STUDENTS' APOLOGY REALIZATION PATTERNS IN ONLINE CLASSES DURING THE PANDEMIC-19

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Abstract

Online class becomes a more common platform in academic activities nowadays, specifically in during the Pandemic-19. As a consequence, equipping students with adequate skills is an urgent thing to do in order to prepare them in the world of digital citizenship. This paper, then, is intended to investigate the common patterns made by university students in expressing their apology realization through the lens of Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Pattern (CCSARP). It is expected that the identification of the patterns will enable lecturers to gain more comprehensive understanding as well as to help students any possible varieties in expressing apology.

Keywords: *Apology, Online Class, Pandemic-19*

Introduction

Communicative Competence is an urgent competency that students should achieve in order to be able to use language effectively in real acts of communication. Several studies have established empirically that non-native speakers might fail to communicative effectively even when they have mastered excellent grammar of the target language. Inappropriate utterances due to this lack of communication skills have been reported in a number of studies, for instance the failure of non-native English speakers in communicating in American English (Wood et al., 2010) the failure of using the expressions of gratitude among Turkish people (Araz & Erdugan, 2017), the inability of a Thai student in understanding the concept of bathing in England (Ahn, 2007), and the inappropriate apology realization o f non-native speakers of English (Masita, 2004).

A number of factors are responsible for this lack of communication skill. One of them is the inability to produce appropriate utterances by social contexts of English due to the lack of sociocultural competence of the learners. This is in line with a study by Li (2015) that underlines the culture differences between the first language of speakers and the targe language as one of the main reasons of students' failure in appropriately comprehending and producing target language. As addressed earlier, there are great varieties of the rules of politeness behaviours from one culture to another. The ways of how an utterance should be expressed greatly depends on how the language communities in a specific culture views the ways to express that speech based on the politeness markers they have. One of the cultural-bound utterances that become the main concern in this paper is the apology realization of Indonesian students in online class.

Apology plays an important role in social life. This apology act is usually conducted as the after someone has offended the hearer, intentionally or unintentionally. Its primarily function is to convey affective meaning as well as to restore social relationship where there is some behaviour that appears to violate social norms. About this, Yule (2006) explains that an utterance or an act is required in the act of apologizing to "set things right" (p. 235). In line with that, Brown and Levinson (1987) propose the terms of "positive politeness strategies" and "negative politeness strategies" as the

strategies in the patterns of apology realization.

Positive strategies are intended to avoid giving offense by highlighting friendliness, solidarity, intimacy, informality and familiarity. In general, this strategy is characterized through the use of in-group identity markers, special discourse markers, promising, complimenting, jokes, nicknames, honorifics, tag questions, exaggerating interest in hearer, establishing common grounds, juxtaposing criticism with compliments, and avoiding disagreement. On the other hand, negative strategies are described as the strategy to emphasize avoidance of imposition on the hearer through the expressions of restraint, formality, and distancing. These strategies are realized through a number of efforts such as being conventionally indirect, minimizing an imposition, giving deference, apologizing, impersonalizing, and nominalizing. Furthermore, Brown and Levinson also state that the choices of politeness strategies are mainly influenced by some factors such as formality, power, distance, and rank of imposition. The research in this paper, then, focuses the analysis on the strategies in apology realization patterns with the consideration to the four aforementioned factors.

Methodology

The research in this paper is a part of a study about politeness strategies in online classes with a bigger number of audiences and research participants. As the preliminary study, the research participants of this paper are three university students at their fourth semester majoring English department. The researcher and the participants have known each other since all of the participants are taking the same online class with the researcher as the lecturer when the data is taken. The data in this research is collected through online, semi-structured recorded interviews. The interview is selected since it is considered that this method of data collection might enable participants to provide historical information under the topic. Apart from that, it might also allow the researcher to ask questions to the participants in order to get a more elaborated answer or to clarify the situations that are not clear enough.

During the interview, the participants are provided the contexts of situations in which the apology realizations are supposed to be realized. The participants respond orally in a recorded online interview session through zoom by directly stating the apology realization they would say when it is prompted. Then, the participants are to provide explanation of why they choose such realization. There is one guiding paper used during the interview written in English. They are five prompts which providing the subjects with apology situations. The prompts are as follows:

Table 1: Apology Prompts

Situation 1	You are overslept and late for the first virtual meeting of your online class for five minutes with a lecturer that you haven't met before. Your lecturer asks about the lateness during the class.
Situation 2	You laugh inappropriately during an online class with your lecturer who is also your uncle that you know very well.
Situation 3	Your promises to hand in the mid-term assignment to your lecturer but you haven't finished writing it at the due time. You call your lecturer at his personal phone number to apology and ask for some additional time to finish and submit the assignment. The lecturer says that the lateness of submitting the assignment is a serious problem and he is not happy about that.

