

APOLOGY AND IMAGE REPAIR STRATEGIES USED IN BALINESE LANGUAGE LETTER

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Abstract

An apology is an action that people perform to express their regret for committing certain offenses or mistakes. To save the speaker's face, the act of apology also usually occurs with some image repair strategies. However, different languages and cultures may have different rules for expressing an apology and image repair. How apology is performed linguistically in Balinese is specifically less studied. This study examines apology and image repair strategies used in an apology letter written in the Balinese language taken from a Rancage Award-winning novel "Sunari" written by I Ketut Rida. The data were analyzed qualitatively using the theory of apology and image repair strategies. The finding shows that no explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) is used in making an apology. Instead, the writer employed indirect non-conventional and conventional strategies together with the image repair strategies of reducing the offensiveness of events and corrective action.

Keywords – *apology strategies, image repair, Balinese language*

Introduction

In human social life, the interaction between people or parties does not always run smoothly and can please everybody. There is always a possibility for someone to make the other person feel offended, sad, angry, or losing face for various reasons. An apology is an act of communication to convey regret, tolerance, and acknowledgment that there are people or organization who have been harmed or are in an unpleasant position in social interactions. Apologies are expected to restore social harmony and improve relationships. Not only to show remorse and maintain the harmony of the parties concerned, **an apology is also related to the image repair of the apologizing individual or organization.**

In addition to various gestures and other material actions, apologies are mainly characterized by language use. The study of how language is used in carrying out the act of apology is studied in the field of pragmatics, namely the actual use of language in communication. Here, apology is approached with the concept of face, which is also related to politeness and the speech act theory (see Searle, 1975). As discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987), an apology is the consequence of a Face Threatening Act (FTA) as well as an act of FTA to oneself. One needs to apologize after hurting someone's negative face (i.e., one's personal right and territory to be not obstructed by others). This, at the same time, harm the interlocutors' positive face (i.e., a person desire to be approved and appreciated). For this reason, apologize usually involves an image repairing act. They describe that apology is usually realized directly by "explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)" or implicitly by some specific strategy.

Putu Nur Ayomi¹, Ni Putu Dita Rahayu², Ni Putu Dhita Vasya Wedari³,
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However, IFID is usually accompanied by other propositions such as explaining, promising not to do the same offense in the future, etc., including some image repair strategies. After conducting and observing apology research across context and culture, Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984) propose Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP). Here when realizing the speech act of apology, usually the following strategies are used: 1) illocutionary force indicating device (IFID); 2) expression of the speaker’s responsibility for the offense; 3) explanation or account of the cause which brought about the offense; 4) repair offer; 5) promise of forbearance. According to Murphy (2015), this classification is still too general and cannot cover more nuances of meaning. Here he reformulated another categorization that highlights the different degrees of explicitness.

Table 1. Apologising Strategy (Murphy, 2015: 186-187)

Broad category	Sub-category (individual strategy)
A. Explicit expression of apology	1. A performative IFID
	2. A commissive with ‘apology’/‘apologies’ as a direct object
B. Conventional (indirect) apology formula	1. An expression of regret
	2. A request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness
	3. A statement of desire
	4. A statement of obligation
C. Non-conventional indirect apology strategy	1. Explanation, account, or excuse
	2. Accepting the blame
	3. Expressing self- deficiency
	4. Recognising H as entitled to an apology
	5. Expressing lack of intent

The use of category A in expressing an apology is the most direct one and has no implicature other than an act of apology itself. Strategies in category B is generally interpreted as an apology. However, there are certain situations in which its sincerity can be doubtful. On the other hand, strategies in category C are the most indirect since apology is not expressed lexically in utterances but derivable from the context. Furthermore, Benoit (1997) added several strategies of image repair that usually accompanied a speech act of apology. This is presented in the table below:

Table 2. Image Repair Strategies (Benoit, 1997)

General Strategies	Tactic	Key Characteristic
Denial	Simple denial	To claim the offensive act in question did not occur
	Shift blame	To deny personal responsibility for the act by indicting someone else for the act in question
Evade responsibility	Provocation	Responded to act of another
	Defeasibility	Lack of information or ability
	Accident	Act was a mishap
	Good intentions	Meant well in act
Reducing Offensiveness of event	Bolstering	Stress good traits
	Minimization	Act not serious
	Differentiation	Act less offensive
	Transcendence	More important considerations
	Attack accuser	Reduce credibility of accuser
	Compensation	Reimburse victim
Corrective Action		Plan to solve or prevent problem
Mortification		Apologize for act

