Journal of Language Research
ZABANPAZHUHI

Journal of Language Research, *Alzahra University*
Vol. 16, No. 53, Winter 2025, pp.69-96
Research Article

Speakers' choice of apology strategies in a discourse completion task: A study of Turkish speakers in Tabriz

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Received: 2024/08/28 Accepted: 2024/11/04

Abstract

This study investigates the use of apologizing strategies by speakers of Azerbaijani Turkish in Iran. One hundred and twenty (60 male and 60 female) randomly selected speakers of Azerbaijani Turkish from Tabriz participated in a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and returned 2400 apology speech acts. The DCT included 20 scenarios representing 10 discourse situations. The acts were analyzed based on the categorization suggested by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), which included Illocutionary Force Indicating Device, Taking on responsibility, Explanation, Offer of repair, Promise of forbearance, Concern for hearer, and Nonverbal strategies. The findings indicated that the highly preferred apology strategies among the participants are explanation and offer of repaire. Moreover, there was a statistically significant association between the independent variables (the participants' age, gender, and level of education) and the choice of apology strategies. However, such an association was only significant for some discourse situations; e.g., in interaction with relatives that are in an equal status with the participant and in an adult-child interaction where the participant has a superior status.

Keywords: Discourse Completion Test, Tabriz, Azerbaijani Turkish, apology, speech acts

How to Cite:
Fereidoni, J; Kheiri, K; Tadayyon-Chahartagh, N (2025), Speakers' choice of apology strategies in a discourse completion task: A study of Turkish speakers in Tabriz, *Journal of Language Research*, 16 (53), 69-96.

https://doi.org/10.22051/jlr.2024.48121.2479 homepage: https://zabanpazhuhi.alzahra.ac.ir

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1. Introduction

Apologies typically arise when a social norm is breached due to a fault or offense, prompting the offender to address and rectify the resulting harm. An apology is linguistically manifested through what is termed an apology speech act. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) propose that this speech act can take two fundamental forms: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) and the apology speech act set. In the case of IFIDs, expressions like 'sorry' or 'excuse me' serve as commonly used, language-specific devices to pacify the interlocutor. Each language possesses its own scale of conventionality for IFIDs. Alternatively, an apology can be conveyed through expressions that explain the cause of the fault, the speaker taking responsibility for the offense, expressing a willingness to compensate, or promising that the action will not recur (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, pp. 206-207).

One pivotal study in the exploration of apology strategies is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP), conducted by a collaborative team of researchers from diverse countries. This extensive project encompassed various studies investigating request and apology strategies in five languages: English, German, Hebrew, Danish, and French. Noteworthy contributions from this project are documented in works such as Kasper et al. (1989). The CCSARP laid the foundation for numerous subsequent studies on languages worldwide. As will be discussed in the following lines, these studies indicated that a speakers' decision to apologize can be affected by social, pragmatic, and cultural factors such as degree of seriousness of the offence, social distance, the relationship between the participants, and cultural values. The correlation of these factors with the preferred speech act can establish their impact on the choice of the strategy (Holmes, 1989). For instance, people are more likely to use intense apology strategies when the committed offense is very serious. The same applies when the offended is of higher status than the offender (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). Hodeib (2019) showed IFIDs were predominantly used when the offended party was older or had higher social status, while repairs were favored in situations involving physical or emotional damage. Additionally, Jebahi (2011) showed that Tunisian university students

preferred to use remorse where the offended is their close friend, older than them, or has the power to affect their future. In contrast, Muhammed (2006) revealed that Sudanese students apologized more frequently in situations of equal status or less severity.

Cultural and social factors such as age, gender, and social status further influence the choice of apology strategy. For example, research by Jebahi (2011) on Tunisian adults indicated a reluctance to apologize to children in most cases, with the primary strategy being the offer of repair, although some adults preferred denial of responsibility. Holmes's (1989) study on sex differences in apology strategies in New Zealand English indicated that women both apologize and are apologied to more than men. Moreover, he found that although both genders used the same apology strategies, the reason enforcing the apology was different for the two groups. For instance, women mostly apologized when they violated the other person's rights; while men mostly apologized when damaging someone's posessions. Moreover, Shahrokhi and Jan (2012) showed that Persian male speakers tended to use IFIDs and taking responsibility alighning with the findings of Márquez Reiter (2000) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). Zandi and Amani (2016) in their study on apology strategies in *Lori-e Bakhtiyari* showed that women were more ready to accept their fault and apologize. Besides, most of them chose the *explanation* strategy to give a reason for their action; which means they were more clear and straight in apologizing. However, male participants tried to postpone apologizing or put the blame on someone else. On the other hand, Fraser (1981) found no significant difference between male and female participants' apologies. This was confirmed by Harb (2015) who, in her study on the role of gender in the apology strategies employed by native speakers of Arabic, found no statistically significant difference between male and female participants in the choice of apology strategies. Similarly, Zandi et al. (2017), found that both male and female participants use the same strategies for apologizing; however, the frequency of use for each strategy was different among the two gender groups. These are in line with findings of Muhammed (2006) on Sudanese learners of English.