Situation 4	You have offended your classmate that you have been known since high school by inappropriately imitating his mistake in pronouncing an English word when he is in the middle of explaining something during a virtual class discussion. Your classmate mentions this fact during the online class just after the discussion finished.
Situation 5	Just before the class begins, you realize you have lost the USB flash drive containing a very important final assignment project you are working with your classmate for your online presentation today. This is the first time you and your classmate have class project together. You have never met him/her personally before. You call your classmate to tell him/her about it.

Research Findings

Situation 1:

The setting of this situation is an online virtual meeting of the first online class. This is a formal setting in which the participant owes an apology to a lecturer (power: superior) s/he meets for the first time (distance: low solidarity) for being late (rank of imposition: light offence).

Based on the interview to the three participants of this research, it is revealed that all of the participants consider that the facts that this is the first time they meet the lecturer really affects how they express their apology. The first participant (Participant A) chooses to directly express his apology to the lecturer during the class by telling the truth: "I do apologize for being late. I was overslept, Sir". On the other hand, the second participant (Participant B) decides that it's better to make a false reason for his lateness by saying "I am sorry sir, but my electricity was cut at my first so I couldn't join the class on time". Different from those two participants, the third participant in this research (Participant C) thinks that besides expressing her apology for being late to respond the lecturer's question, she also considers to contact the lecturer personally after the virtual meeting to explain the reason of her lateness and show that she is really sorry for the lateness.

Situation 2:

Similar to Situation 1, the setting of Situation 2 is formal virtual meeting of an online class. The participant owes an apology to a lecturer (power: superior) who is also his/her uncle s/he knows well (distance: high solidarity) for inappropriately laugh during the class (rank of imposition: medium offence).

The results of interviews to the three research participants show that each participant has different perspective toward the situation, specifically the fact that the lecturer is his/her own uncle. Participant A states that the close relationship between him and the lecturer would not affect him in expressing his apology. It is the lecturer status and the formal setting that becomes his first consideration in the choice of how he would apologize. Thus, he chooses to apologize by saying: "I am so sorry, Sir" just right after the inappropriate laugh. Moreover, Participant B thinks that the personality of the lecturer would significantly affect his apology realization, but unless the lecturer is a very strict and unfriendly person, he believes that a short and informal apology such as: "Sorry" will be enough. Similar to the second participant, Participant C considers her personal relationship with the lecturer as a beneficial factor for her. However, the fact that this is a formal class setting and there are her classmates attending the class drives her to choose a formal apology such as: "I am sorry" to say in the virtual meeting.

Situation 3:

The situation in this prompt is an informal setting in which the participant personally contact the lecturer (power: superior) by phone about his/her mid-term assignment that has been due (rank of imposition: high offence). No information

about the distance between the participant and the lecturer. However, the term "mid-term assignment" implies that this is not the first meeting between the participant and the lecturer (distance: high solidarity).

For this kind of situation, the responses of the three participants are quite similar. All of them use a very formal way in their apology realization by saying: "I am really sorry" or "I do apologize". In addition, all of the participants would try to tell the lecturer the reasons of the lateness even if the lecturer does not ask for it as well as to request some additional time to finish the mid-term assignment. In doing this, Participant A chooses to make a promise as an effort to get some additional time by saying: "Could you please give us some additional time, please? I promise I'll send the assignment before the due date". In contrast, both Participant B and Participant C merely ask the lecturer to give them any additional time without any promise. The superior position of the lecturer with more power than the participants as his students as well as the fact that the lecturer is older than them become the main factors of those three participants to choose formal apology realization in speaking with the lecturer.

Situation 4:

The setting of Situation 4 is formal since it happens during the virtual online meeting. As classmates, the power between both speakers are equal with the distance is high solidarity because they have been friend for years. However, the rank of imposition in this situation is categorized as high offence. The fact that the classmate has mentioned it during the class implies that he consider it as a serious offense.

