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# Intensification of Apology Strategies in Persian: A Politeness Perspective

Mohsen Shahrokhi\*

*English Department, Shahreza Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran*

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## Abstract

This paper is an endeavor to investigate whether apology supportive intensification is motivated by contextual variables in Persian. In this respect, the relevant apology speech acts were collected through the administration of a Discourse Completion Test consisting of situations which varied in terms of Social Dominance, Social Distance, and Severity of Offence. The elicited data was analyzed and codified according to a coding scheme developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The results indicated that participants' assessment of contextual variables motivated the strategy they used as apology supportive intensifications. Moreover, the study identified the use of culture-specific strategies as far as apology speech act supportive intensifications are concerned.

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*Keywords:* apology, supportive intensification, social dominance, social distance, severity of offence

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## 1. Introduction

An apology can be an attempt by the apologizer to compensate for an act that has caused an offense, threatening the recipient's face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Apologies fall under the expressive category, according to Searle's (1969) taxonomy, performed to indicate the psychological emotions of the speakers. Apologies as important verbal devices – which can be manifested also nonverbally – were subjected to definition attempts by researchers from

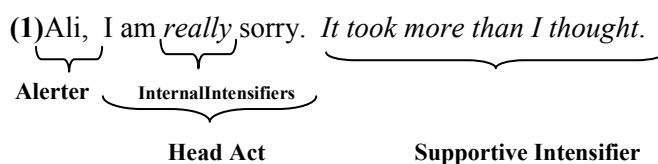
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\*Corresponding author's Tel.: +98 329 321 2510

*E-mail address:* shahrokhi@iaush.ac.ir

various perspectives. One of the most cited definitions of apology is that of Goffman's (1971) which is quoted in Bergeman and Kasper (1993, p. 82) as "remedial interchanges, remedial work serving to reestablish social harmony after a real or virtual offense". Olshtain (1989, pp. 156-7) defines an apology as "a speech act which intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially mal-affected by a violation". Explanation is the Greek meaning of apology, which is a strong apology strategy as Sami-Hou (2006) suggests. The definition presented by the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) for apology includes "a defense, a justification, and an excuse" by which one can infer the varieties in which apology strategies may be manifested.

In addition to the definitions provided in the literature for apology, there are components which usually make up apology speech acts. According to Blum-Kulka and House (1989) an apology can be realized through three main components namely Alerters, Head acts and Adjuncts. Alerters function as an initiator to alert the addressee's attention to the ensuing speech act. A Head act is the minimal unit through which the main apology is realized and can be also intensified internally. Adjuncts which follow the main apology strategy are what called by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) as Supportive Moves. Supportive Moves are realized when the speakers opt for strengthening the apology strategy in order to make it more appropriate with regard to the severity of the offence committed and with regard to power and distance relations between the interlocutors engaged in a situation. As such, the apology strategies may be intensified through two methods. The first method is to intensify the apology strategy internally within the syntactic structure of the utterance; while the second method is to support the apology strategy by repeating or employing another apology strategy outside the syntactic structure of the first apology strategy. This study refers to the strategies of the first method as apology internal intensifier and the strategies of the second method as supportive intensifiers. An example of apology speech act including the internal intensifier and supportive intensifiers could be as example (1).



Since apology attracted the attention of researchers as a popular topic, different classifications of this speech act have been proposed. Fraser (1980), for instance, classified apologies into two main groups, namely direct and indirect apologies. He further subdivided the direct apology strategies as

announcement of apology, stating the obligation to apologize, an offer for apologizing, and request for apology acceptance.

Fraser (1980) suggested five indirect apologies as well; his indirect apology strategies include expressing regret, requesting forgiveness, acknowledging responsibility, promising forbearance, and offering redness. Then, it was Olshtain and Cohen (1983) whose apology strategy classification formed a contributive classification. They suggested that apologies can be realized as an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), an expression of the speaker's responsibility for the offence, an explanation or account of the situation or of the cause which gave rise to the violation, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) later on, built on Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and presented a set of strategies for the performance of apologies. Their classification consisted of IFIDs, an explicit or implicit account of the cause of violation, taking on responsibility that they believed ranges from self-humbling to complete denial of the offense, making an offer, and promise of forbearance. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) classification was the basis for the investigation in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) in the analysis of apologies which will be elaborated in detail in the following section.

Generally speaking, speech acts in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory threaten both positive and negative face of the speaker and the addressee engaged in an interaction. Hence, request, suggestion, advice, and threats are classified as "face-threatening acts (FTA)" which jeopardize the negative face (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 65). Positive face of the speaker is threatened through the performance of such speech acts as apology and by accepting compliments as well, according to Politeness Theory.

The degree of the face-threat involved in any face-threatening act (FTA) is influenced by the degree of the following variables as stated by Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987): the social distance (D), the social dominance or power distance (P), and the severity of offence. The social distance between the interlocutors is an indication of how well the speaker and the hearer know one another. Social distance has a binary value of (+SD), where the interlocutors do not know one another well, and (-SD), where the interlocutors know one another well. The social dominance or power is the relative social dominance of one of the interlocutors on the other one; social dominance has a ternary value, namely (S>H) where the speaker dominates the hearer, (S=H) where the speaker and the hearer are equal, and (S<H) where the speaker is dominated by the hearer. The severity of the offence for which an apology is realized, is also used to estimate the degree of face work in a situation. The severity of the offence, as a context-internal variable, is evaluated as high or low across situations.

