



**THE ACT OF FACE-SAVING: APOLOGY STRATEGIES
AMONG MERANAW UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN
SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES**

**Juhaid H. H. Abbas^{a,*}, Binnor M. Abdul Samad^b, Mohammad Hussein
Imam^c, Annie Mae C. Berowa^d**

^{a,b,c,d} Mindanao State University Main Campus, Philippine
* Corresponding author, anniemae.berowa@msumain.edu.ph

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Receive 20/11/2026 Received in revised form 07/05/2026 Accepted 28/06/2026	ABSTRACT The present study demonstrates the pattern of the speech act of apology among Meranaw university students in Southern Philippines, who are adherents of Islam, by employing a descriptive qualitative research method. The study specifically aims to illustrate the strategies employed by 41 respondents in realizing the speech act of apology, as well as to examine the apology strategies they employed towards different groups of addressees: superior status; equal status; lower status; friends; and strangers. The data were collected through a modified written discourse completion task (DCT) that contains 15 hypothetical scenarios. The 615 data obtained were mainly coded and analyzed using the taxonomy of apology strategies and treated using frequency and percentage counting. Finally, the study reveals that the respondents generally and dominantly employ the explicit Expression of Apology (EA) strategy. In addition, combinations of apology strategies as well as new strategies such as Action as a Form of Apology (AFA) and Non-Apology Strategies are illustrated. Lastly, the study shows that the strategies employed by the respondents do not conform to the social status and social distance variables as there is no notable difference in strategy found. Keywords: apology, politeness strategy, speech act, social status, social distance

Introduction

Language as the medium for communication and interaction plays a pivotal part in learning, understanding, and expressing the world around us and even beyond. It gives support in establishing and maintaining a relationship with other people. Due to its high importance to society, studies and investigations about it have been proliferating which are concerned with grammar, pronunciation or sound patterns, communicative competence and processes along with its implication to the social aspect of a certain group of people, and many others. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistic studies, focuses on analyzing a language and the variations of language as it is used in different contexts for instance when doing compliments, requests, and apologies among others (Cutting, 2008). Moreover, pragmatics is vital in every human communication or interaction as a lack of skills or knowledge in pragmatics might result in mishaps such as misunderstandings and miscommunication between the interlocutors (Aydin, 2013).

As people immerse and interact, language also adapts the social context of the communicative environment for the utterances to convey the desired specific intentions. One of these intentions that can make or severe interpersonal relationships when communicating can be explained by the speech act of apologies. Austin (1962) stated that apology is concerned with how a person reacts to their conduct and assuming or expressing their regret towards their actions while

declaring and attesting that they will avoid such actions in the future. Meanwhile, Searle (1969) defines apology by classifying it on how it varies from the other illocutionary acts. He argues that apology is referred to the expression of regrets for past misconduct in which one is suffered or still suffering from. This definition of an apology mainly refers to the intention of the speaker when committing such acts. However, studies have also shown that mere intention is not sufficient to explain the effectiveness of illocutionary act of apology since the hearers might be too enraged to accept the utterance as an apology, or the speaker might have done damages that a simple “*I’m sorry*” will not be able to solve (Oishi, 2013). As such, Goffman (1981) defined apology as “a gesture through which an individual splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offense and the part that dissociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule” (p.113). This definition explains how apologies are acts whose value or meaning depends on the interaction between the speaker and the listener. He maintains that the illocutionary act of apology is determined during the on-going discourse between the speaker and the listener.

In any communicative interaction, language use varies across cultures, as each cultural group follows its own norms and conventions in expressing meanings and intentions. The way we understand and see the world varies by culture (Zulfa & Akmalia, 2023). Consequently, understanding the cultural norms of language

users is essential for achieving effective communication (Aydin, 2013). In the Meranaw context, the speech act of apology is particularly significant because of the high value placed on *Maratabat*, a core cultural concept deeply embedded in Meranaw society (Mendoza & Berowa, 2017; Berowa, 2020; H. Abbas & Berowa, 2022; Macaumbos, Curo, & Berowa, 2025). *Maratabat* encompasses notions of pride, honor, dignity, rank, shame, self-esteem, reputation, and face (Dimaporo, 2016; Saber, Maanyag, & Warriner, 1960, as cited in Berowa & Mendoza, 2017). Because maintaining one's face and preserving the dignity of others are highly valued, Meranaws are expected to exercise caution and sensitivity in their language use to avoid causing offense and social disharmony.