In regard to this situation, Participant A articulates that he would use joke as an indirect apology realization to his classmate such as "come on, don't be angry; it's nothing, just a joke"; no need to explicitly express his apology, considering that they have been friends from high school. Unlike the previous participant, the second participant in this research explicitly

mentions his apology by saying: "I am so sorry, I don't mean to hurt you but it's just so funny." In spite of that, he does not think this should be a serious problem between him and his classmate. The reason why he thinks a verbal apology is still required despite his close relationship as an old friend to the classmate is because this is a formal class with other classmates and the lecturer are also there. The third research participant, on the other hand, considers the classmate's mention toward the inappropriate attitude she has done as a serious problem. Consequently, she would say: "I am so sorry. Please don't be angry" to show the classmate that she really regrets for what she has done. Additionally, Participant C also says that she would personally contact the classmate just after the class as her effort to fix the unhappy situation and restore the harmony.

Situation 5:

This setting of this last prompt is informal, comprising a conversation between the participant and his/her classmate. Similar to Situation 4, the level of power between the participant and the classmate is equal. Unlike the previous situation, however, the distance between them is considered as low solidarity as the participant does not personally know the classmate very well. The level of imposition in this situation is high offence. This is implied from the description within the prompt about the missing USB that contains an important final assignment just before the assignment has to be presented at the online class that day.

As the response of this situation, Participant A says: "I am so sorry I know this is my mistake that the flash drive is lost". As his own defence, Participant A also explains that he would try to put the blame on someone else to diminish his mistake, for example by saying things such as: "I was quite sure the flash drive was already in my bag. I don't know why it can be missing now." At the same track, Participant B says: " I am sorry that our

flash drive is missing." However, instead of trying to reduce his mistake by finding a good reason for the lost, Participant B prefers to asks for the possibility that his classmate has a copy of the data within the missing flash drive. Similarly, Participant C chooses to both express her apology and asks whether the classmate has a copy of the assignment, even if it's not the complete one. She also promises to re-do the assignment by herself. In addition, Participant C would offer to contact the lecturer and explain what has happen with the hope that the lecturer would give any additional time for her in re-doing the assignment on behalf of her and her classmate.

Discussion of research Findings

Based on the aforementioned findings, the most common realization used by the participant is the term "sorry". It can be seen that in almost all the situations, the participants of this research begin their apologies by stating this term, unless in Situation 4 in which Participant A thinks that an explicit apology using the term sorry is not really necessary due to the close relationship to the classmate. Thus, the term "sorry" appears to be the most central strategy in apologizing. Furthermore, all participants tend to combine more than one strategy in their apology realizations. Some of the strategies are included as the positive politeness strategies such as promising, offer of repair, and taking on responsibilities while some others includes negative politeness strategies such as refusal to acknowledge guilt, minimizing an imposition, and prohibiting.

Furthermore, the results of interviews to the participants in regards of the reasons of their chosen strategies reveal that the selection process is greatly influenced by a number of factors. Among them, the presence of the lecturer really affects the participants in selecting what kind of apology realization they will use regardless if the lecturer is someone they have just met for the very first time (Situation 1), the person they have known for quite a while (Situation 3) or even the one that personally close to them (Situation 2) as well as if it is a formal online classroom setting (Situation 1 and Situation 3) or informal personal setting by phone (Situation 2), all of the participants believe that they have to show high respects to the lecturer due to his superior power, educational background, and age. Consequently, they are very careful in selecting the words and even the intonation, mimics, and gestures when they are communicating with the lecturer.

In contrast, for the people with relatively equal power (classmate), the main consideration of the participant is the social distance to the person. If the one hat has been felt offended is someone they do not know very well and is not personally close, they appears to be quite formal and try to show their sincere apology to the person, specifically when the level of imposition is quite high and might make the classmate into a big problem due to their carelessness (Situation 5). To the people they are close with, however, the participants tend to claim that an explicit verbal and formal apology is not something really urgent to say. Instead, they choose to express their apology indirectly by uttering a prohibition such as "don't be angry" or refusal to acknowledge guilt such as: "but it's so funny." They believe the good close personal connection between them and the classmate will make the classmate know that he does not have a bad intention to him.

Conclusions

The research results show that factors such as formality, power, distance, and level of imposition significantly affect participants in the apology realization they are using. This can be seen from the varieties of apology realization they are using toward the situation as in the prompts. However, the situation in this research is not real, they are all prompted by predetermined scenarios provided by the researcher. This might or might not affect how the

participants would act in a natural setting of apology situation. Apart from that, the limited numbers of participants and time of data collection might also limit the results of this research. Therefore, further research with wider scopes as well as larger numbers of participants and time is required to provide more comprehensive understanding on apology realization patterns, specifically in relation to the online interaction.

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