Hence, the face work (W) that should be done for any FTA can be estimated, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), by adding the value of

these variables, namely social distance between participants (D), power relation (P), and the risk (R) of face loss due to FTA. The risk of face loss relates to the severity of offence as far as apologies are concerned. Accordingly, Brown and Levinson's model for the estimation of the face work required for any FTA is formulated as:  $W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$ , where "the amount of work (W) one puts into being polite depends on the social distance (D) between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H), plus the power (P) of the hearer over the speaker, plus the risk (R) of hurting the other person" (Littlejohn and Foss, 2008, p. 126; Yabucchi, 2006, p. 327).

Based on the interlocutors' assessment of the context-internal (severity of offence) as well as context-external variables (social distance, social dominance), interlocutors can use a variety of strategies to perform an apology and to intensify the apology as well in order to minimize or soften the inherent face threat involved in an apology. This study addresses Persians' perception of the contextual variables when supportive intensification of an apology is the aim to be achieved.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants and Data*

The participants of this study were all Persian male native speakers, aged between 19 to 27, college and university educated. Since the influence of context-internal and context-external variables on the intensification strategies of apology speech acts were the primary concern of this study, the most appropriate data was the data in which the above-mentioned variables were controllable. Accordingly, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) consisting of 12 situations which were varied in terms of social distance, social dominance, and severity of offence was used to collect the relevant data. The DCT was adopted from Marquez-Reiter (2000) and a few modifications were made to suit it for Persian context. The DCT used was accompanied with a questionnaire through which the participants' general information such as age, sex, and education level was collected. The situations description is provided in the result section of the paper.

### *2.2. Coding Scheme*

The primary coding scheme used for the analysis of the data in this study is that of Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989). Meanwhile, new developments in studies conducted in Persian (e.g., Afghari, 2007) were employed for the analysis of the data, in addition to the new strategies that the researcher encountered within the course of the data analysis. Accordingly, the combination of a classic

coding scheme, and the new coding schemes resulted in the final coding scheme used for the analysis of the data as displayed in the following table.

**Table 1. Apology Supportive Intensifier Coding Scheme**

Category	Strategies and Examples
<i>Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)</i>	A. Expression of Regret. e.g., ... <i>Motoasefam</i> (I am sorry.) B. Offer of apology. e.g., ... <i>Ma?zerat mixaam</i> (I apologize.) C. Request for Forgiveness. e.g., ... <i>Bebaxshid</i> (Forgive me.)
<i>Taking on Responsibility</i>	A. Lack of intent. e.g., ... <i>Qasdi nadaashtam</i> (I didn't mean to). B. Justifying the hearer. e.g., ... <i>Haq ba shomaast</i> (You are right). C. Statement of the offence. e.g., ... <i>Ketabetun ro nayavordam</i> (I didn't bring your book). D. Expression of self deficiency. e.g., ... <i>Gij budam</i> (I was confused). E. Concern for the hearer. e.g., ... <i>Omidvaram be shoma sadameh nazade baasham</i> (I hope I didn't hurt you).
<i>Other Apology Strategies</i>	A. Explanation of Situation. e.g., <i>Motoasefam dir-shod. Reis az man xaast bemunam va meqdaari az kaar ro tamaam-konam.</i> (Sorry I'm late, the boss asked me to stay behind to finish some work.) B. Offer of Repair e.g., <i>Kaampiyouteret shekast vali negaraan nabaash yeki dige baraat migiam.</i> (Your computer got smashed but don't worry I'll get you another one.) C. Promise of Forbearance. e.g., ... <i>Qol-midam dobaare etefaaq-nayufteh.</i> (I promise it won't happen again.) D. Underestimating the Offence by Humor. e.g., ... <i>Xodaaro shokr fahmidi kaare man che-qadr saxteh.</i> (Thank God, you realized how hard my job is.)

### 3. Results

The results of the analysis are provided below, situation by situation, starting from the first apology situation (Apology 1) to the last apology situation (Apology 12). The result of every situation includes a description of situation, evaluation of context-internal and context-external variables, statistics of the strategies performed in every situation and an example of the most significant strategy used by the participants in the situation.

#### *Apology 1*

In the first situation where the participant realized an apology speech act, the speaker who is a university student has to apologize for ignorance as explained below.

**A1:** You are a university student. You have borrowed a book from your lecturer which you have promised to return today. When meeting your lecturer in the hallway you realize that you forgot to bring it along. What do you say him?

The speaker is dominated by the hearer (S<H), they do not know one another well (+SD), and the offence committed in this situation is low in severity.