Understanding the diverse forms of apology speech acts, as explored in seminal studies like the CCSARP, lays the groundwork for our investigation into the specific apology strategies employed in Azerbaijani Turkish. While there have been some studies on speech acts in Azerbaijani Turkish, such as as Tabar and Malek's (2013) work on requests and Tabatabaei, Gencer, Eldem, and Bakhtiarvand's (2018) study on apologizing strategies among Turkish learners of English, to the best of our knowledge, no previous study has addressed the speech act of apology in Azerbaijani Turkish. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the strategies used by people in Tabriz for apologizing.

Azerbaijani Turkish (or Azerbaijani or Azeri) belongs to the Oghuz branch of Turkic languages (Brown & Ogilvie, 2010; Heiat, 2001). This variety of Turkish is primarily spoken in the country of Azerbaijan and different regions of Iran, including East and West Azerbaijans, Zanjan, Ardabil, Qazvin, Hamadan, etc. The Turkish spoken in Iran is sometimes referred to as Iranian Turkish. Tabriz, the capital city of East Azerbaijan province located in the northwest of Iran, is predominantly a speaker of Azerbaijani Turkish. However, most of the literate population can also converse in Farsi, the country's only official language.

The present paper seeks to discern the patterns employed by participants to apologize in various social contexts when offering apologies. Additionally, we will investigate the potential impact of social factors, i.e., age, gender, and level of education on these apology patterns. More specifically, our research questions include:

1. What verbal apology strategies are employed in various discourse situations?
2. How men and women differ in their selection of apology strategies?
3. How do age groups differ in their choice of apology strategies?
4. How does the participants' level of education influence their selection of apology strategies in each context?

This paper is organized as follows: the next section provides a detailed description of the research methodology. Subsequently, the findings will be presented, and, finally, the last section concludes the research, discussing the implications of the findings for future research.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

One hundred and twenty native speakers of Azernaijanian Turkish (60 males and 60 females) participated in this study. All the participants lived in Tabriz at the time of study and most of them could speak Farsi as the official language of the country. The participants were categorized based on their age (young [25-40], and elderly [40-90]), gender (male and female), and education (with and without academic education).

2.2 Tools

The data were collected using a modified version of Discourse Completion Test (DCT) (Blum-Kulka, 1982). The DCT is widely used for collecting data on speech acts as it allows researchers to elicit standardized responses in specifi sociolinguistic cotexts (Mackey & Gass, 2021). The test involved situations describing a socially differentiated context, followed by a blank space to be filled out by the participants (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Mackey & Gass, 2021). The DCT was modified based on 10 discourse situations likely to be encountered by the participants, with each situation offering two contexts. The questionnaire included 20 situation descriptions.

Participants identified themselves with the person committing offenses in the situations, choosing their normal reaction from among the options available to them. The questionnair also included a section for gathering demographic information of the informants including their age, gender, occupation, education, and mother language.

2.2.1 Construct validity of the DCT

To ensure the construct validity of the DCT in this study, we followed several steps. The DCT enarios were adapted from established DCT formats (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Mackey & Gass, 2021) to reflect everyday apology situations specific to Tabrizi Turkish. This adaptation process involved selecting 10 realistic discourse situations based on focus groups with native speakers. The situations were validated by three experts in sociolinguistics and

cross-cultural pragmatics to ensure they reflected naturalistic interactions within the Tabrizi Turkish-speaking community.

Moreover, a pilot study was conducted with a small sample of native Tabrizi Turkish speakers (N=) to test the DCT items. Feedback from participants regarding the clarilty, appropriateness, and reliability of the scenarios was used to refine the DCT. This step was crucial in ensuting that the elicited responses represented naturalistic use of apology strategies in the target community.

To control potential for extraneous variables, the DCT also included a section to gather participants' demographic information (e.g., age, gender, occupation, education, and mother tongue). This allowed us to analyze responses according to relevant social factors that could influence apology behavior in Tabrizi Turkish.

2.3 Data collection procedure

After making sure of the situations and the questionnaire, the authors collected the data through fieldwork. Participants read each situation, imagined themselves in those situations, and selected the option that best suited each scenario. Oral instructions were in Turkish, while written descriptions were in Farsi. Options provided for participants were in Azerbaijani Turkish, written in a modified version of the Arabic alphabet commonly used among Turks in Iran. All the participates read and answered the questions on their own, except for the illiterate participants for whom the descriptions were read aloud by the researcher.

Two contextual variables, social distance (SD) and power (P), were considered. These variables were proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and define the relationship between the interlocutors. Social distance shows the degree of familiarity of the interlocutors. Power, on the other hand, indicates the degree of authority and the ability to influence someone (Ogiermann, 2018). The social distance between the interlocutors in this study were defined as stranger, relative, and friend. Besides, we embedded three power relationships in the situations: equal status, speaker dominance, and hearer dominance (Table 1).

Table 1.