Despite the importance of apology as a communicative act, studies on apology within the Philippine context remain limited. Existing research has primarily focused on public apologies issued by media personalities, corporate apologies on social media platforms, and apology practices among Filipino business management learners in Manila settings (Dela Rosa & Castro, 2016; Sebastian, Ponce, & Alieto, 2019; Robles, Bote, & Flores, 2020). These studies are largely concentrated on Tagalog- and English-speaking populations in urban and mainstream. To date, no empirical study has specifically examined how Meranaw speakers, particularly Meranaw university students, realize the speech act of apology or how socio-pragmatic variables such as gender, social status, and

social distance influence their choice of apology strategies. This responds, therefore, the need for further investigation within both Philippine pragmatics and the documentation of Meranaw communicative practices.

Addressing this gap is important not only for enriching the field of Philippine pragmatics but also for providing a more accurate representation of Meranaw communicative norms. Moreover, such an investigation may contribute to the development of culturally sensitive communication practices in education, governance, and peacebuilding initiatives involving Meranaw communities. For that reason, this study aims to examine the apology strategies employed by Meranaw university students in Southern Philippines through a modified written Discourse Completion Task (DCT). Specifically, the study investigates how socio-pragmatic factors, including social status (superior, equal, and lower status) and social distance (friends and strangers), influence the realization of apologies in different communicative situations.

The speech act of apology merits scholarly attention because it is a common and indispensable feature of everyday interaction. Since apology strategies vary across cultures and social contexts, understanding how Meranaw speakers perform apologies and the factors that shape their choices can provide valuable insights into their communicative behavior. Hence, a deeper understanding of Meranaw apology practices may foster greater intercultural

awareness and promote more effective communication between Meranaws and members of other linguistic and cultural communities.

Literature Review

Pragmatics, Speech Act, and Apology

Pragmatics is concerned on how people use language in a specific situation. It deals on how a language is employed to perform some actions, which are called speech acts. Speech acts such as requesting, refusing, greeting, complimenting, thanking, apologizing among others are being performed in everyday lives to accomplish communicative intentions. These communicative acts can cause a pragmatic failure when a speaker does not possess a sufficient competence (Thomas, 1983). Thus, numerous studies of speech acts were conducted to address these challenges and to elevate the pragmatic competence of the interlocutors.

One speech act that received many attentions is the act of apologizing. Apologies are expressive illocutionary act (Searle, 1976) which has a social goal of maintaining harmony between speaker and addressee (Prachanant, 2016). Such goal is considered as a politeness strategy (Holmes, 1990; Brown & Levinson, 1987) and it also coincides on the politeness' definition provided by Fraser and Nolan (1981) and Leech (1983). They define politeness as a verbal behaviour that

creates harmonious interaction (as cited in Al-Sallal & Ahmed, 2020). The act of apologizing can be considered as either negative politeness or positive politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Furthermore, apology as a politeness strategy is defined by Holmes (1989, as cited in Al-Sallal & Ahmed, 2020) as a “speech act addressed to V’s face-needs and intended to remedy an offence for which A takes responsibility, and thus to restore equilibrium between A and V where A is the apologist, and V is the victim or person offended” (p. 196). In addition, Garcia (1989) views apology as “an explanation offered to a person affected by one’s action that no offense was intended, coupled with the expression of regret for any that may have been given; or a frank acknowledgment of the offense with expression of regret for it, by way of reparation” (p. 44). Also, Marquez-Reiter (2000) maintains apology as a “compensatory action for an offence committed by S (the speaker) which has affected H (the hearer)” (p. 44). Similarly, Olshtain (1989) defines it as “a speech act which is intended to provide support for the H (hearer) who was actually or potentially affected by a violation X, the S (speaker) is willing to humiliate himself or herself to some extent and to admit faulting and responsibility for X” (p. 156). More so, Gooder and Jacobs (2000) added that “proper apology acknowledges the fact of wrongdoing, accepts ultimate responsibility, expresses sincere sorrow and

regret, and promises not to repeat the offence” (p. 205). With these definitions, it can be concluded that the act of apologizing is face-saving act.

Moreover, as a type of expressive speech act, the apology has been a central topic to numerous studies focusing on its patterns and how different ways of apologizing can be classified. Some of these studies were thematically arranged in the following paragraphs.

Apology Strategies

In the Philippine context, Dela Rosa and Castro (2016) examined the apology strategies and felicity conditions fulfilled in the public apology statements of an American and a Filipino TV host after alleged faults done during the pageant nights of Miss Universe 2015 and Binibining Pilipinas 2015. In particular, the study aimed to establish the similarities and differences of their employed apology strategies and felicity conditions. It was found that the American TV host provided a more direct apology expression as compared to the more intensified expression of the Filipino TV host. Based on the apology strategies used, the American TV host made emphasis on self-blame, self-embarrassment, and on a more empathetic type of apology. On the other hand, the Filipino TV host made her apology more self-justifying which highlights explicit lack of intent and denial of self-responsibility. As regards felicity conditions, the apology statement of the American TV host is more felicitous than that of the Filipino TV host.