The apology strategies in situation 1 were intensified through supportive intensifiers. The supportive intensifiers used in this situation are reported in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Situation 1 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI*	EOR	OA	RFF	ESD	SOF	LOI	EOS	OFR	POF	Total
Percent	8.2	1.6	1.6	6.6	1.6	52.5	1.6	11.5	13.1	1.6	100

\*NSI: No Supportive Intensifier; EOR: Expression of Regret; OA: Offer of Apology; RFF:

Request for Forgiveness; ESD: Expression of Self Deficiency; SOF: Statement of Offence;

LOI: Lack of Intent; EOS: Explanation of Situation; OFR: Offer of Repair; POF: Promise of Forbearance

The most frequent supportive intensifier is Statement of Offence, registering 52.5 percent of supportive intensifiers. An instance of Statement of Offence is ‘...I left your book at home...’ (...*ketaabetun ro to xune jaa gozaashtam...*) in example (2).

(2) Hello Professor, I left your book at home. If you need the book today I will fetch the book for you in an hour.

(*Salaam ostaad, man ketaabetun ro to xune jaagozaashtam. Age ketaab ru emrooz niaz daarid miram xune va taa yek saate dige baraatun miaremsh.*)

As displayed in Table 2 above, the second most frequent supportive intensifier is Offer of Repair as ‘...If you need the book today I will fetch the book for you in an hour’ (...*Age ketaab ru emrooz niaz daarid miram xune va taa yek saate dige baraatun miaremsh.*)

Some 11.5 percent of the supportive intensifiers are An Explanation of Situation and the strategy Request for Forgiveness registers some 6.6 percent of supportive intensifiers. The supportive intensifiers Expression of Regret, Offer of Apology, Expression of Self Deficiency, Lack of Intent, and Promise of Forbearance each one makes up 1.6 percent of supportive intensifiers.

Apology 2

This scenario depicts a situation where the speaker who is dominated by the hearer (S<H) has to apologize to his manager who knows the speaker well (-SD) for a blunder which is low in severity as explained below.

**A2:** After work, you and your manager from work, meet to chat over a coffee together. In the middle of the conversation you accidentally spill your coffee on his trousers. What do you say to him?

The strategies Statement of Offence, Lack of Intent, and Explanation of Situation each oneregistered some 1.6 percent of the apology strategies in this situation. As a result of qualitative analysis of the data, the study could come up with a new strategy that Persian participants used in this study. The strategy is believed to be new because it did not match any strategies reported in data analysis framework and because the researcher did not find any instance of this strategy reported in apology speech acts studies previously conducted. Through this new strategy the speaker underestimates the offence committed through humor. In other word, through giving a sense of humor in the situation, the speaker tries to make his fault not that important. The study termed the strategy *Underestimating the Offence by Humor* as ‘...thanks God it did not wet your trousers ...’ (...*xodaa ro shokr shalvaaret ro xis nakard...*) in example (3) below

**(3)** Ops, thanks God it did not wet your trousers. It is event and happens.  
*Ox,xodaa ro shokr shalvaaret ro xis nakard. Etefaaghe dige pishmiaad.*

Table3below displays the percentage of supportive intensifiers employed in situation 2. The most frequent supportive intensifier is Lack of Intent as ‘...I did not mean at all’ (...*aslan ghasdi nadaashtam*) registering some 21.3 percent.

**Table 3. Situation 2 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	RFF	ESD	LOI	CFH	OFR	UOH*	Total
Percent	19.7	16.4	9.8	4.9	6.6	21.3	6.6	9.8	4.9	100

\*UOH: Underestimating the Offence by Humor

The strategies Offer of Apology and Offer of Repair each one makes up 9.8 percent of the supportive intensifiers. Expression of Self Deficiency and Concern for Hearer each one constitutes 6.6 percent of strategies and the strategy Request for Forgiveness and Underestimating the Offence by Humor each one registers 4.9 percent.

### Apology 3

The speaker in this situation has a dominating relation (S>H) with the hearer and there is social distance between them (+SD). The offence in this situation is low in severity. Situation 3 depicts a scenario where the speaker is expected to apologize for a delay as follows.

**A3:** You are a secretary of a company for some time now. You had asked your new colleague to answer the telephone while you leave for a few minutes to attend to another urgent matter. Once back you realize that you had been gone for more than an hour and a half later. What do you say to him?

The variety of supportive intensifiers employed in this situation is reported in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Situation 3 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	RFF	CFH	SOF	LOI	EOS	OFR	Total
Percent	13.1	3.3	8.2	4.9	4.9	24.6	4.9	26.2	9.8	100

Most of apology strategies are intensified through Explanation of Situation, registering 26.2 percent, as in example (4).

(4) It was a heavy traffic jam. It caused me to be very very ashamed.  
*(Teraafike sangini bud. baaese shod ma xeili xeili sharmande beshim)*

The second frequent supportive intensifier is Statement of the Offence, registering 24.6 percent. From among all apology strategies realized in this situation some 9.8 percent were supported through Offer of Repair to intensify the main apology strategy.

Offer of Apology made up 8.2 percent of supportive intensifiers in this situation. The strategies Request for Forgiveness, Lack of Intent, and Concern for Hearer each one constituted 4.9 percent of supportive intensifiers and the fewest frequent supportive intensifier was Expression of Regret, registering 3.3 percent.