Summary of situations described in DCT

	Social distance	Power relationship	Items in DCT
Situation 1: the speaker attempts to apologize for being late to an important job meeting with a high-status person.	Interviewr-interviewee	Hearer dominance	1 and 13
Situation 2: the speaker tries to apologize to their professor for not finishing a project on time.	Student-professor	Hearer dominance	2 and 18
Situation 3: the speaker forgot to express condolences for the death of a friend's close relatives.	Friends	Equal status	3 and 17
Situation 4: the speaker fails to answer a friend's call.	Friends	Equal status	4 and 11
Situation 5: the speaker bumps into an older person and causes their things to fall on the ground.	strangers	Hearer dominance	5 and 12
Situation 6: the speaker failed to visit a relative when they were sick.	Relatives	Equal status	6 and 16
Situation 7: the speaker failed to help their classmates.	Friends	Equal status	7 and 19
Situation 8: the speaker walks over someone's foot while getting off a bus	Strangers	Equal status	8 and 14
Situation 9: the speaker forgets to participate in their friends' party.	Friends	Equal status	9 and 20
Situation 10: the speaker gets angry at their neighbor's children because of a misunderstanding.	Adult-child	Speaker dominance	10 and 15

To analyze the relationship between independent variables (age, gender, education) and the choice of apology strategies, the Pearson chi-square test was performed.

2.4 Analysis of the data

The data obtained from the DCT were analyzed using the coding scheme provided by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), and Blum-Kulka et al.

(1989). The coding scheme offers dimensions for analyzing each response individually. The apology strategies and options available for informants in the present research are provided in the following sub-section.

2.4.1 Apology strategies

Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID): an explicit and routin device for the direct expression of apology (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). According to Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) each language has its own set of IFIDs, which can be put on a scale of conventionality. Some of the phrases used for the direct expression of apology in Tabriz are as follows:

1. /yzr istiɾæm/ (I apologize)
2. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn/(forgive me/I'm sorry)
3. /ɡyzæʃt elæjɯn/(forgive me)
4. /mæziɾæt istiɾæm/ (I beg your pardon)

Taking on responsibility (AR): using this strategy, the speaker accepts their fault and tries to placate their interlocutor by apologizing. Examples:

1. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn, biliɾæm ki be væxtæ qɑlmɑmɑlɯjdɯm/ (I'm sorry, I know that I was not supposed to be late).
2. /ɡyzæʃt elæjɯn, xɑtɑ mændædɯ/ (Forgive me, the fault is mine).
3. /søzym joxdur. hɑq sizɯnændɯ/ (I have nothing to say. You're right).
4. /mæni bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. bilmiɾæm næ dejæm/ (I'm sorry, I don't know what to say).
5. /mæni bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. mæn t͡søx diqqæt ejlæmælijdim/ (I'm sorry, I had to be more careful).

Explanation: This strategy is used when the speaker wants to diminish their guilt or justify their fault by attributing their action to an external cause. This strategy is demonstrated in the sentences below:

1. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. tɑksi joxidi; onɑ gøræ bevæxtɑ qɑldɯm/ (I'm sorry, I was waiting for a taxi).
2. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. ɑnɑmɯn mærizliɣinæ gøræ vɑxtɯndɑ qʊrtɑrɑmmɑdɯm/ (I'm sorry, I couln't finish on time because of my

mother's sickness).

3. /yzr istiræm. mütəʔæssifɑnæ mænim xæbærim joxidi/ (I apologize. Unfortunately, I didn't know).
4. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. gɯʃinin sæsi ɑz idi, eʃitmæmiʃæm/ (I'm sorry, I couln't hear the mobile's ring tone).
5. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. tælæsirdim, hævɑsɯm olmɑdɯ/ (I'm sorry, I was in a hurry and I didn't notice.
6. /æzizim bɣɯʃlæ. fikr elædɯm sæn kæsɯbsən, hirslændim/ (I'm sorry dear. I thought you tore it and I got mad).

Offer of repair: this strategy is employed to mitigate bad effects of a fault by compensating for the damage or trouble. The examples below demonstrate the use of this strategy in context:

1. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. iʃimizi bɑʃlijɑx ki bundɑn ɑrtɯq vɑxtɯnɯzɯ ɑlmijim/ (I'm sorry. Let's start our work …)
2. /yzr istiræm. tezliknæn jɑzarɑm/ (I beg your pardon. I'll write for you soon).
3. /gøræn læhzæ tez zæŋg vurɑrɑm/ (I'll call as soon as I saw it).
4. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn, kømæklik ælimdæn gælær/? (I'm sorry, can I help?)

Promise of forbearance: this strategy is used to ensure that the fault will not be repeated. The examples below illustrate the use of this strategy in context.

1. /bæɣɯʃlæjɯn. qol veriræm dɑ tikrɑr elæmijæm/ (I'm sorry. I promise that I won't do it again).
2. /dɑhɑ tikrɑr olmɑjɑdʒ͡ɑx/ (it won't happen again).

There are also devices to intensify apology. These devices can be used alone or in combination with other strategies, and they may include the use of adverbials (e.g., very), repetition (e.g., 'I'm very, very sorry'), and expressing concern for the hearer (e.g., 'are you alright?'.

Concern for hearer: this strategy shows that the speaker cares for the hearer.