In similar context, Sebastian, Ponce and Alieto (2019) investigated the pragmatics of Twitter corporate apologies posted by customer service representatives of internet-providing companies. The study revealed that besides Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) tokens (i.e. sorry, regret), there were accompanying strategies employed by the companies to address concerns and issues posted by their clients online.

Apology Strategies and Socio-pragmatic Variables

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the relationship between the speech act of apology and the socio-pragmatic factors: social distance and social status. In 2014, Abu Darwish examined the apology strategies employed by the Jordanian students. The data were gathered through a DCT consisting of 15 questions. The sample is consisted of sixty students. The study revealed that in general, participants either males or females utilize explicit expression of apologies strategy.

Moreover, Banikalef, Maros, Aladdin and Al-natour (2015) investigated the speech act of apology within the Jordanian context. The data was gathered from the 1100 naturally occurring apology events through an ethnographic observation. Semi-structured interview was employed to investigate the effect of factors such as social status, social distance, and severity of offence on the kind of apology strategies. More so, convenient sampling was used in selecting the

research participants. The framework of Olshtain and Cohen (1983) was used to classify different types of apology strategies. The study revealed that acknowledging responsibility was the most more frequently used than other apology strategies in Jordanian Arabic. Furthermore, acknowledging responsibility and swearing by God's name were found to be the most frequent combination of apology strategies. Non-apology strategies were also found. Lastly, social status was found to be a stronger predictor of apology strategy compared with the severity of the offence or the social distance.

Furthermore, Altayari (2017) examined the speech act of apology in the context of Saudi Arabia. There were 100 participants in this study who were asked to complete a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) that included ten different situations requiring an apology expression. The aim of this study was to explore the ways in which Saudi speakers use apology speech and to examine the effect of social factors on the selection of an apology strategy. The results revealed that the Saudi participants used different and varying speech strategies when offering an apology. Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) and explanation or account and offer of repair strategies were the most frequent apology strategies used by Saudi speakers.

In the Philippine context, Robles, Bote and Flores (2020) investigated the speech act of apology among Filipino Business Management Learners. Using

Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) framework, the study determined the apology strategies of the participants who enrolled in a private school in Muntinlupa City, and the effects of other factors such as social distance, social status, and severity of the offense in the way they frame their apologies. Oral Discourse Completion Task adapted from Al Masaeed, Waugh, and Burns (2018) and the descriptive statistics were utilized. The study revealed that most of the participants used explicit expressions of apologies in expressing their remorse. The participants also considered the context of the situation and social constraints (i.e. social status, social distance, and the severity of the offense) in expressing sincerity and regret in the apology; and the apology strategies used were aimed at re-establishing relationships among the interlocutors.

Apology Strategies and Social Status

Banikalef and Maros (2013) investigated the apology strategies of Jordanian EFL graduate students in various situational settings. The objective of the study is to examine the influence of social status and social distance on the choice of apology strategies. Data were collected through Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT) and semi structured interviews. The study revealed that most of the students used Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) and accepts responsibility strategies. Other new strategies (arrogance and ignorance, blame something else, swearing) which fall outside the model of Cohen & Olshtain also appeared in the subjects'

responses. The newly detected strategies are culture-specific acts that are deeply rooted in the Jordanian society. The findings also showed that the choice of the apology strategy is affected by social status more than social distance.

Apology Strategies and Social Distance

Focusing on social distance factor, Suszczyńska (1999) examined the different apologies strategies in English, Polish and Hungarian by employing written discourse completion test. The study utilized the apology strategies framework of Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) in coding the data. More so, the study found a strong preference for Illocutionary Force Indicating devices (IFIDs) in American English, with an overwhelming majority being an expression of regret, and argued that this is due to the wish to maintain the social distance between the interlocutors.

In essence, as shown in the presented literature review, many studies in foreign contexts (Abu Darwish, 2014; Ahmed et. al., 2013; Suszczyńska, 1999, etc.) have been conducted, while very limited studies have been found in the Philippine context (Dela Rosa & Castro, 2016; Sebastian et. al., 2019; Robles, et. al., 2020). Since the act of apologizing varies culturally, investigating its patterns among Meranaw college students could fill the apparent scarce of research on apology in pragmatics in the Philippines. Also, this study would provide a literature of the speech act of apology of the Meranaw speakers as there is no existing study, as far as the knowledge of the researchers is concerned, on their context. Thus, this study

is focused on delving the influence of socio-pragmatic variables: gender, social status and social distance to their realization to the speech act as these factors have been central variables to some previous studies. Specifically, this paper answers the following questions:

1. What are the strategies employed by Meranaw MSU college students in realizing the speech act of apology?
2. What are the apology strategies employed by the respondents towards the following groups of addressees:
 - a. Superior Status;
 - b. Equal Status;
 - c. Lower Status;
 - d. Friends; and
 - e. Strangers?