### Apology 4

The speaker in situation 4 asks his friend to have an enquiry regarding the address they are going to while there was no need to do so as explained below.



**A4:** After you had asked your friend to ask the pedestrian for directions of how to get to X street, you realized that there was actually no need to do so since you had a map in your pocket all the while. What do you say to him?

The interlocutors in this situation are friend, that is to say there is no social distance (-SD) between them. They are equal in terms of social power (S=H) and the severity of the offence committed is evaluated as low.

Table 5 indicates the variety of supportive intensifiers employed in this situation. More than 60 percent of the apology strategies performed in this situation was not supported through intensifiers. Some 16.4 percent of apologies were supported through Statement of Offence. Like Underestimating the Offence by Humor, the strategy Lack of Intent registered 6.6 percent as ‘...I did not mean to disturb you’ (...*Nemixaastam zahmat baraat dorostkonam*) in example (6) below.

**Table 5. Situation 4 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	ESD	SOF	LOI	EOS	UOH	Total
Percent	62.3	1.6	3.3	16.4	6.6	3.3	6.6	100

The participants pretended the offence committed in this situation were unimportant through the use of Underestimating the offence by Humor strategy in 16.4 percent of apologies performed in this situation. This strategy included such instances as example (5) below.

- (5) ‘Why did you ask the address while I had a map in my pocket?!’  
 (*Man ke ye naghshhe to jibam daashtam, Baraa chi Adreso Porsidi?!*)

Statistically speaking, the context-internal and context-external variables nominate the strategies Statement of Offence as the most suitable apology strategies in this situation. The strategy Statement of Offence registers 24.6 percent of apology strategies including ‘see, the map was in my pocket...’ (*Mibini, naghshhe tu jibam bud...*) in example (6) below.

- (6) See, the map was in my pocket. I did not mean to disturb you.  
 (*Mibini, naghshhe tu jibam bud. Nemixaastam zahmat baraat dorost konam*)

The strategies Expression of Self Deficiency and Explanation of Situation register each one 3.3 percent of supportive intensifiers and the fewest realized supportive intensifier is Expression of Regret, registering 1.6 percent.

### Apology 5

The speaker and hearer do not know one another well in this situation (+SD). They are neighbors who are equal in terms of social dominance (S=H). The speaker is expected to apologize for a high sever damage made to hearer’s car as follows.

**A5:** Your neighbor has agreed to help you move some things out of your apartment with his car. Once in his car you notice how clean and spotless the car is. While turning round a bend a bottle of oil which was amongst your belongings falls onto the back seat and its contents are spilt all over the seat. You both notice it. What do you say to him?

**Table 6. Situation 5 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	ESB*	RFF	ESD	SOF	JTH	EOS	OFR	Total
Percent	16.4	9.8	1.6	3.3	1.6	8.2	1.6	1.6	55.7	100

**ESB: Explicit Self Blame; JTH: Justifying the Hearer**

Table 6 shows in this situation the participants supported the main apology strategies through an Offer of Repair supportive intensifier, registering 55.7 percent. Since the damage made to the hearer’s car is amendable, the participants supported the main apology strategies in this situation by resorting to such restitutorial acts as ‘...I’ll buy a new cover for that seat’ (...*Man ye rokeshe no baraa on sandal mixaram*) in example (7) below.

(7) O, You should forgive me. I’ll buy a new cover for that seat.  
(*vai, bayad mano bebaxshi. Man ye rokeshe no baraa on sandal mixaram*)

The second frequent supportive intensifier is Expression of Regret as ‘I’m sorry’ (*motoasefam*) registering 9.8 percent. The strategy Statement of Offence is the third most frequent supportive intensifier, registering 8.2 percent. Request for Forgiveness makes up 3.3 percent of supportive intensifiers and the strategies Explicit self Blame, Justifying the Hearer, Expression of Self Deficiency, and Explanation of Situation each one registers 1.6 percent as the fewest frequently used supportive strategies.

### Apology 6

The speaker in situation 6 is dominated by hearer (S<H) who is the speaker's manager; however, they know one another very well (-SD). The speaker is expected to apologize to his manager for a high severe offence as follows.

**A6:** Having picked up your spouse from the airport with your manager's car, you meet with an accident on the way back to office which resulted in a broken headlight and a bent bumper. Once back at the office, you return the keys. What do you say to him?

According to Table 7, more than 80 percent of apologies were supported through realization of an intensifier.

**Table 7. Situation 6 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	JTH	ESD	SOF	EOS	OFR	Total
Percent	19.7	1.6	9.8	1.6	1.6	6.6	23	36.1	100

The most frequent supportive intensifiers is Offer of Repair as ‘...Let me have it repaired in the workshop before I return it’ (...*ejaze bedid taa mashin ro bebaram tamirgaah dorosesh konam ghabaz in ke beheton pas bedam*) in example (8).