The realization of apology is varied, as are the various contexts behind the apology, this has been discussed by several studies, for example, Abudin & Sundari (2021), who explore how Indonesian public figures apologize publicly through Youtube video found that those public figures use explicit, conventional- indirect, and non-conventional-indirect strategies. The expression of apology is also followed by the statement of unintentionality and promise to repair the mistake. The apology is not directed to the victim of offense but rather to the public or audience. Similar research on Chinese and Hollywood celebrities apologies and image repair can also be seen in the work of Kauffman (2012) and Zhanghong & Yanan, (2020). In a political context, Murphy (2015), for example, studies how British MPs perform political apologies. In the business context, the realization of apology can also be seen through the work of Compton (2016), Page (2014) and Xu & Yan (2020). The extensive study on cross-cultural apology and among EFL students has also been done extensively, for example, in the Indonesia and Iran culture by Rajabi (2015) & Wardoyo (2017). These studies have shown that although diverse in the tendency of apology strategies used, the type of the strategies still meets the list made by Benoit (1997) and Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984). Despite the extensive study of apology as mentioned above, less attention is paid to the ethnic language of Indonesia, for example, in Balinese. Its unique culture represented by the language of an apology needs to be explored more to add to the richness of pragmatic study.

For this initial exploration, the act of apology observed is a written letter taken from a prominent Balinese novel Sunari. This novel talks about the life of Sunari, a spoiled third-year high school girl who got pregnant by her boyfriend, Duria. Because of her pregnancy, she could not continue to college. Sunari finally gave birth to a dead child without a husband. Later she met a university student who did fieldwork in her village, fell in love but eventually left behind. At the end of the story, she met again with Duria, who apologized to her through a letter. At the end of the story, she finally reunites with Duria.

Methods

The data source of this study is an apology letter taken from the novel Sunari. This novel is written in Balinese by a Balinese author, I Ketut Rida. Although it was written in 1939, due to its contribution to the development of the Balinese language literature, this novel received a Rancage Literary Award in 2000. Despite not depicting the most recent condition of today's Balinese, the language used in this novel can reflect the cultural value and social situation of Balinese at the time. The apology performed in the letter is analysed and discussed using the CCSARP coding script to investigate the categories of the strategy used, e.g., IFID, taking on responsibility, explanation, etc. In addition to that, the image repair theory is also used to explore more about this act.

Finding and Discussion

Unlike the previous researches, which found that explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), i.e., by saying *sorry*, *apologize* or *regret*, is the primary strategy in expressing apology, which is usually followed by one or more strategies. The study on Balinese apology letters shows that the interlocutor used the less direct strategies: the conventional indirect apology and the non-conventional indirect apology formulas. In fact, at the beginning moves of the apology, the writer used the most indirect formula such as explaining, expressing self- deficiency, accepting the blame, and recognising the addressee as entitled to an apology. From the middle to the closing, these strategies are followed by the less indirect strategies which is Non-conventional indirect apology strategy. The subcategories used are a request for acceptance of

Putu Nur Ayomi¹, Ni Putu Dita Rahayu², Ni Putu Dhita Vasya Wedari³,
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apology/forgiveness, a statement of obligation, and three moves of the statement of desire. These choices are related to apology's social and situational context, which will be explained further in the discussion section.

An apology also involves an image repair strategy that functions to restore the speaker's face. In this case, three strategies are used, sometimes used together or overlapping with the apology strategy. As shown in Table 3, reducing offensiveness through bolstering and compensation is frequently used in the data, together with corrective action. The overall moves and strategies used in the apology letter found in the novel can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Apology and Image Repair Strategy Used in the Letter