It must be emphasized that apologizing is not a simple thing to do as it does not only demand linguistic competence but also pragmatic competence. Thus, this study aims to provide facts that can foster one's pragmatic competence which would be very beneficial in the context of Meranaw. Finally, this study is very important since this is the first attempt, as far as the knowledge of the researchers are concerned, in delving into the speech act of apology among Meranaw people.

This also further provides an understanding on social status and social distance as factors in performing the speech act of apology.

Methodology

This paper employs a descriptive qualitative research method as it focuses on describing the patterns of the respondents' realizations to the speech act of apology. Moreover, the data were collected through a modified written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) patterned from the study of Abu Darwish (2014). Obtained data were then tabulated using frequency count and percentage. This investigation was conducted at a university in Lanao del Sur, an institution dominated by Meranaw students. There were forty-one (41) Meranaw students who are native speakers of the Meranaw language and were enrolled at Mindanao State University–Main Campus, Marawi City. The participants came from various academic programs across the university's seventeen (17) colleges and represented different year levels. They were selected because they possessed the linguistic and cultural characteristics necessary to provide relevant information for the study.

Moreover, the participants belonged to the Meranaw ethnolinguistic group, one of the major Moro groups in the Southern Philippines and Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The term Meranaw literally means “people of the lake,” referring to their historical and cultural association with Lake Lanao and the surrounding Lanao region. The Meranaw people are known for their

rich cultural traditions, strong Islamic heritage, distinct social institutions, and the use of the Meranaw language as their primary means of communication (Disoma, 1999; Ulla, 2014). As Yanda (2023) maintains, culture and language are strongly influenced by religion. Hence, as native speakers and members of the Meranaw community, the participants possessed firsthand knowledge and experiences of the linguistic and cultural practices under investigation. Their shared ethnolinguistic background enabled them to provide authentic and contextually grounded responses that were essential to addressing the objectives of the study.

A written Discourse Completion Task (DCT) that contains predesigned situations written with a specific scenario was used to elicit the desired speech act. DCT is believed to be effective as data elicitation tool in studies carried out in pragmatics (Beebe & Cummings, 1996; Nurani, 2009), easy to administer (Varghese & Billmyer, 1996), and provide the researcher with the opportunity to collect a large amount of data in a short time (Beebe & Cummings, 1996). It adapted the DCT used by Abu Darwish (2014) to suit the Meranaw context focusing on two socio-pragmatic factors: social status and social distance.

Method of Analysis

To analyze the data of the study, several frameworks on the speech act of apology were applied. Firstly, to establish the apology strategies employed by the participants, the framework of Olshtain and Cohen (1983) was used. In particular,

the data from the DCT were coded using taxonomy and tabulated using frequency count and percentage. The strategy that got the highest frequency and percentage was inferred as participants' common strategy in performing the speech act of apology.

Moreover, to identify the apology strategies employed by the participants towards the following groups of addressees: (a) Superior status; (b) Equal status; (c) Lower status; (d) Friends; and (e) Strangers, the data were categorized according to these variables and coded using the same taxonomy of apology strategies along with frequency and percentage counting. The analysis was accomplished using the Speech Act Theory in which the categorized data were analyzed into Austin's (1962) three layers of Speech Act and Searle's (1969) Classification of Speech Act. In addition, using the Politeness Theory of Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987), the researchers determined which strategies of the groups of addressees is/are polite/impolite, and which is/are conformed to the theory.

Finally, after identifying the apology strategies from the research questions, the data were then discussed and described using descriptive qualitative research design to draw the conclusion.

Results and Discussion

Politeness strategies employed by Meranaw university students

The result shows that respondents employ various strategies as well as combinations of these strategies in realizing the speech act of apology as presented in the Table 1.

Table 1

Apology strategies employed by Meranaw MSU College Students

APOLOGY STRATEGIES	f	%
EXPRESSION OF APOLOGY (EA)	217	35.3
EXPLANATION OR ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION (EAS)	0	0
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY (AR)	1	0.2
AN OFFER OF REPAIR (OR)	2	0.3
ACTION AS A FORM OF APOLOGY (AFA)	1	0.2
PROMISE OF FORBEARANCE (PF)	1	0.2
EA + EAS	63	10.2
EA + EAS + AR	22	3.6
EA + EAS + AR + OR	1	0.2
EA + EAS + AR + AFA	1	0.2
EA + EAS + AR + PF	1	0.2
EA + EAS + OR	6	1
EA + EAS + AFA	4	0.7
EA + EAS + PF	3	0.5
EA + AR	136	22.1
EA + AR + OR	32	5.2
EA + AR + AFA	8	1.3
EA + AR + PF	4	0.7
EA + OR	45	7.3
EA + AFA	8	1.3
EA + NON-APOLOGY STRATEGY	3	0.5
EA + PF	16	2.6
EAS + AR	2	0.3
EAS + AR + OR	1	0.2
AR + AFA	2	0.3
NON-APOLOGY STRATEGIES(i.e. do nothing, argue/blame the interlocutor)	35	5.7