- (8) Hi, coming back from the airport I had a small accident. Let me have it repaired in the workshop before I return it.  
(*salam, to raahe bazghasht ye tasaadof kochik rox daad, ejaze bedid taa mashin ro bebaram tamirgaah dorosesh konam ghablaz in ke beheton pas bedam.*)

Explanation of Situation strategy is used in 23 percent of apology strategies as a supportive intensifier. The third most frequent supportive intensifier is Offer of Apology followed by Statement of Offence registering 9.8 and 6.6 percent respectively. The strategies Expression of Regret, Justifying the Hearer and Expression of Self Deficiency each one constitutes 1.6 percent of supportive intensifiers.

### Apology 7

The speaker in situation 7 is dominating the hearer in terms of social power (S>H). Although they know one another well (-SD), however the offence committed due to the speaker's mismanagement is evaluated as high severe as explained below.

**A7:** According to your request, your colleague accepts to cancel his ticket for holidays. He stays to help you with an important project at work. Afterwards, the manager of the company asks you to stop a part of the project on which your colleague is working due to lack of fund. What do you tell your colleague?

According to Table 8, the most frequent supportive intensifier is Explanation of Situation, registering 21.3 percent.

**Table 8. Situation 7 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	CFH	SOF	LOI	EOS	OFR	UOH	Total
Percent	39.3	8.2	6.6	1.6	8.2	4.9	21.3	6.6	1.6	100

With regard to high percentage of Explanation of Situation as the main apology strategy, some 21.3 percent, the Persian participants' first choice shows the strategy Explanation of Situation as supportive intensifier can support the apology required in this situation best. The second frequently used supportive intensifier is Expression of Regret constituting 8.2 percent of supportive intensifiers. Like Offer of Apology the strategy Offer of Repair makes up 6.6 percent of supportive intensifiers as '...the company instead will reserve a ticket for you whenever you like' (...*sherkat bejaye in ye belit har moghe ke dosst dashte bashid baratun reserve mikone...*) in example (9).

- (9) 'We know you are not satisfied with current situation, but the company instead will reserve a ticket for you whenever you like'  
(*midunim ke shoma az vaziate mojud razi nisti, vali sherkat bejaye in ye belit harmoghe ke dosst dashte bashid baratun reserve mikone.*)

The strategy Lack of Intent registers 4.9 percent. The fewest supportive intensifiers are Concern for the Hearer and Underestimating the offence by Humor, registering each one 1.6 percent.

#### *Apology 8*

The speaker who is dominating the hearer (S>H) in situation 8 knows the hearer very well (-SD). He has made a low sever mistake as explained below.

**A8:** Your colleague comes to your office with the typed letters you asked him to type. When he gives them to you, you realize you have given him the wrong letter. What do you say to him?

The most frequently used apology strategy in this situation is Expression of Self Deficiency, registering 23 percent, as Table 9 indicates.

**Table 9. Situation 8 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	RFF	ESD	SOF	EOS	CFH	Total
Percent	55.7	6.6	1.6	19.7	8.2	3.3	1.6	100

The problem arose due to the speaker’s negligence in this situation; it is consequently the strategy Expression of Self Deficiency which can support an apology best as participants’ first choice reveals. An instance of Expression of Self Deficiency realized in this situation is included in example (10) below.

(10) ‘Wow’I gave you the wrong letters. What should I do with my careless mind?’

(*Vai, Namehaa ru eshte baah behet daadam.chi kaar konam baa in havaase part.*)

Table 9 shows that Expression of Self Deficiency is the most frequent supportive intensifier employed in this situation, registering 19.7 percent. This can support the idea presented above that when the speaker accepts that the offence committed is due to his negligence, he prefers to support his apology through the strategy Expression of Self Deficiency as the first supportive apology intensifier.

The strategy Statement of Offence registers 8.2 percent as in ‘...I gave you the wrong letters’ (...*Namehaa ru eshte baah behet daadam.*). The strategies Expression of Regret and Explanation of Situation each one respectively registers 6.6 and 3.3 percent. The fewest frequent supportive intensifiers are Request for Forgiveness and Concern for the Hearer, constituting each one 1.6 percent.

### *Apology 9*

Situation 9 is a scenario between two friends where there is neither social dominance (S=H) nor social distance (-SD) between the speaker and hearer. The offence committed, however, is highly severe as explained below.

**A9:** During your stay in your friend’s house in the countryside, you dropped black ink on a very expensive carpet and you could not get rid of it. At the end of the week, you go to his house to return the house keys. What do you say to him?

The supportive intensifiers employed in this situation are displayed in Table 10 below.

**Table 10. Situation 9 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	RFF	SOF	LOI	EOS	OFR	JTH	Total
Percent	24.6	4.9	4.9	1.6	16.4	1.6	11.5	32.8	1.6	100

The most frequent supportive intensifier is Offer of Repair, registering 32.8 percent. Accordingly, it seems when the offence will result in a damage to the hearer’s property, the participants prefer to support the apology realized through an Offer of Repair as (...*Maa har joor shomaa befarmaain jobraan farshetun ro ke ye kami johar rush rixt ro mikonim*) in the following example.