1. /mæziræt istiræm. nɑrɑhɑtsɯz/? (I beg your pardon. Are you sad?)
2. /jɑxtʃ͡ɯsɯz/? (Are you alright?)

3. /lytfæn ælimnæn nɑrɑhɑt olmɑ/ (Please don't be mad at me.)

Nonverbal strategies: the apology is expressed nonverbally by showing emotions, hugging, kissing, and hand-shaking.

1. /onu gudʒ͡ɑxlɑjɯb hæmdærdi elæræm bilæsinæn/ (I'll express my sympathy by giving them a hug).
2. /ællærindən tutub mæziɾætxɑhi elæræm/ (I'll take their hands and apologize).
3. /mæziɾætxɑhi ytʂ͡yn bilæsɯnɯ gudʒ͡ɑxlɑjɯb øpæræm/ (I'll give them a hug and apologize).

4. Results

A descriptive analysis of the data showed thatparticipants, in general, preferred apology strategies as follows: explanation (38.5%), repair (27.3%), taking responsibility (15.9%), IFID (8.2%) concern for the hearer (6%), forbearance (2.6%) and nonverbal strategies (1.7%). It's noteworthy that the results of Pearson's chi-square test indicated statistically significant relationships between the use of apology strategies and participants' age ($X^2(6, N = 2400) = 64.27$, $p = .00$), gender ($X^2(6, N = 2400) = 51.13$, $p = .00$), and education level ($X^2(6, N = 2400) = 36.52$, $p = .00$).

Table 2 presents a cross-tabulation of the frequency of apologizing strategies concerning age, gender, and education groups. According to this table, "explanation, repair, and taking responsibility" were the most preferred strategies for both young and elderly groups. Notably, the non-verbal strategy (e.g., giving a hug) was exclusively chosen by the young participants. Male and female participants more frequently opted for explanation, repair, taking responsibility, and IFID strategies, with the most significant difference observed in the frequency of the non-verbal strategy, chosen in 40 cases by males but not at all by females. Table 2 also indicates that both highly educated and low education level groups preferred giving an explanation, offering repair, and taking reponsibility to apologize for their faults. However, for lower-educated participants, forbearance followed concern for the hearer and non-verbal strategies. In contrast, for the higher-educated group, the non-verbal strategy was the least chosen.

Table 2.

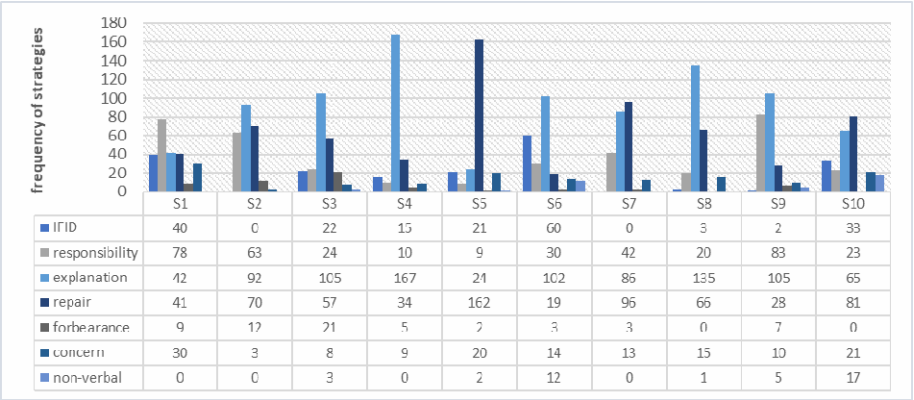
The cross-tabulation of the frequency of apologizing strategies and age, gender, and education groups

		age		gender		education	
		young	old	male	female	low	high
strategy	IFID	82	114	110	86	85	111
	responsibility	181	201	184	198	199	183
	explanation	436	487	449	474	466	457
	repair	371	283	302	352	327	327
	forbearance	29	33	36	26	31	31
	concern	61	82	79	64	56	87
	non-verbal	40	0	40	0	36	4
Total		1200	1200	1200	1200	1200	1200

Additionally, a statistically significant relationship was found between the choice of strategies and discourse situations $X^2(54, N = 2400) = 948$, $p = .00$. Figure (2) shows the frequency of strategies used in each discourse situation, providing valuable insights into participants' preferences and contextual variations.

Figure 5

frequency of the preferred strategies used in each discourse situation



In what follows, we will examine in detail the pattern employed in each

discourse situation.

Situation 1

In Situation 1, where the speaker aims to apologize for being late to an important job meeting with a higher-status person, respondents predominantly chose to take responsibility for their actions (32.5%), explain the reason (17.5%), offer repair (17.1%), and express their apology directly (16.7%). Notably, non-verbal strategies were not selected at all. None of the dependent variables showed a statistically significant relationship with the apology strategies chosen for the first situation (age: X^2 (5, N = 240) = 9.61 , p = 0.08 .; gender: X^2 (, N = 240) = 1.75 , p = .88; education: X^2 (5, N = 240) = 0.43, p = .99).