TOTAL	615	100%
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As clearly shown in Table 2, there is a strong preference among Meranaw MSU College Students toward the explicit expression of apologies in realizing their remorse which comprised of 570 or 93% in total out of the 615 retrieved data. Of this dominant strategy, 35% of it says that the respondents employ expression of apology alone in realizing the speech act of apology. This means that the respondents generally employ “*sorry*”, “*forgive me*”, “*my apologies*”, “*pardon*”, etc. alone in expressing apologies. This finding corroborates the study made by Sebastian, Ponce and Alieto (2019) as they claim that Filipino utilized the illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) tokens or the explicit expression of apologies (EA). Similarly, this finding also confirms the study made by Robles, Bote and Flores (2020) as they claim that explicit expression of apologies is very popular among Filipino learners. Lastly, this also further coincides with the finding of Abu Darwish (2014) where he discovered that Jordanian people generally employ explicit expression of apologies.

More so, the second preference is the use of expression of apology plus acknowledgement of responsibility strategies which comprised of 22%. This means that the respondents tend to explicitly express apologies along with acknowledging that they are responsible to the offense. This finding coincides to the study conducted by Banikalef and Maros (2013) as they claim that

illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) or explicit expression of apologies and accepts responsibility strategies are popular among Jordanian students. Similarly, this study further supports the study made Banikalef, Maros, Aladdin and Al-natour (2015) as they claim that acknowledging responsibility was the most frequently used in the context of Jordan.

In addition, 10% of the data shows that the respondents tend to employ the expression of apology (EA) and the explanation or account of the situation (EAS) strategies. This means that they explicitly apologize while explaining their circumstances. This result corroborates the finding made by Altayari (2017) where it revealed that illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDS) or simply the expression of apologies (EA) plus explanation or account of the situation (EAS) and offer of repair (OR) strategies were the most frequent apology strategies used by Saudi speakers. This similarity is grounded on the fact that these two studies were conducted with Muslim participants. Furthermore, the strategy of providing an explanation to the circumstance substantiate the study conducted by Dela Rosa and Castro (2016) as they claim that Filipino TV host's apology is more self-justifying.

Apart from the interesting findings on the combinations of those strategies based on the taxonomy provided by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), the result discovered new strategies in realizing the speech act of apologies which are the

Action as a Form of Apology (AFA) and Non-Apology Strategies. The former strategy is committed by the respondents when they perform an action as a compensation or mitigation to the offense instead of uttering apologies such as the hypothetical scenario of a father who asked his child to wash a car, but he/she forgot the task which made the father angry. Now, the result found out that some of the respondents resort to cleaning the car instead of expressing apologies. This strategy is different from the “An Offer of Repair (OP)” strategy in a sense that OP has something to do with uttering (i.e. offering) something that would repair the offense such as by paying the damage item or anything that could replace an item that centered to the offense. Meanwhile, the second finding (i.e. non-apology strategies) is committed by the respondents when they did not express any apologies nor showing a remorse to the offense such as by ignoring, arguing or blaming the offended person or by remaining silence.

Furthermore, the result conforms to the three facets of speech act theorized by Austin in 1962. The utterance of apologies is the production of the speech act known as the locutionary act while the act performed in apologizing with the intention of showing remorse or responsibility to the offense makes the illocutionary act. Finally, the effect of the action realized by the apologizers to the offended person makes the perlocutionary act. Thus, the speech act of apologizing among Meranaw MSU College Students corroborates the notion that this type of

speech act is mainly composed of the three facets. More so, the findings also provide more elaboration on the notion that the speech act of apologizing falls on expressive type of speech act based on the theory of illocutionary classification provided by Searle (1969). This is an expressive speech act since the respondents utter apologies to express their remorse, responsibility and compensation to the offense that can save the face of the apologizer and the offended person.

Moreover, in saving the face of the apologizer and the offended person, the result shows that the use of explicitly expressing apologies is widely acceptable and pervasive among the Meranaw MSU College Students that implies a form of politeness strategy. This means that apologizer saves or repairs his/her face and the face of the offended person by explicitly uttering an expression of apology. Thus, this finding clearly justifies the theory of Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987) where saving face is a form of politeness which evidently reflect in realizing the speech act of apologizing.

Apology strategies employed by the participants towards different groups of addressees

a. Superior Status

The frequencies and percentages of the apology strategies employed by the respondents towards a person of superior status were presented and computed as reflected in Table 2.