- (11) ‘My naughty kid spilt the ink while he was playing. We’d like to compensate for the carpet spoiled by ink as you say.’  
*(In bacheye sheitone maa vaghti daasht baazi mikard johar ro rixt. Maa har joor shomaa befarmaain jobraan farshetun ro ke ye kami johar rush rixt ro mikonim.)*

The second and third frequent supportive intensifiers are Statement of Offence and Explanation of Situation registering respectively 16.4 and 11.5 percent. The strategies Expression of Regret and Offer of Apology each one constitutes 4.9 percent. The fewest frequent supportive intensifiers employed are Request for Forgiveness, Lack of Intent, and Justifying Hearer each one making up 1.6 percent.

### Apology 10

The speaker and hearer are not dominating one another in situation10 (S=H), however they are stranger (+SD). The offence committed is evaluated as low severe because it is not intentional as explained below.

- A10:** A passenger has agreed to change seats with you so that you are able to sit next to your child on the bus. While changing seats you accidentally tread on the passenger’s toe. What do you say to him?

The Supportive Intensifiers employed in this situation are reported in Table 11 below.

**Table 11. Situation 10 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	RFF	ESD	SOF	LOI	EOS	OFR	CFH	UOH	Total
Percent	36.1	9.8	16.4	9.8	4.9	1.6	11.5	1.6	1.6	4.9	1.6	100

The most frequent supportive intensifier is Offer of Apology, registering 16.4 percent as ‘I apologize’ (*Ma?zerat mixaam*). The second frequent supportive intensifier is Lack of Intent, constituting 11.5 percent of supportive intensifiers as ‘... I did not mean to, sorry’ (*...Aslan havaasam nabud, bebaxshid*) in example (12).

- (12) ‘Did I hurt your toes? I did not mean to, sorry’  
(*Angoshtetun ro leh kardam? Aslan havaasam nabud, bebaxshid*)

The strategies Expression of Regret and Request for Forgiveness each one makes up 9.8 percent. Like Expression of Self Deficiency, the strategy Concern for Hearer registers 4.9 percent. The fewest frequent strategies are Statement of Offence, Underestimating the Offence by Humor, Explanation of Situation, and Offer of Repair making up each one 1.6 percent.

### Apology 11

In situation 11 the speaker is dominated by the hearer (S<H), there is social distance between them (+SD), and the offence committed is evaluated as high as explained below.

**A11:** Your recently appointed manager at work has lent you some money that would enable you to settle your bills. You had promised to return the money in a week. After three weeks, you go to his office to return the money. What do you say to him?

Explanation of Situation and Statement of Offence are the most frequent supportive intensifiers in this situation, making up each one 23 percent.

**Table 12. Situation 11 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	RFF	ESD	SOF	LOI	EOS	OFR	Total
Percent	26.2	1.6	3.3	4.9	4.9	23	3.3	23	9.8	100

Offer of Repair is used in 9.8 apology strategies to intensify the main apology. Like Expression of Self Deficiency, Request for Forgiveness registers 4.9 percent as ‘...you should really forgive me’ (*...Vaghean baayad bebaxshid*) in example (13).

- (13) ‘I did my best to return the money on time but I could not manage to. You should really forgive me’  
(*xeili sa?i kardam pool ro sare vaght biaaram vali nashod. Vaghean baayad bebaxshid*)

The strategies Lack of Intent and Offer of Apology each one constitutes 3.3 percent and the fewest frequent strategy is Expression of Regret, registering 1.6 percent.

### Apology 12

In the last apology situation, the speaker who is dominating the hearer (S>H) has to apologize for a damage made to the hearer property. There is social distance between the speaker and hearer (+SD) and the offence committed here is highly severe as explained below.

**A12:** You have been working for a company for some time now. A new trainee has lent you his brand new laptop for you to use for a while. Trying to answer the phone, you accidentally drop it on the floor and smash part of the screen. What do you say to him?

Table 13 shows that Offer of Repair is used in 47.5 percent of cases as supportive intensifier.

**Table 13. Situation 12 Apology Supportive Intensifiers Percent**

Strategy	NSI	EOR	OA	RFF	ESD	SOF	LOI	OFR	Total
Percent	27.9	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	8.2	47.5	100

The second frequent supportive intensifier is Lack of Intent as ‘...I did not want to break it on purpose’ (...*nemixaastam amdan beshkanamesh*) in example (14).

(14) ‘You are right if you get angry with me. But I did not want to break it on purpose’  
(*hagh daari age az dastam asabaani beshi. Vali nemixaastam amdan beshkanamesh...*)

The other supportive intensifiers including Expression of Regret, Offer of Apology, Request for Forgiveness, Expression of Self Deficiency, and Statement of Offence each one registers 3.3 percent.

## 4. Discussion

The data analyzed showed the variety of linguistic choice among Persian speakers as far as the intensification of apology speech acts is concerned. The following discussion includes the relation of context-internal and context-external variables with apology supportive intensifiers.