Table 3.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 1 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	H	L
IFIDs	21	19	18	22	21	19
responsibility	39	39	40	38	39	39
explanation	20	22	15	27	21	21
repair	21	20	28	13	19	22
forbearance	6	3	5	4	5	4
concern	13	17	14	16	15	15
non-verbal	0	0	0	0	0	0

Our data revealed that both male and female respondents prefer using a combination of apology strategies. The most frequent mixture was IFIDs + taking responsibility, with 30% of females and 32% of males opting for this combination. Additionally, 19% of females and 16% of males chose IFIDs alone. In this situation, female participants favored taking responsibility (30%), offering repair (20%), using IFIDs (19%), and providing an explanation (17%) as their preferred apology strategies. Similarly, male participants also preferred taking responsibility (32%), followed by giving an explanation (19%), offering

repair (16%), using IFIDs (16%), and expressing concern for the hearer (15%). Promises of forbearance and using non-verbal strategies were the least preferred options for both groups.

A comparison of the two age groups indicated that both young and elderly participants preferred taking responsibility for being late to the appointment (31% and 30%, respectively). For young participants, the next favorite strategies included offering repair (23%), using IFIDs (16%), explanation, and concern for the hearer (both 13%). Promise of forbearance (4%) and non-verbal strategies (0%) were the least preferred strategies for the younger generation in this situation. In contrast, the elderly chose to explain the reason for their lateness (24%), apologize using IFIDs (18%), offer repair (13%), and express concern for the hearer (11%). Again, promises of forbearance and non-verbal strategies were less preferred (4% and 0, respectively).

We also examined the difference in the choice of apology strategies in the first situation based on participants' academic and non-academic education. Our results indicated that participants with higher education preferred accepting responsibility for their fault (33%), rectifying their mistake (20%), and explaining the reason (18%). Direct expressions such as "excuse me," expressing concern for the hearer, promises of forbearance, and non-verbal strategies were less preferred by this group in this context (14%, 12%, 4%, and 0%, respectively). On the other hand, individuals with lower education chose to take responsibility, use direct expressions, provide an explanation, and offer repair with close frequencies (22%, 22%, 20%, and 18%, respectively).

Situation 2

In the second situation, where the speaker attempts to apologize to a higher-status person (their professor) for not finishing a project on time, the most preferred strategies included explanation (38.3%), taking responsibility (29.2%), and offering repair (26.3%). Other strategies were chosen with significantly lesser frequencies, totaling 6.3%. The strategies selected for apologizing in the second situation differed based on participants' gender (X^2

(5, N = 240) = 14.71 , p < .01). However, there was no significant relationship between the choice of strategies and participants' age and education.

Table 4.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 1 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	H	L
IFIDs	0	0	0	0	0	0
responsibility	28	35	24	39	31	32
explanation	50	42	40	52	44	48
repair	33	37	46	24	36	34
forbearance	7	5	8	4	7	5
concern	2	1	2	1	2	1
non-verbal	0	0	0	0	0	0

Gender* s2

As it can be seen from Table 4 almost half of the female participants chose to provide an explanation for their failur (41%) and almost the other half chose to offer a repair (27%) or take the responsibility of their action (21%). A similar pattern can be observed with the male participants. The higher frequency of *explanation* strategy can be interpreted as a face-saving action through which the speaker tries to mitigate the effects of their fault by giving reasons for it.

Age*s2

Analysing the data by the participants' age showed that the most preferred strategy to apologize in this situation for the elderly participants was providing an explanation (39%%), take the responsibility of their action (33%), and repair their fault (20%). The younger generation, on the other hand, chose to repair their fault (41%), explain (30%), and take responsibility (20%).

Edu*s2

Looking at the data from an educational point of view showed that people with academic education chose *repair*, explanation, and taking

responsibility with almost the same frequencies (32, 31, and 31%, respectively). People with non-academic education chose *explanation* (43%) for apologizing in such a situation followed by offer of repair (27%), and taking responsibilty (19%). Some participants from both groups chose to promise not to repeat their fault again but the frequencies were not weighty (Table 4).

Situation 3

The third situation described a context in which the speaker forgets to express condolences for the death of a friend's close relatives. Here again the most preferred strategy was explanation (43.8%) with promise of repair (23.8%) coming after that. This was followed by IFID (9.2%), promise of forbearance (8.8%), concern for the hearer (3.3%). Besides, 3 of the the young females with non-academic education were the only participant who chose non-verbal strategies (1.3%). Results of a chi-square test of independence showed that the relation between gender, age, and education and the choice of apology strategies in this situation is not significant (age: X^2 (6, N = 240) = 8.86 , p = .18; gender: X^2 (6, N = 240) = 4.25 , p = .64; education: X^2 (6, N = 240) = 6.1, p = .4).

Table 5.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 3 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	high	low
IFIDs	13	9	9	13	13	9
responsibility	12	12	11	13	9	15
explanation	49	56	53	52	54	51
repair	29	28	34	23	31	26
forbearance	10	11	7	14	9	12
concern	4	4	3	5	4	4
non-verbal	3	0	3	0	0	3

Gender*s3

Here almost half of both male and female participants preferred to

explain the reaseon for their fault (48 and 45%, respectively). Other participants chose to offer a repair (23% males and 25% females). Females (13%) chose to apologize using non-verbal strategies such as giving a hug or a kiss and taking responsibility of their action (10%) while male participants preferred to take responsibility (10%), promise not to repeat their fault again (9%) and use non-verbal strategies (7%).