Table 2

Apology strategies employed by the participants towards a person of superior status

APOLOGY STRATEGIES	f	%
EXPRESSION OF APOLOGY (EA)	55	26.8
EXPLANATION OR ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION (EAS)	0	0
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY (AR)	1	0.5
AN OFFER OF REPAIR(OR)	0	0
ACTION AS A FORM OF APOLOGY (AFA)	1	0.5
PROMISE OF FORBEARANCE (PF)	1	0.5
EA + EAS	20	9.8
EA + EAS + AR	11	5.4
EA + EAS + AR + OR	0	0
EA + EAS + AR + AFA	1	0.5
EA + EAS + AR + PF	0	0
EA + EAS + OR	1	0.5
EA + EAS + AFA	4	2
EA + EAS + PF	3	1.5
EA + AR	35	17.3
EA + AR + OR	4	2
EA + AR + AFA	7	3.4
EA + AR + PF	4	2
EA + OR	24	11.7
EA + AFA	7	3.4
EA + PF	11	5.4
EAS + AR	2	1
EAS + AR + OR	0	0
AR + AFA	2	1
EA + NON-APOLOGY STRATEGY	2	1
NON-APOLOGY STRATEGIES(i.e. do nothing, argue/blame the interlocutor)	9	4.4
TOTAL	205	100%

The percentage found in the table shows that the respondents generally prefer using explicit expression of apologies in realizing their remorse which comprised of 92% out of the 205 retrieved data. Of this dominant strategy, 26% of it implies

that the respondents employ expression of apology alone in realizing the speech act of apology. More so, the second preference is the use of expression of apology plus acknowledgement of responsibility strategies which comprised of 17%. This means that the respondents tend to explicitly express apologies along with acknowledging that they are responsible to the offense. Furthermore, 11% of the data shows that the respondents tend to employ the expression of apology (EA) plus an offer of repair (OR) strategies. With this dominant result, this shows that the respondents widely use the expression of apologies strategy in apologizing to a person of superior status.

b. Equal Status

The frequencies and percentages of the apology strategies employed by the respondents towards a person of equal status were presented and computed as reflected in Table 3.

Table 3

Apology strategies employed by the participants towards a person of superior status

APOLOGY STRATEGIES	f	%
EXPRESSION OF APOLOGY (EA)	64	31.2
EXPLANATION OR ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION (EAS)	0	0
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY (AR)	0	0
AN OFFER OF REPAIR(OR)	1	0.5
ACTION AS A FORM OF APOLOGY (AFA)	0	0
PROMISE OF FORBEARANCE (PF)	0	0
EA + EAS	20	9.8
EA + EAS + AR	5	2.4
EA + EAS + AR + OR	1	0.5
EA + EAS + AR + AFA	0	0
EA + EAS + AR + PF	1	0.5
EA + EAS + OR	4	2
EA + EAS + AFA	0	0
EA + EAS + PF	0	0
EA + AR	58	28.3
EA + AR + OR	23	11.2
EA + AR + AFA	1	0.5
EA + AR + PF	0	0
EA + OR	13	6.3
EA + AFA	1	0.5
EA + PF	3	1.5
EAS + AR	0	0
EAS + AR + OR	1	0.5
AR + AFA	0	0
EA + NON-APOLOGY STRATEGY	1	0.5
NON-APOLOGY STRATEGY (i.e. do nothing, argue/blame the interlocutor)	8	3.9
TOTAL	205	100%

The percentage found in the table shows that the respondents generally prefer using explicit expression of apologies in realizing their remorse which comprised of 95% out of the 205 retrieved data. Of this dominant strategy, 31% of it implies that the respondents employ expression of apology (EA) alone in realizing the

speech act of apology. More so, the second preference is the use of expression of apology (EA) plus acknowledgement of responsibility (AR) strategies which comprised of 28%. This means that the respondents tend to explicitly express apologies and acknowledge that they are responsible to the offense. Furthermore, 11% of the data shows that the respondents tend to employ the expression of apology (EA) plus acknowledgement of responsibility (AR) plus an offer of repair (OR) strategies. With this dominant result, this shows that the respondents widely use the explicit expression of apologies strategy in apologizing to a person of equal status.

c. Lower Status

The frequencies and percentages of the apology strategies employed by the respondents towards a person of lower status were presented and computed as reflected in Table 4.