The analysis of the data revealed that the first two most frequent supportive intensifiers in the data collected from among Persian speakers are respectively



Offer of Repair and Statement of Offence, as displayed in Figure 1. The first two frequent supportive intensifiers are from among Taking on Responsibility category; Offer of Repair and Statement of Offence make up some 61.5 percent of all supportive intensifiers used by the participants. Lack of Intent, Expression of Self Deficiency, Concern for Hearer, and Justifying the Hearer which are from the category Taking on Responsibility register respectively some 7.54, 5.8, 2.32, and 0.5 percent. As such, the first linguistic choice of Persian participants is to take on the responsibly of the offence committed to support the apology strategy they realize to redress an offence. Explanation of Situation is used, then, in 14.9 percent of apology strategies as supportive intensifiers.

According to Figure 1 below, IFID strategies are employed in 20.5 percent of apology strategies as supportive intensifiers including Expression of Regret some 8.1 percent, Offer of Apology some 7.54 percent, and Request for Forgiveness some 4.8 percent.

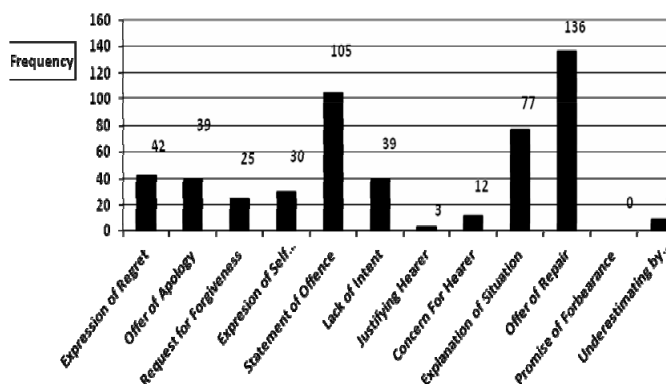


Figure 1. Apology Supportive Intensifiers Total Frequencies

The strategy Underestimating the Offence by Humor is used only in 1.7 percent of apology strategies as supportive intensifier, indicating that it is not a favorable strategy as supportive intensifier among the participants of the study. The participants of the study did not use the strategy Promise of Forbearance as supportive intensifier in any situation. Promise of Forbearance is, therefore, not suitable supportive intensifier among Persian participants of this study.

As for variety of supportive intensifiers across situations, Table 14 below reports the percents and frequencies of the supportive intensifiers realized in different situations. The frequencies and percents in bold style indicate the most frequent strategy in a situation. The frequencies and percents highlighted in gray indicate the highest frequency of a given strategy across all situations.

**Table 14. Frequency and Percent of Apology Supportive Intensifiers across Situations**

Situation	Strategy	Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)			Taking On Responsibility (TOR)					Other Strategies			Total	
		EOR	AOA	RFF	ESD	LOI	JTH	CFH	STO	UOH	AES	AOR		POF
1	No	1	1	4	1	1	0	0	32	0	7	8	1	56
	%	1.6	1.6	6.6	1.6	1.6	0	0	52.5	0	11.5	13.1	1.6	
2	No	10	6	3	4	13	0	4	0	3	0	6	0	49
	%	16.4	9.8	4.9	6.6	21.3	0	6.6	0	4.9	0	9.8	0	
3	No	2	5	3	0	3	0	3	15	0	16	6	0	53
	%	3.3	8.2	4.9	0	4.9	0	4.9	24.6	0	26.2	9.8	0	
4	No	1	0	0	2	4	0	0	10	4	2	0	0	23
	%	1.6	0	0	3.3	6.5	0	0	16.4	6.5	3.3	0	0	
5	No	6	0	2	2	0	1	0	5	0	1	34	0	56
	%	9.8	0	3.3	3.3	0	1.6	0	8.2	0	1.6	55.7	0	
6	No	1	6	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	14	22	0	49
	%	1.6	9.8	0	1.6	0	1.6	0	6.5	0	23	36.1	0	
7	No	5	4	0	0	3	0	1	5	1	13	4	0	36
	%	8.2	6.6	0	0	4.9	0	1.6	8.2	1.6	21.3	6.6	0	
8	No	4	0	1	12	0	0	1	5	0	2	0	0	25
	%	6.6	0	1.6	19.7	0	0	1.6	8.2	0	3.3	0	0	
9	No	3	3	1	0	1	1	0	10	0	7	20	0	46
	%	3.3	3.3	1.6	0	1.6	1.6	0	16.4	0	11.5	32.8	0	
10	No	6	10	6	3	7	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	38
	%	9.8	16.4	9.8	4.9	11.5	0	4.9	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	0	
11	No	1	2	3	3	2	0	0	14	0	14	6	0	45
	%	1.6	3.3	4.9	4.9	3.3	0	0	23	0	23	9.8	0	
12	No	2	2	2	2	5	0	0	2	0	0	29	0	55
	%	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	8.2	0	0	3.3	0	0	47.5	0	

**EOR: Expression of Regret; AOA: An Offer of Apology; RFF: Request for Forgiveness; ESD: Expression of Self Deficiency; LOI: Lack of Intent; JTH: Justifying the Hearer; CFH: Concern for Hearer; STO: Statement of Offence; UOH: Underestimating the Offence by Humor; AES: An Explanation of Situation; AOR: An Offer of Repair; POF: Promise of Forbearance**

Situations 1 and 5 register the most frequent realizations of supportive intensifiers, that is each one 56 cases. In situations 1 the speaker is dominated by the hearer (S<H), however in situation 5 the speaker and the hearer are both equal in terms of social dominance (S=H). The offence committed in situation 1 is evaluated as low, however in situation 5 the offence is evaluated as high. The speaker and hearer do not know one another (+SD) both in situation 1 and

5. Social distance (+SD), consequently, is the common variable between the two situations where the most frequent realization of supportive intensifier is registered.

