Linguistic politeness of Pakistani English and British English speakers: Culture and gender perspectives

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Abstract: This study examines sociocultural, pragmatic, and gender differences between native speakers of British English (BritE) and Pakistani English speakers (PakE) in expressing apology responses (ARs). Based on a discourse completion task (DCT) using data from 60 speakers of both cultures, the study focuses on the variations in the use of apology response strategies in three severe and three non-severe situations. The findings show that the two groups use a variety of politeness strategies in expressing apology responses. The majority of BritE speakers tend to use ARs with the relatively strong hearer-oriented strategies (Acceptance). PakE ARs, on the other hand, seem to be dominated by the frequent use of Acknowledgment, with speaker-oriented strategies. Similarly, BritE speakers tend to use more indirect (Evasion) strategies as compared to PakE speakers. These results have proven that both male and female English-using Pakistanis are amazingly obvious and direct in their apology responses. Furthermore, the findings do not show quite pronounced gender differences both within and between the two cultures in terms of the strategy use and expressions.

Subjects: Cultural Studies; Language & Linguistics; Language Teaching & Learning

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
Studies on language and gender have revealed the differences between male and female linguistic style. Classically, men and women speak differently. Women use a large number of tags and less interruption forms in conversation than men do. In Western cultures, as stated, women often use high level of politeness expressions more than men do, unlike men, women have a more positive attitude towards standard language. The current study investigates apology responses from culture and gender perspective focusing how cultural nuances and gender role influence the use of apology responses of Pakistani English and British English speakers. Further, responding to apology is among the most challenging speech acts occur in everyday interaction, which renders their mastery vitally important to the communicative and pragmatic competence of the non-native English speakers.
Keywords: Apologies; cross-cultural pragmatics; culture; sociocultural; speech acts; politeness

1. Introduction
Different nations in the world possess their own particular cultures which demonstrate some “universalities and particularities” (Ngai & Janusch, 2018, p. 1). Culture and language are closely interconnected in a way that sociocultural conventions designate our way of thinking and speaking (Ngai & Janusch, 2015, 2018). Therefore, every culture has its own unique communicative patterns in its speech behavior. During intercultural interactions, people interpret the utterances of cultural “others” according to their own native sociolinguistic norms or according to the conventions of their own cultural settings. The present study reveals that the use of ARs is complex and sometimes difficult to recognize because it involves social, psychological, linguistic and paralinguistic aspects in its realization. The study indicates that misconceptions and communication breakdowns can be brought about by discourse differences as shaped by culture. Wouk (2006) asserts that a review of the relevant literature on apologies demonstrates that though researches on apologies have been a trend since the 1980s, there is an incessant increase in their number over the last 20 years.

In fact, many of the studies that are based on apologies have been carried out in isolation, and the interlocutor’s possible reactions to the act of apology have not been considered. Though scholars (Adrefiza & Jones, 2013; Agyekum, 2005; Robinson, 2004; Waluyo, 2017; Wu & Wang, 2016) have involved some of the pragmatic responses to the act of apology in their researches, the investigations are still lacking the inclusion of socio-pragmatic subtleties and linguistic strategies. The outcome of the studies such as that of Adrefiza and Jones (2013) reveals that the attention of the investigators towards the topic is inadequate and limited as interlocutor’s gender, the severity of the offense, and the possible reactions in such sociocultural aspects have not been the major concern of the studies.

Gender, however, has an influence on using language in all cultures (Chamani, 2014). Men and women differ in their linguistic style. A. Saleem et al. (2014) state that Pakistani women’s language is characterized by its shortness (brevity of expression) and attention and the excessive use of politeness strategies. On the other hand, men’s speech tends to be longer and more socially dominant. Another study by (Sultana & Khan, 2014) states that Pakistani women prefer using standard Urdu (not mixing it with indigenous languages) since they recognize it as valuable linguistic norms of their society so they try to keep it, but men, on the other hand, do not mind to utilize standard Urdu in their conversation. Conversely, women in western cultures tend to keep their linguistic norms, even closer to the standard language than men do or are agents of upcoming linguistic changes. However, the vital aspect of how people belonging to different cultures, gender, and degree of imposition as well as languages express themselves while responding to an apology is missing in the previous researches. The challenge for Pakistani English speakers in today’s “intercultural contexts is that social rules are in constant flux; what is appropriate depends on the unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the interlocutors, and the specific context in which they are communicating” (Azam & Saleem, 2018; Saleem et al., 2020). Eventually, “misconceptions and communication breakdowns are often brought about by discourse differences as shaped by culture” (Azam & Saleem, 2018, p. 45). Especially, when a large number of Pakistanis every year appear in IELTS and TOEFL tests in order to get admission in foreign English speaking and non-English-speaking universities (Khalid, 2016; Shamim, 2008), in such circumstances, inadequate pragmatics competence (insufficient knowledge of ARs) while studying abroad can be a cause of misconception and misunderstanding among speakers if they do not understand each other’s illocutionary intent. Furthermore, during the interaction with international organizations on Internet especially, social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, WeChat, Instagram, LinkedIn, Qzone etc.), English-using Pakistanis need to demonstrate adequate
pragmatic competence. So, ARs i.e. Apology Responses need to be among the major concerns of the investigations. In order to gain these results, the study poses the following research questions:

1. How do Pakistani English and British English speakers, both male and female, express apology responses?
2. What are their apology response strategies?
3. How are gender and cultural differences exhibited in apology response strategies in both language communities?

2. Literature review
In recent years, there have been a number of studies (Saleem et al., 2020, 2021b) conducted on apology response speech act. Previously, only a few studies (Adrefiza & Jones, 2013; Agyekum, 2006; Robinson, 2004) about ARs existed which had mostly been conducted due to the analysis pertaining to the use of apology and not because of the prime emphasis on inquiry. Saleem et al. (2021a) believe responses to apologies play an important role in remedial interchanges. They state that ARs can serve a fundamental function in restoring and maintaining social harmony that is achieved through the act of apology. In other words, the achievement of such an aim will be largely determined by the types of responses from the addressee or the offended person. Adrefiza (2011) suggests that responses to apology determine whether the offended person is satisfied with the apology through the apologizer’s acknowledgement of the offence. Apart from linguistic, socio-linguistic, and pragmatic elements, studies on ARs have frequently been integrated into studies considering other perspectives such as that of psychology and religious belief (Chejnová, 2021; Derakhshan et al., 2020; Ludwig, 2020; Pourmousavi & Zenouzagh, 2020; Su, 2020; Tsoumou, 2020).

The process of ARs is multifaceted as it symbolizes not only linguistic features but social and psychological perspectives also. Chejnová (2021) proposes that there are various pressing aspects such as situational factors, the interface of personality, individual factors and conditions that play a vital role in the realization of ARs. Research has specified three acts that might follow apologies. These acts are: (a) appreciation “Thanks, so nice of you”; (b) relief “you need to replace it with a new one” as well as (c) minimization “no problem at all, no damage done”. Jucker (2019) opines that utterances such as: “You’re welcome”, “That’s all right”, “Think nothing about it”, “No problem at all”, “No worries”, “That’s okay”, “That’s alright” happen to be the most commonly occurred decreasing remarks applied in American speech while ending the exchange. Choi and Severson (2009) assert that such remarks show an approval of regrets, whereas “OK” as well as “all right” without deictics “that’s” and “it’s” are recognized as an Acceptance of a regret (Maibodi & Dehghani, 2020).

Adrefiza and Jones (2013) claim that there are other utterances such as “Never mind”, “It’s nothing”, “Don’t you worry at all”, “Nothing to excuse”, “No worries at all”, “Don’t excuse”, and “No harm was done” that may be deduced as approval of a regret as these utterances indicate the offended person’s gratification over wrongdoing. Other studies about ARs conducted by Adrefiza and Jones’ (2013) categorized the above-mentioned statements into appreciation, minimization, and relief. In the study of Saleem et al. (2021b), further probable responses include Rejection, evasion, and acknowledgment. The usage of hedging devices has the ability to function either as minimization or relief in the expression of speech act.

2.1. Gender variations
Studies on language and gender have revealed the differences between male and female linguistic style (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Saleem & Anjum, 2018b; Su, 2020; Tsoumou, 2020). Classically, Lakoff (2004) concludes that men and women speak differently. Women use a large number of tags and less interruption forms in conversation than men do. In Western cultures, as stated by (Chejnová, 2021; Tsoumou, 2020), women often use high level of politeness expressions more than men do. Tsoumou (2020, p. 49) further states that unlike men, women “have a more positive attitude towards standard language”. A few decades ago, scholars in the
Table 1. Apology response framework