Table 4

Apology strategies employed by the participants towards a person of lower status

APOLOGY STRATEGIES	f	%
EXPRESSION OF APOLOGY (EA)	98	47.8
EXPLANATION OR ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION (EAS)	0	0
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY (AR)	0	0
AN OFFER OF REPAIR(OR)	1	0.5
ACTION AS A FORM OF APOLOGY (AFA)	0	0
PROMISE OF FORBEARANCE (PF)	0	0
EA + EAS	23	11.2

EA + EAS + AR	6	2.9
EA + EAS + AR + OR	0	0
EA + EAS + AR + AFA	0	0
EA + EAS + AR + PF	0	0
EA + EAS + OR	1	0.5
EA + EAS + AFA	0	0
EA + EAS + PF	0	0
EA + AR	43	21
EA + AR + OR	5	2.4
EA + AR + AFA	0	0
EA + AR + PF	0	0
EA + OR	8	3.9
EA + AFA	0	0
EA + PF	2	1
EAS + AR	0	0
EAS + AR + OR	0	0
AR + AFA	0	0
EA + NON-APOLOGY STRATEGY	0	0
NON-APOLOGY STRATEGIES(i.e. do nothing, argue/blame the interlocutor)	18	8.8
TOTAL	205	100%

The percentage found in the table shows that the respondents generally prefer using explicit expression of apologies (EA) in realizing their remorse which comprised of 90% out of the 205 retrieved data. Of this dominant strategy, 47% of it implies that the respondents employ expression of apology (EA) alone in realizing the speech act of apology. More so, the second preference is the use of expression of apology plus acknowledgement of responsibility strategies which comprised of 21%. This means that the respondents tend to explicitly express apologies along with acknowledging that they are responsible to the offense. Furthermore, 11% of the data shows that the respondents tend to employ the

expression of apology (EA) plus explanation or account of the situation (EAS) strategies. With this dominant result, this shows that the respondents widely use the explicit expression of apologies strategy in apologizing to a person of lower status.

As evidently presented in the previous tables, the results show that the respondents generally employ the expression of apologies in performing the speech act of apology regardless of the social status where an offended person belong. This means that explicitly expressing apology is the most polite strategy that Meranaw students can resort when he/she offended a person of superior status, equal status, and lower status.

Moreover, other than explicitly expressing apologies and expressing apologies plus acknowledgement of responsibility strategies; the results show that in superior status, the respondents tend to express apologies (EA) and offer a repair (OR). Meanwhile in equal status, the respondents tend to express apologies (EA) along with acknowledging a responsibility (AR) and offering a repair (OR). Finally in lower status, the respondents tend to express apologies (EA) and explain the situation (EAS). Hence, this little difference is still dominated by the expression of apologies that may imply that social status does not influence the apology strategies of the Meranaw respondents. However, as regard this variable, this finding does not coincide with the study conducted by Banikalef and Maros

(2013) and Banikalef et. al. (2015) as they claim that social status affects apology strategies.

d. Friends

The frequencies and percentages of the apology strategies employed towards friends were presented and computed as reflected in Table 5.

Table 5

Apology strategies employed by the participants towards friends

APOLOGY STRATEGIES	f	%
EXPRESSION OF APOLOGY (EA)	69	33.7
EXPLANATION OR ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION (EAS)	0	0
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY (AR)	0	0
AN OFFER OF REPAIR(OR)	1	0.5
ACTION AS A FORM OF APOLOGY (AFA)	0	0
PROMISE OF FORBEARANCE (PF)	0	0
EA + EAS	24	11.7
EA + EAS + AR	7	3.4
EA + EAS + AR + OR	1	0.5
EA + EAS + AR + AFA	0	0
EA + EAS + AR + PF	1	0.5
EA + EAS + OR	4	2
EA + EAS + AFA	0	0
EA + EAS + PF	2	1
EA + AR	50	24.4
EA + AR + OR	6	2.9
EA + AR + AFA	0	0
EA + AR + PF	2	1
EA + OR	10	4.9
EA + AFA	1	0.5
EA + PF	9	4.4
EAS + AR	1	0.5
EAS + AR + OR	1	0.5

AR + AFA	0	0
EA + NON-APOLOGY STRATEGY	3	1.5
NON-APOLOGY STRATEGIES(i.e. do nothing, argue/blame the interlocutor)	13	6.3
TOTAL	205	100%

The percentage found in the table indicates that the respondents generally prefer using explicit expression of apologies in realizing their remorse which comprised of 90% out of the 205 retrieved data. Of this dominant strategy, 33% of it implies that the respondents employ expression of apology alone in realizing the speech act of apology. More so, the second preference is the use of expression of apology plus acknowledgement of responsibility strategies which comprised of 24%. This means that the respondents tend to explicitly express apologies and acknowledges that they are responsible to the offense. Furthermore, 11% of the data shows that the respondents tend to employ the expression of apology (EA) plus explanation or account of the situation (EAS) strategies. With this dominant result, this shows that the respondents widely use the explicit expression of apologies strategy in apologizing towards friends.

e. Strangers

The frequencies and percentages of the apology strategies employed towards strangers were presented and computed as reflected in Table 6.