Apology Strategy	Image repair Strategy	Utterances/Moves
-	-	<i>Luh Sunari timpal tiange uling lawas.</i> 'Luh Sunari, my old friend'.
-	-	<i>Luh celih pesan Luh bakal ajak iang nutur padaduanan.</i> 'Luh really avoid me whenever I want to talk to you in person'.
-	-	<i>Sawireh surate ene anggon iang sarana, mangdane praside masih iang matemu nutur kapining Luh.</i> 'That's why I use this letter as a media, I hope I have a chance to talk to you.'
Opening, asking for a chance to speak		<i>Dumadak Luh nyak mamaca surat iange ene, yapitui suud keto bakal besbes Luh.</i> 'I wish you can read this letter because after this you may rip it.'
Explanation, account, or excuse		<i>Pantes mula Luh patikelid tekening iang, sawireh iang mula tusing patut buin paek teken Luh</i> 'It is just natural if you always avoid me because I don't deserve to be close again with you.'
Expressing self-deficiency		<i>I Duria mula patut kelidin, sawireh ambek laksanane tusing bina teken paripolah buron</i> 'Duria deserved to be avoided because his traits are just not much different from an animal.'
Accepting the blame		<i>Agung dosane tan winilang.</i> 'The great sin that had been done doesn't deserve to be forgiven'
Recognising H as entitled to an apology		<i>Pepineh Luhe buka keto mula patut pesan, maka cihna Luh nu inget tur ngelah aji dini di gumine.</i> 'It is right for you to think that way, it means you still remember and have dignity in this world.'
Recognising H as entitled to an apology		<i>Sepa gumine yen ada surya endag uli kauh, punyan biune mabuah ping pinda.</i> 'It would be very bizarre if the sun rises on the west, and the banana's tree produces fruit twice'
	Reduce Offensiveness: Bolstering	<i>Tekan iange jani, joh tekening keneh ngulurin indria yadin mokak, keto masih tusing madasar sangkaning ngendog ngadu brana.</i> 'I came here, is far from the intention of lush or stroking my ego, not also for showing off my wealth.'
	Reduce Offensiveness: Bolstering	<i>Tusing ja len sangkaning susrusa Nirmala, bakal nebus dosane suba ane kalangkung nistane, lama-kane panandang sakit jengah Luhe tan sinipi tekening kula-warga ento sida ilang.</i> 'Nothing else because of a pure and sacred heart to atone for this very despicable sin that caused you and your family shame and humiliation, may it disappear.'
	Reduce Offensiveness: Compensation	<i>Ucape ane tampelang Luh apang tusing nu neket malaad buin di awak Luhe.</i> 'All the bad words that you received so that they would no longer stick to you.'

A request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness		<i>Sajaba keto maduluran keneh suci Nirmala I nista ngajap-ajap kapiolasan Luhe, waluyane I tabia dakep grepe ngalih tungguhan mangdene ia maan angin, maan sunaran surya, mawastu nyidayang idup mawoh kadi patute</i> ‘Besides that, with a pure and honest intention, this despicable person begging for your kind heart, just like chilli stalk that need a supporting stake, hoping to get wind, get sunlight so that it can live properly.’
A request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness		<i>Nah, tulung bang ia ngidih tungguhan, apang nyidayang magamgaman sida maurip.</i> ‘Yes, please give it a backrest, for the place where it can grow.’
A statement of obligation	Corrective action	<i>Aketo pesan Luh, sawireh iang ane nibanin Luh jelek ne suba, jani iang ngidih galah bakal menahin kapelihane gede ento.</i> ‘It’s really like that Luh because I’m the one who had burdened you with that insult, Now I ask you a chance to fix my mistake.’
A statement of desire (expecting reconciliation)	Transcendence	<i>Jalan ingkupang papineh tur laksanakanane, mangdane mawesana kasidan tepuk sadia rahayune dini di lemah.</i> ‘Let’s unite the mind and action, hopefully, one day we can find peace and happiness in this world’
A statement of desire		<i>Dumadak laksanakanane ane suba liwat, sida katebus di mani puane.</i> ‘I hope all the things that happened in the past, could be redeemed one day.’
A statement of desire		<i>Luh, tolih ja I padang liglig kameranan setata ngajap kritisian ujan, ane marupa tresnan Luhe, ane ngawinang ia idup mapikenoh di gumine.</i> ‘Luh, look at the dry grass there longing for the rain to come, which is nothing, but your love Luh. It will make my life in this world having a meaning.’

Apology Strategies

As shown in table 1, apology strategies involve three broad categories, which are later subdivided into some individual strategies. The use of those strategies in the novel can be described as follow:

Explicit expression of apology (IFID)

In this letter, there is no use of IFID or the direct expression of apology, which is likely used to express regret, such as phrases equal to *I’m sorry, forgive me, I apologize for..., etc.* Instead, the expression of apology is delivered indirectly. The reason behind this can be related to the context. In this novel, Duria, the letter’s writer, had made a severe offense to Sunari by impregnating her and then abandoning her to continue his study in a prominent University in Java. After several years, he returned and tried to reconcile his relationship with her. A direct apology by IFID would be too late to perform and can be considered meaningless at this time. This is different from other studies in which the apology was made shortly after the offense.

Non-conventional indirect apology strategy

Explanation, account, or excuse

The first move made by Duria in his letter to signal an apology is by explaining the current situation in which Sunari did not want to talk to Duria. He also alluded to the offense he had done. This can be seen in the quotation below:

Pantes mula Luh patikelid tekening iang, sawireh iang mula tusing patut buin paek teken Luh
‘It is just natural if you always avoid me because I don’t deserve to be close again with you.’