Age*s3

Taking the participants' age into account, our results showed that both old and young generation chose to provide an explanation for their fault (47 and 55%, respectievly). This was followed by offer of repair (28%), non-verbal strategies (9%), and taking responsibility (8%) for the young generation. The older generation also chose to apologize by offering repair (19%), taking responsibility (12%), and using non-verbal strategies (11%).

Edu*s3

Both educational groups showed similar patterns in their choice of apology strategies for this situation, i.e., both groups preferred expalantion and offer of repair as the main apology strategies (54 and 31 for the H group and 51 and 26 for the L group) . However, people with academic education chose IFIDs (13) over taking responsibility (9). Besides, 3 people from the non-academic group chose non-verbal strategies.

Situation 4

The next situation was about a person who fails to answer a firend's call. As it can be seen from Table 6, explanaition (69.6%) was the most highly preferred strategy followed -with a significant difference- by offer of repair (14.2%). The other strategies were chosen with notably lower frequencies (16.4% totally). The frequency of strategies chosen in this situation did not differ by the participants' age (X^2 (5, N = 240) = 7 , p = .22), gender (X^2 (5, N = 240) = 4.58 , p = .46), and level of education (X^2 (5, N = 240) = .54 , p = .99).

Table 6.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 4 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	low	high
IFIDs	6	9	8	7	8	7
responsibility	7	3	3	7	5	5
explanation	83	84	79	88	85	82
repair	15	19	22	12	16	18
forbearance	4	1	4	1	2	3
concern	5	4	4	5	4	5
non-verbal	0	0	0	0	0	0

S4*gender, age, education

Both male and female participants acted similarly in choosing the right strategy here. The same pattern can be observed for the two education groups. The age groups also chose explanation and offer of repair as the main strategies. However, accodring to Table 6 more young people preferred to offer a repair than the aged people.

Situation 5

In the fifth situation, the speaker bumps into an older person and causes their things fall on the ground. As it is obvious from Figure (2), the respondents chose to compensate for the trouble by offering the hearer a repair (67.5%). The other strategies chosen by the respondents included explanation (10%), IFID (9.2%), concern for the hearer (8.3%%), promise of forbearance, and non-verbal strategies (both 0.8%). The relation between the participants' age, gender, and education and the choice of apology strategies was not stratistically significant (X^2 (6, N = 240) = 9.84, p>.05, X^2 (6, N = 240) = 7.62, p>.05, X^2 (6, N = 240) = 11.18, p>.05).

Table 7.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 5 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	low	high
IFIDs	12	9	10	11	7	14
responsibility	5	4	1	8	6	3
explanation	10	14	12	12	9	15
repair	76	86	87	75	88	74
forbearance	2	0	0	2	2	0
concern	13	7	8	12	7	13
non-verbal	2	0	2	0	1	1

Situation 6

The sixth situation described a context in which the speaker fails to visit a relative when they were sick. Our results showed that the respondents chose to apologize by providing an explanaition (42.5%), using direct devices for the expression of apology (25%), taking responsibility (12.5%), offering repair (7.9%), showing concern for the hearer (5.8%), using non-verbal strategies (5%), and offering forbearance (1.3%).

Table 7.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 6 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	low	high
IFIDs	34	26	20	40	26	34
responsibility	13	17	16	14	15	15
explanation	43	59	52	50	49	53
repair	9	10	11	8	12	7
forbearance	2	1	2	1	3	0
concern	7	7	7	7	3	11
non-verbal	12	0	12	0	12	0

As can be seen in Table 7 only young male respondents with non-academic education chose non-verbal strategies here. The relation between gender and the choice of apology strategies was statistically significant X^2 (6, N = 240) = 16.42, p < .01. Also, a chi-square test on independence showed that there is a significant association between education level and apology strategiess, X^2 (6, N=240) = 22.11, P < .01. Besides, the participants' preferred apology strategies is also associated with their age X^2 (6, N=240) = 19.64, P < .01. Most of the elderly participants preferred *explanation* and *IFIDs* (totally 90 out of 120 cases). The other strategies were also selected but with notably less frequencies. On the other hand, young participants chose a variety of strategies but *explanation* gained the highest frequency again (Table 7).

Situation 7

In situation 7 where the participants fail to help their peer, they chose to apologize by *promis of repair* (40%), *explanation* (35.8%), and *taking responsibility* (17.5%). Besides, some participants chose *concern for the hearer* (5.4) and *promis of forbearance* (1.3%) but none of them chose *direct devices* or *non-verbal sreategies* (both 0%) to apologize their classmates.