Table 6

Apology strategies employed by the participants towards friends

APOLOGY STRATEGIES	f	%
EXPRESSION OF APOLOGY (EA)	91	44.4
EXPLANATION OR ACCOUNT OF THE SITUATION (EAS)	0	0
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY (AR)	0	0
AN OFFER OF REPAIR(OR)	0	0
ACTION AS A FORM OF APOLOGY (AFA)	0	0
PROMISE OF FORBEARANCE (PF)	0	0
EA + EAS	30	14.7
EA + EAS + AR	10	4.9
EA + EAS + AR + OR	0	0
EA + EAS + AR + AFA	0	0
EA + EAS + AR + PF	0	0
EA + EAS + OR	1	0.5
EA + EAS + AFA	2	1
EA + EAS + PF	1	0.5
EA + AR	46	22.4
EA + AR + OR	4	2
EA + AR + AFA	1	0.5
EA + AR + PF	1	0.5
EA + OR	4	2
EA + AFA	4	2
EA + PF	1	0.5
EAS + AR	0	0
EAS + AR + OR	0	0
AR + AFA	0	0
EA + NON-APOLOGY STRATEGY	0	0
NON-APOLOGY STRATEGIES(i.e. do nothing, argue/blame the interlocutor)	9	4.4
TOTAL	205	100%

The percentage found in the table indicates that the respondents generally prefer using explicit expression of apologies in realizing their remorse which comprised of 95% out of the 205 retrieved data. Of this dominant strategy, 44% of it implies that the respondents employ expression of apology alone in realizing the speech

act of apology. More so, the second preference is the use of expression of apology plus acknowledgement of responsibility strategies which comprised of 22%. This means that the respondents tend to explicitly express apologies along with acknowledging that they are responsible to the offense. Furthermore, 14% of the data shows that the respondents tend to employ the expression of apology (EA) plus explanation or account of the situation (EAS) strategies. With this dominant result, this shows that the respondents widely use the explicit expression of apologies strategy in apologizing towards strangers.

As clearly shown in the previous tables, the results imply that the respondents generally employ the expression of apologies (EA) in performing the speech act of apology regardless of the social distance where the apologizer and the offended person belong. This means that explicitly expressing apology is the most polite strategy that Meranaw students can resort when he/she offended a friend or a stranger. Moreover, this finding corroborates the study made Suszczyńska (1999) as it revealed a strong preference for Illocutionary Force Indicating devices (IFIDs) in American English. This means that regardless of the social distance, the respondents use the said strategy to maintain the relationship.

Conclusion

This study illustrates the patterns of the speech act of apology of the Meranaw College Students in the Mindanao State University-Main Campus. The results claim that the strong preference strategy employed by the respondents is the explicit

expression of apologies (EA). Moreover, the findings of this study shows that social status and social distance are not a determining factor in the apology strategies employed by the participants, as they were rather mostly similar in the participants' responses to the DCT items. This means that the strategies employed by the respondents are not conformed to the social status and social distance variables as there is no notable difference of strategy found.

Moreover, this study discovered several strategies that may be exclusive among the Meranaw people. These include the combinations of those strategies, action as form of apology (AFA), and non-apology strategies. The first two strategies are used by the respondents to show remorse, to provide remedy, and to recognize responsibility. Meanwhile, the last strategy appears to be culturally rooted in the *maratabat* or pride value of the Meranaw people. This means that some of the respondents do not recognize the face-want of the offended person as they do not take credit for regret and responsibility to the offense. However, this strategy is rarely employed by the respondents.

Furthermore, the concept of saving and maintaining the face of the apologizer and the offended person strongly appears to be the main reason in realizing the speech act of apology. On top of that, performing an apology also reflects in the cultural value of *maratabat* in the Meranaw society. Such act conveys that the *maratabat* of the offended person is being recognized, maintained

and compensated. Additionally, in a general sense, the respondents seem to acknowledge the universal notion of face in human society which is the need to maintain the face of the apologizer and of the offended person in any linguistic interaction.

Declaration of generative ai and ai-assisted technologies

During the creation of this work, the author(s) did not utilize any AI tools in the writing process.

About the Authors

Juhaid H. H. Abbas is a graduate of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching and Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies of the English Department of the Mindanao State University Main Campus in Marawi City, Philippines.

Binnor M. Abdul Samad is a graduate of Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies of the English Department at the Mindanao State University Main Campus in Marawi City, Philippines.

Mohammad Hussein M. Imam is a faculty member of the English Department at the Mindanao State University Main Campus in Marawi City, Philippines.

Annie Mae C. Berowa is a faculty member of the English Department at the Mindanao State University Main Campus in Marawi City, Philippines.

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