Expression of Regret registers the most frequent realization in situation 2. The most frequent realizations of the strategies Offer of Apology and Request for Forgiveness is reported for situation 10. The context-internal variables, namely social distance and social dominance in situations 2 and 10 are different; that is to say the speaker is dominated by hearer ( $S < H$ ) and there is no social distance (-SD) between the interlocutors in situation 2 and in situation 10 the speaker and the hearer are not dominating one another ( $S = H$ ) and there is social distance (+SD) between the interlocutors. However, the offence committed is evaluated as low in both situation 2 and situation 10. As such, the most frequent realization of IFID strategies as supportive intensifier across situations is reported where the severity of offence is low.

Situation 1, where the speaker is dominated by the Hearer ( $S < H$ ), the interlocutors do not know one another well (+SD), and severity of the offence is low, includes the most frequent realization of Statement of Offence as supportive intensifier. In situation 2, as explained above, the speaker is dominated by hearer ( $S < H$ ) and there is no social distance (-SD) between the interlocutors; in situation 2 where the severity of offence is low the most frequent realizations of the strategies Lack of Intent and Concern for Hearer as supportive intensifier are reported. The strategy Expression of Self Deficiency is registered most frequently in situation 8 where the speaker has a dominating ( $S > H$ ) and close (-SD) relation with the hearer and the offence committed is low in severity. The strategy Justifying Hearer has few instances in situations 5, 6, and 9 as supportive intensifier. Except for Justifying Hearer, most of the strategies from the category Taking on Responsibility, namely Statement of Offence, Lack of Intent, Concern for Hearer, and Expression of Self Deficiency register the most frequent realizations in situations where severity of the offence committed is low as in situations, 1, 2, and 8.

Underestimating Offence by Humor is most frequently used as supportive intensifier in situation 4. The equal status of interlocutors ( $S = H$ ), the lack social distance (-SD) between the interlocutors, and the low severity of the offence in situation 4 nominates it as the most suitable situation where an apology strategy can be supported by humor as supportive intensifier.

In situation 3, where the speaker is expected to apologize for delay while his colleague has been covering for him, the most frequent realization of Explanation of Situation is reported. Explaining the reason which could have given rise to the delay can be a suitable supportive intensifier for the apology strategies realized in this situation.

According to Table 14 above, the strategy Offer of Repair has been used as the most frequent supportive intensifiers in situations 5, 6, 9, and 12. Regarding the context-internal and -external variables in situations 5, 6, 9, and 12, all the

possible statuses of context-internal variable, namely (S=H) in situations 5 and 9, (S>H) in situation 12, (S<H) in situation 6, (-SD) in situations 5, 6, and 9, and (+SD) in situation 12, can be observed. However, the only common variable in situations where Offer of Repair has been employed by the participants of the study as the most frequent supportive intensifier is the high severity of the offence committed.

## 5. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this study was to provide an account of the apology supportive intensifications realized in Persian based on the participants' assessment of the context-internal and context-external variables. The results indicated that some of the universal strategies of apology were used for the intensification of apologies in Persian; this supported the claim by Brown and Levinson (1987) that there were universal strategies for the realization of apologies (e.g., Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) and their intensifications. Moreover, the results implicated that context-internal and context-external variables motivated the realization patterns of apology supportive intensifications in general. As the interlocutors' assessments of the context-internal and context-external variables interacted with the strategies the interlocutors chose for the intensifications of apologies.

The findings also indicated the existence of culture-specific apology strategies, as *Underestimating the Offence by Humor*, used as a supportive intensification of apologies in Persian; this highlighted the significance of cultural norms and rules in any theory concerning with the realization of apology speech acts. The communication failures and misunderstandings that may happen cross-culturally due to culture-specific strategies for the realization of speech acts can be minimized in case culture-specific strategies receive further attention and investigation in both Persian and other languages. As for Persian, this type of research could be “an approximation which provides us with insight into Persian ... politeness strategies” (Shahrokhi and Jariah, 2011, p.30). Therefore, the investigation and revelation of culture specific strategies of speech acts, as conducted preliminarily in this study, can contribute to the formation of a more comprehensive theory of cross-cultural speech acts realizations.

Moreover, since the participants of the study were all selected from male native speakers of Persian, the study also paves the way for conducting the same research on female native speakers of Persian to see whether gender differentiates the choice of apology intensifications with regard to contextual variables.

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