, indicating that just gender is not a significant predictor of apology behavior. Previous investigations in Persian (Shariati and Chamani 2010) and Chinese (Liu and Ren 2015), social status, roles of power and culture are among the factors. major determinants how apology strategies are applied.

In many cases, these considerations overshadow gender in determining how people apologize. For example, in a hierarchical relationship, if we observe that men and women must demonstrate deference or respect there will be a similar apologizing nature for both genders. Holmes's observations suggest that they are much better understood in terms of context rather than as universal rules applicable to all speakers of English or other languages. These critiques taken together tell us that Holmes's framework has its merits, but also it is limited. This helped highlight

apologies' function in terms of preserving relationships and connecting gender to politeness tactics.

On the other hand, it is constrained as it threatens to assume gender difference is unchanging and universal. Previous research indicated that the apology behavior is shaped by various elements such as social power, cultural norms and contextually situational. Researchers now stress that gender isn't necessarily steady but more of a fluid resource which people tap into when social action serves different social purposes. Holmes (1990, 1995) is the main contributor to this body of sociolinguistic theory, writing on apologies and gender. However, as Mills (2003), Cameron (2007), Deutschmann (2003), and many others have contended, it should be approached with caution. Her findings would be best understood as a contribution to understanding New Zealand English in the late 20th century, not as a universal pattern for gender and politeness. Current practices imply that apologies should be considered as situated, context dependent acts in which gender operates in conjunction with dimensions of power, culture and identity and not as the only driving factor of explanation

2.7 Goffman's Theory of Apology.

Erving Goffman (2017) was one of the first to theorize apology as a component of social interaction on a day-to-day basis. For Goffman, in the framework of "remedial interchange," apologies are ritual mechanisms individuals use in order to repair relations with the aggrieved others and to right the order of interaction. For Goffman, the apology is less a language of regret than a symbolic gesture, a gesture of recasting that reinforces social conventions and preserves the moral character of the wrongdoer even while restoring the reputation of the offended. What this means is

that the apology is a performance, and a maintenance of a cohesive social organization. Goffman's narrative informed later investigations of facework and politeness and has positioned apology in the realm of ritualized interactional practices. As fascinating as Goffman's theory makes it seem, it, of course, has also drawn some criticism. The most significant concern among posthumous historians is that his theoretical model of apology takes too heavy a reliance upon ritual formality.

As Olshtain and Cohen (1983) argue Goffman provides a key model of the "idealized" apology but does not recognize the pragmatics of flexibility dependent on the linguistic and cultural context in which apologies are actually made. Their interlanguage pragmatics work found that apologies are not inherently a particular ritual but they are constructed purposely amongst speakers with not only the magnitude of offense, but also the relationship between speakers and the expectations of their culture. That incongruity between Goffman's ritualized system and the reality of apology practices only accentuates itself. Another critique comes from Goffman's neglect of cultural variation. His model assumes a fairly universal model of apology organization, though cross-cultural work has found large gap in the way apologies are articulated and received in the target context. When Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) conducted Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project, they discovered that strategies for expressing apology ranged widely across languages (everything from formulaic expressions of regret or elaboration to justification or the offer of repair). Goffman's theory, with their results, is too narrow according to their findings and does not allow a fitting description of the cultural embeddedness of apology practices. A cultural apology might be either not right or,

in other cultures, may be unnecessary, so Goffman's model must be critiqued; the universalization in Goffman's model has to be critiqued.

An additional limitation stems from Goffman's inability to consider power and gender effects on apology behavior. Holmes (1990, 1995) demonstrated that apologies are not merely ritual interventions for resolving breach of social contract, but critically contingent on social order. And her research in New Zealand English found that women do apologize more than men, although this is usually because it is a "strategy for preserving good relationships with people," while for men their apologies are limited and associated with issues of authority and control. This means that apologies are not only processes of reshaping exchanges of power, but of shaping identity. And because the dimensions of apology are not taken into account, Goffman's account of apology may not provide an entirely neutral (or, at least, superficial) account that takes into account how the nature of the apology reproduces or contests social orders. Lastly, Goffman has received criticism for his fixed concept of apology as a model for interaction. Mills (2003) goes on to suggest that Goffman and later ritualized accounts treat apologies only as formulaic actions which fail to recognize the discursive and negotiated nature of politeness within discourse. For Mills, apologies are not ritual "slots" to fill out but rather are dynamic practices shaped by ongoing interactional purposes, speaker wants and listener narratives. This more flexible position emphasizes the deficiencies that Goffman's model reveals about the practicalities of communicative practices that take place in opposition to, interpretations of or calculation for an apology.

3. Concluding Notes

To recapitulate, seven dominant theoretical frameworks of apology have been discussed in this review, and their advantages and limitations have been assessed. Speech Act Theory offered a way of studying apologies as performative behaviors but overlooked cultural and interactional variances. Olshtain and Cohen's model brought systematic strategy categorization but neglects nuance on cultural and contextual levels. Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory illuminated the role of face but has been criticized for its cultural bias, oversimplification and inattention to emotion. Trosborg's taxonomy and the CCSARP project presented pioneering classifications of interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics, but was overly dependent on elicited data and Western-centric assumptions. Holmes's framework has drawn attention for gendered uses of apology but has been criticized for essentialist generalizations and narrow scope.

Last but not least, Goffman's ritual theory offered a useful framework for understanding apology as a corrective exchange but underestimates the cultural diversity, power dynamics and interactional dynamism of the exchanges. Seen in conjunction, these criticisms demonstrate that there is an argument to be made that already developed theories, although beneficial, have failed to grasp the various factors related to apology in every culture, gender, and interaction context. More flexible, culturally specific and contextualized strategies that see apologies as fluid, negotiated and dynamic practices with the kind constituted by power, identity and social relations, should therefore be embraced in future research. This kind of approach is especially important in the study of Arabic speaking communities and Iraqi EFL learners whereby the religious, cultural and collectivist values are significant for the apology behaviors.

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