Table 8.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 7 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	low	high
IFIDs	0	0	0	0	0	0
responsibility	27	15	23	19	23	19
explanation	35	51	38	48	48	38
repair	47	49	54	42	43	53
forbearance	2	1	0	3	1	2
concern	9	4	5	8	5	8
non-verbal	0	0	0	0	0	0

According to Table 8 females preferred explanation (51) and offer of

repair (49) to apologize their peers. Most of the male participants, on the other hand, chose repaire (47) followed by explanation (35) and taking responsibility (27). However, the association between gender of the participants and their choice of strategies was not statistically significant X^2 (4, N = 240) = 8.7, p = .06.

Most of the elderly participants preferred *explanation* while the young chose *offer of repair* to apologize their classmate (Table 8). However, the relationship between age and strategy was not significant X^2 (4, N = 240) = 6.73, p = .15.

Participants with academic education preferred to offer a repair (53) to their classmates rather than explain (38) or take responsibility (19). While those with non-academic education chose explanation (48) and offer of repaire (43) with similr frequencies. Nonetheless, no statistically significant association was observed between the participants' level of education and the strategies they chose for apologysing to their peers X^2 (4, N = 240) = 3.61, p = .46.

Situation 8

In the eightth situation, the speaker walks over someone's foot while getting off from a bus. This describes the interaction between two strangers. For such a situation most of the participants chose to aologose by explanation (56.3%) and offer of repair (27.5%). Some others preferred taking responsibility (8.3%), concern for the hearer (6.3%), and non-verbal strategies (0.4%) but no one chose promis of forbearance.

Table 9.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 8 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	young	old	low	high
IFIDs	3	0	1	2	2	1
responsibility	6	14	11	9	11	9
explanation	70	65	67	68	68	67
repair	31	35	34	32	33	33
forbearance	0	0	0	0	0	0
concern	9	6	6	9	5	10
non-verbal	1	0	1	0	1	0

As mentioned earlier, the two highly preferred strategies for all groups include *explanation* and *offer of repair* to apologize a stranger. The third preferred strategy for females was *taking responsibility* while males chose *expressing concern for the hearer*. The third mostly chose strategy for young participants was *taking responsibility*. The older generation chose *taking responsibility* and *concern for the hearer*. People with academic education chose *concern for the hearer* after *explanation* and *offer of repair* and, with little difference, *take responsibility* while those without academic education preferred to take the *responsibility* of their action. Nonetheless, none of the independent variables were significantly associated with the apology strategies (gender*strategy: X^2 (5, N = 240) = 8.22, p = .14, age*strategy: X^2 (5, N = 240) = 2.2, p = .81, and education level*strategy: X^2 (5, N = 240) = 3.2 , p = .66).

Situation 9

In situation 9, where the speaker forgets to participate in a friends' party, giving an explanation (43.8%), taking responsibility (34.6%), and offer of repair (11.7%) were more preferred. Concern for the hearer, offer of forbearance, non-verbal strategies, and IFIDs were also chosen but with less frequency (4.2%, 2.9%, 2.1%, and 0.8%, respectively).

Table 10.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 9 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	Y	O	L	H
IFIDs	1	1	0	2	0	2
responsibility	37	46	38	45	43	40
explanation	55	50	54	51	52	53
repair	13	15	16	12	14	14
forbearance	3	4	3	4	2	5
concern	6	4	4	6	5	5
non-verbal	5	0	5	0	4	1

As can be seen from Table 10 all group follow almost the same pattern in choosing strategies to apologize a friend. However, it is notable that the non-verbal strategies are mostly selected by the young male participants with lower education. A chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant relationship between either of the independent variables and the selection of apology strategies by the participants (age: X^2 (6, N = 240) = 8.79 , p = .18; gender: X^2 (6, N = 240) = 6.9, p = .33; education level: X^2 (6, N = 240) = 5.2, p = .51).

Situation 10

In situation 10 the speaker gets angry to his/her neighbor's children but then understands that he/she was wrong and wants to apologize to the child. Most of the participants chose the explanation strategy (38.5%) followed by offer of repair (27.3%) and taking responsibility (15.9%). A significantly less number of the participants chose IFID (8.2%), concern for the hearer (6%), promis of repair (2.6%), and non-verbal strategies (1.7%).

Table 11.

A comparative table of apology strategies in situation 3 by age, education, and gender groups

	gender		age		education	
	M	F	Y	O	L	H
IFIDs	20	13	16	17	14	19
responsibility	10	13	14	9	10	13
explanation	34	31	26	39	35	30
repair	28	53	39	42	39	42
forbearance	0	0	0	0	0	0
concern	11	10	8	13	7	14
non-verbal	17	0	17	0	15	2

A Pearson's chi-square test showed that there is a stratistically significant relationship between age and apology strategies in the tenth situation X^2 (5, N = 240) = 22.01 , p < .01. As it can be seen in Table 11, despite

offer of repaire and explanation that were the two highly preferred options here, most of the old participants chose to use *IFIDs* and to show *concern for the hearer*. However, younger participants chose to use *non-verbal strategies* and *IFIDs* and *take the responsibility* of their action.

Moreover, the relationship between gender and the strategies is also significant X^2 (5, N = 240) = 26.77 , p < .01. Most of the female participants chose *offering a repair* (53) and *explanation* (31) to apologize to the child. *IFIDs*, *taking responsibility* and *concern for the hearer* were also selected with a notably less frequency i.e., 13, 13, and 10, respectively. Male participants, on the other hand, showed a more even pattern. Their choices were distributed among a variety of the options with the most highly chosen being *explanation*. Besides, only male participants chose *non-verbal* strategies.