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The phrase *I don't deserve* in the excerpt above indicates that Duria had made some mistakes to Sunari in the past, and she had all the right to not treat him properly because of that misconduct. This move is used as the opening part of the letter and introduces the reader to what will be discussed next. The non-conventional indirect apology strategy used in the letter mainly used assertive illocutionary acts, which function to present or assert the truth of the statement.

Expressing self- deficiency

In the next part of the letter, Duria elaborated what was mentioned earlier by stating self-deficiency by saying *Duria deserved to be avoided because his traits are not much different from an animal*. Here, he restressed that he himself understood and admitted the mistake. By comparing himself to an animal, Duria stated his self-deficiency and, by doing so, also emphasized that he knew that what he had done was very bad and hurtful.

Accepting the blame

Duria continued what he had mentioned earlier by using an assertive illocutionary act that claimed that his sin was huge and could not be easily dismissed. By saying *The great evil that had done doesn't deserve to be forgiven*, Duria emphasized his understanding of the greatness of his mistake and how Sunari might despise his apology. Accepting his blame by judging himself as he does not deserve forgiveness placed Sunari in a higher position, and he asked for her mercy.

Recognising H as entitled to an apology

After saying that his mistake was so great and actually did not deserve any forgiveness, Duria continued to acknowledge and validate Sunari's feeling and position as a woman using assertive illocutionary acts. It was natural for her to be angry and refuse his apology:

It is right for you to think that way, it means you still remember and have dignity in this world. Earth will be doomed if the sun rises on the west of the world, and the banana's tree produces fruit twice'

By saying this, Duria indirectly highlighted that Sunari is entitled to an apology by showing his remorse.

Conventional (indirect) Apology Formula

After several moves of the Non-conventional indirect apology formula, Duria continued to apologize more explicitly by several strategies such as a request for acceptance of apology/forgiveness, a statement of obligation, and several statements of desire. A request of acceptance of apology is expressed figuratively. Duria portrayed himself like a weak small tree that needed a stake to live, as in the quotation below:

'Besides that, with a pure an honest intention, this despicable person begging for your kind heart, just like chilli stalk that need a supporting stake, hoping to get wind, get sunlight so that it can live properly.'

Further, Duria mentioned that he was responsible for all the ill fate that fell to Sunari, and it was his responsibility to fix this mistake. This move is performed by directive illocutionary acts of request such as *I'm the one who has burdened you with that insult, in this*

time I want to ask your time to pick those big problems. The letter ended with several statements of wish and desire, especially the longing for reconciliation, as shown in Table 3 above.

Image Repair Strategy

Although making an apology is considered as a politeness strategy that can save the addressee's face, this action actually puts the speaker's negative face in harm (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore an image repair act usually comes together with the act of apology. In Duria's letter, he used two strategies: reducing offensiveness and corrective action. Reduce offensiveness is the most dominant strategy used with three sub-strategies: bolstering, compensation, and transcendence.

Bolstering is used several times in the letter. Here the offensiveness of an act is reduced by emphasizing good intention, such as in utterance *I came here, is far from the intention of lush or stroking my ego, not also for showing off my wealth.* This strategy is used to bring out positive feelings toward the speaker by negating the possible negative assumption. Compensation is done by reimbursing the addressee with promises to fix the problem. The last sub-strategy to reduce offensiveness in the letter is transcendence. This is done by focusing on a more favorable context, for example, by saying *Let's unite the mind and action, hopefully, one day we can find peace and happiness in this world.* By using directive speech act which also involved the addressee as in the utterance, Duria proposed a better situation. However, he placed the responsibility of realizing it not only to himself but also to Sunari by using inclusive *we*.

The second strategy is corrective action in which Duria asked for a chance to fix his mistake and remove the humiliation and shame that Sunari received because of his past action. This can be inferred from the utterances *because I'm the one who has burdened you with that insult. So now I ask you for a chance to fix my mistake.* By doing so, Duria would like to repair his image from an irresponsible man to become a responsible one.

Conclusions

This study has explored how an apology is realized in Balinese, specifically a letter from a Balinese novel. The finding shows differences with previous studies in which the explicit IFID is not used. Instead, the main strategies used are indirect. The apology letter is opened by the least explicit strategies, the non-conventional indirect strategies, and ends with several more explicit conventional indirect strategies. As for the image repair strategy, only reduce offensiveness and a promise of corrective action is used. For the present study, the reason that can be drawn is that those strategies used are highly related to the specific context of the story in which Duria had committed a severe offense to Sunari in the past. The offense itself is never explicitly mentioned in the letter, as it might be too hurtful for the addressee to remember.

It is acknowledged that this study is very limited due to the small number and the specific context of the data set analysed. However, as the finding shows a very interesting result, this topic needs to be further studied, involving much larger data with a variety of contexts to find the typical Balinese apology that might be culture-specific.

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