The association between level of education and strategies was also significant X^2 (5, N = 240) = 13.91 , p < .01. Here again the most freuently chosen strategies were *offer of repair* and *explanation*. The most notable difference between people with academic and non-academic education was that the second group were more likely to use *non-verbal* strategies than the first group.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Our aim here was to find out which strategies are used by people of Tabriz to apologize in different discourse situations. The situations involved two dimensions: social power and social distance. The social distance between the interlocutors were defined as strangers, relatives, and friends. The power relationships between the interlocutors defined their social status relative to eache other and included equal status, speaker dominance, and hearer dominance. Beside the discourse situations, we wanted to know if factors such as the participants' age, gender, and level of education can influence their choice of apology strategies.

Besides, regardless of the situations, the relationship between the participants' choice of apology strategies and their age, gender, and education was statistically significant. The most notable difference between participants

in all groups was in the frequency of the choices, rather than their precedence. To be more specific, all male/female, young/old, and higher/lower education groups preferred to express their apology by *explanation*, *offer of repair*, and *taking responsibility*. However, young respondents used more repairs than the older participants. Moreover, almost all of the non-verbal strategies were chosen by the young male participants with lower education. This result is partly in line with Zandi et al. (2017) who found that both male and female participants use the same strategies for apologizing but with different freuencies. Our results are also in line with findings of Fraser (1981), Muhammed (2006), and Harb (2015) who did not find a statistically significant difference in the pattern of apologies between male and female participants.

A more detailed analysis of the data considering the discourse situations showed that the participants' age, gender, and level of education can affect their the choice of apology strategies in some contexts. For instance, in situation 10 (items 10 and 15) , where the participants imagin getting angry to a child, the association between the independent variables and the choice of apology strategies was statistically significant. All groups showed similar patterns in apologizing to a child, i.e., expalanation and offer of repair. However, in our research, young male participants with non-academic education were more likely to apologize the child with a non-verbal strategy like giving them a hug or buying them a candy. Our result regarding the insignificance of the association between genders in apologizing to a child is in line with findings of Harb (2015). The non-verbal strategy was not taken into account in Harb's study. However, IFIDs and repair were mostly chosen by females and explanation and taking responsibility by the male participants in his research. Our results regarding apologizing to a child were not in accordance with Jebahi (2011) where children were not apologized to. This can be due to cultural differences between Tunisian society and Tabriz.

The association between the independent variables and the choice of apology strategy was also significant in situation 6 (items 6 and 16 in the questionnaire). In this situation, both sides are in socially equal status. Although *explanation* and *IFIDs* were the most common strategy among all

groups, the non-verbal strategy was only selected by young male respondents with non-academic education. This shows that the participants accept their fault and prefer to apologize to their friend in an explicit and direct way. This finding is in agreement with Demeter (2006) who showed that Romanian speakrs prefer an explicit expression of apology most of the time, includingwith their friends. However, our finding is not conforming to Hodeib (2019) who showed that IFIDs were mostly used when the offendee is older and/or has higher social status than the offender.

Finally, in the second situation, where the speaker wants to apologize a higher-status person (their boss or professor), there was a significant association between gender and apology strategies. The higher frequency of *explanation* strategy selected by the participants for this situation can be interpreted as a face-saving action through which the speaker tries to mitigate the effects of their fault by giving reasons for it.

This paper is the first attempt to study apology strategies in Azerbaijani Turkish. Our results suggested that the pattern of apologizing in Tabriz does not conform to the common pattern seen in previous studies. According to our results, Tabrizi people prefer justifying their fault and repair it for their interlocutor; while speakers of Thai and American English (Bergman & Kasper, 1993), Romanian (Demeter, 2006), and Sudanese Arabic (Nureddeen, 2008) preferred using expressions like 'sorry' or 'excuse me' to pacify the interlocutor. This lack of conformity can be reffered to the socio-cultural differences between these communities and the community existing in Tabriz.

Without considering the discourse situations, there was a statistically significant association between the independent variables (the participants' age, gender, and level of education) and the choice of apology strategies. However, a more specific analysis of the data showed that such an association is only significant for some discourse situations; i.e., for the situations 6, 10 and gender in situation 2. This shows that speakers behavior may change based on the context.

DCTs provide valuable data for sociolinguistic analysis. However, they have limitations that mst be acknowledged in making conclusions. DCTs often

elicit idealized or hypothetical responses, which may differ from naturally occurring speech. Participants may give more socially desirable answers than their real life. Besides, DCTs do not capture features such as face expressions or intonations, that may affect the ongoing discourse. These limitations suggest findings from DCTs must be interpreted with caution. To mitigate these shortcomings, further research could be conducted to study apology strategies in real conversational situations with data produced in less controlled situations than DCT. Furthermore, a deeper investigation into how demographic variables such as age and education might influence apology strategies in Tabrizi Turkish could further complement the existing line of research on apology strategies.

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