| Coding Values | Strategy | Expressions in English |
|---------------|----------|------------------------|
| A  | Acceptance (AC) |  |
| 1 | Absolution | “That’s OK” |
| 2 | Dismissal | “It doesn’t matter”, “Don’t worry” |
| 3 | Formal | “I accept your apology”, “I forgive you” |
| 4 | Thanking | “Thanks (for apologizing)” |
| 5 | Intensifiers | “It’s OK, really “, “It’s Ok, It’s Ok” |
| 6 | Requests | “Please return it as soon as possible” |
| 7 | Expressing Empathy | “I understand that stuff happens” |
| 8 | Expressing Emotion | “I’m disappointed” |
| 9 | Questioning/Surprise | “How could you do that to me?” |
| B  | Acknowledgement (AK) |  |
| 10 | Absolution plus | “That’s OK, but ……” |
| 11 | Dismissal plus | “It doesn’t matter, but ……” |
| 12 | Formal plus | “I accept your apology, but ……” |
| 13 | Advice/Suggestion | “You should be quite vigilant next time” |
| 14 | Accepting Remedies | “That sounds good” |
| 15 | Evaluating | “It’s ridiculous” |
| 16 | Accepting Promises | “I accept your words, but ………” |
| C  | Evasion |  |
| 17 | Deflecting/Explaining | “I have not seen you for a long time” |
| 18 | Providing Solution | “Go back and complete the task quickly” |
| 19 | Minimization | “Hey, it’s nothing buddy, just a carpet” |
| 20 | Expressing Concern | “Are ya Okay” |
| 21 | Shifts of Topic | “Forget about that I’ll buy a new one” |
| 22 | Shifts of Blame | “It was a bad weather” |
| D  | Rejection |  |
| 23 | Refusals | “I don’t accept your apology” |
| 24 | Questioning | “What do you mean by sorry” |
| 25 | Complaining | “I was expecting this from you” |
| 26 | Warning | “I’m not gonna tolerate this next time” |

(Continued)
| Coding Values | Strategy                  | Expressions in English                                      |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 27             | Blaming                   | “You’re really careless and make me suffer”                |
| 28             | Swearing                  | “You’re really shit”                                      |
| 29             | Asking for Compensation   | “You’ve to replace it with the new one”                   |
| 30             | Refusing Remedies         | “No way, I just want the same camera”                     |
| 31             | Non-apology “Sorry”       | “Sorry, I can’t forgive you”                              |
| 32             | Expressing Strong Emotions| “I’m getting mad, buzz off”                               |

Field of intercultural and cross-cultural communication have isolated cultural dimensions mentioned previously which can be employed for distinguishing cultures. The cultural dimensions are neither fixed absolutes nor contradictory, but they are relative and scalar; no culture is entirely individualistic or collectivist or more collectivist than some other cultures, and precise realizations of the dimensions also depend on contexts (Adrefiza, 2011). Review of the relevant literature indicates that previous studies (Saleem & Anjum, 2018a, 2018b) in the field did not investigate apology responses from culture and gender perspective. Nevertheless, the current study investigates how cultural nuances and gender role influence the use of apology responses of Pakistani English and British English speakers. Further, responding to apology is among the most challenging speech acts occur in everyday interaction, which, according to Adrefiza and Jones (2013) “renders their mastery vitally important to the communicative and pragmatic competence of the non-native English speakers” (p. 37).

3. Method

This data-oriented study is based on a quantitative approach to investigate the apology responses of English-using Pakistanis and British English speakers in interactive situations. For data collection, a Discourse Completion Test (DCT, see Appendix A), having 06 items, was adopted from Thijittang (2010). The DCT, also known as the “output questionnaire” (Saleem & Anjum, 2018a), is one of the data collection techniques that yields sufficiently large quantities of comparable, systematically varied data. The written DCT is a form of questionnaire comprised illustrated circumstances generated to obtain a specific speech act from targeted respondents. Participants are asked to carefully read the given scenarios and imagine that they were engaging in real life, and then write down what they would say (The focus remained on investigating pragmatic competence, not the written competence). The data collected can then be analysed as speech act realisations of the desired form of speech act (Saleem et al., 2021a). Nevertheless, the procedure can enable researchers to identify the effect of different social factors on producing and perceiving apology responses by designing a sequence of situationally varied scenarios. In addition, data and results elicited by DCT can be generalizable (Barron, 2008, as cited in Ogiermann, 2009). We personally explained and administered the DCT. The target population of this study was (30) Pakistani English speakers (15 males, 15 females) consisting of English faculty working in public sector universities in Pakistan, and (30) British English native (15 males, 15 females) speakers. Kasper and Dahl (1991) recommended that “because participants’ responses in crosscultural speech-act realization studies seem to cluster around specific subcategories, 30 subjects per undivided sample” (p. 16) who respond to “a DCT is a sufficient sample to answer most Pragmatics speech-act realization questions” (see also Bergman & Kasper, 1993). The only criteria for selecting the PakE participants from different institutions was that the respondent
should be educated M.Phil or PhD to demonstrate sociocultural and pragmatic competence and should be in a job where the official written work is carried out in English. The sample of the current study was selected through non-random, purposive and convenience sampling procedures. The British English speakers were from the British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL), University of Edinburgh, UK, and the Coventry University, UK. All the British English speakers were the faculty members (English Department) of the Coventry University, UK, Leeds University UK, and University of Edinburgh, UK. Pakistani English speakers' data were collected from their work places and British English speakers' data were collected through e-mail. The DCT data were analyzed by using SPSS-20, by assigning specific values (1–32, see Table 1, One-way ANOVA was run to investigate the two groups' use of ARs because researchers such as Tabachnick et al. (2007) considered it to be the best statistical approach to use when evaluating the significance of group differences for one continuous dependent variable and one discrete independent variable. Further, the probability level for statistical significance was set at $p < .05$, the standard in the field of applied linguistics (Al-Momani, 2009). Nevertheless, in the present study, AR detailed strategies are grouped as follows:

4. Results

It is already mentioned that descriptive statistics were run, including one-way ANOVA to find the comparative differences among the two groups’ apology responses. There were six situations based on severe and non-severe offenses from the DCT questionnaire.

- **Situation 1 Employee forgot to pass an urgent letter**

As shown in Table 2, results of S1 indicate that Pakistani English speakers, both male and female tend to use less Acceptance strategies ($M = .08$, $M = .12$). In contrast, British English speakers both male and female prefer to use more Acceptance strategies ($M = .40$, $M = .40$). The findings further elaborate that a significant mean difference is not found between the male and female respondents of both the groups.

In contrast, EuP speakers both male and female prefer to use more Acknowledgment strategies ($M = .60$, $M = .52$) than BritE (male and female) respondents ($M = .12$, $M = .12$). Nevertheless, we find the lower mean difference between Pakistani English speakers male and female respondents, similarly, there is no mean difference found between British English speakers’ male and female respondents. As a result, as shown in Table 2, a statistically significant mean difference is reported ($p = .005$) in the use of Acknowledgment strategies between the two language groups.

Speakers of both languages tend to use less Evasion strategies in S1. Nonetheless, Pakistani English speakers both male and female comparatively tend to use less strategies ($M = .08$, $M = .08$) than British English both male and female speakers ($M = .16$, $M = .15$). Both groups, male and female respondents are found using a similar number of ARs. Hence, a statistically significant mean difference is observed ($p > .005$) in the use of Evasion strategies between two groups.

Pakistani English male and female respondents tend to use more Rejection strategies ($M = .36$, $M = .40$) in S1. Surprisingly, females are found using slightly more strategies than male, though the difference is not significant. In contrast, British English male and female respondents prefer to use less strategies of Rejection ($M = .28$, $M = .24$) in S1. Here, we can see the opposite reaction, British English male prefers to use more Rejection ARs than female respondents though the difference is quite minor one. Regardless, a statistically significant mean difference is found ($p > .005$) in the use of Rejection ARs in the current situation.

- **Situation 2 A friend promised to return a laptop after a week**

In this situation, where the offender is a close friend and situation is rated as non-severe. Results presented in Table 3 signal that British English speakers male and female prefer to use Acceptance
strategies ($M = .40, M = .60$) more often in this situation. On the other hand, EuP speakers’ male and female tend to assign low mean scores ($M = .28$ and $M = .30$) to Acceptance strategies in this situation. Nevertheless, a statistically significant ($p > .005$) difference is not observed in the use of Acceptance strategies in non-severe situations.

The results of Acknowledgment category, instead, indicate that EuP both male and female respondents as compared to the Acceptance category prefer to use more Acknowledgment strategies in this situation. The mean score of EuP male and female is ($M = .35, M = .40$). In contrast, BritE speakers both male and female as compared to Acceptance strategies prefer to use less ($M = .36, M = .30$) Acknowledgment strategies in this non-severe situation. Nonetheless, a statistically significant ($p > .005$) difference is not found between the two culturally diverse groups.

As the results indicate that EuP respondents both male and female tend to use less ($M = .16, M = .16$) Evasion strategies in this situation. In contrast, as can be seen in Table 3, the male respondents of BritE group tend to use less ($M = .16$) Evasion strategies as compared to females who prefer to use more ($M = .40$) Evasion strategies in this non-severe situation. Nevertheless, a significant mean difference ($p > .005$) is not reported in the use of Evasion strategies between two groups.

Similar to the Evasion category, the results of the Rejection category also exhibit that there is not found any difference in the use of Rejection ARs between two groups as can be seen in the table.

**Situation 3 Head forgot to inform the junior to join the meeting**

In another severe situation, where the offender is a head of an organization, forgets to inform the junior to join the meeting. Results indicate that EuP respondents both male and female prefer to express more Acceptance ARs ($M = .72, M = .60$). Surprisingly, BritE speakers both male and female also tend to use more Acceptance ARs ($M = .40, M = .48$) in this situation. Subsequently, a significant ($p > .005$) mean difference is not found in the use of ARs in this situation between two language groups.

Surprisingly, EuP both male and female tend to use less Acknowledgment strategies ($M = .16, M = .16$) in this situation. Similarly, BritE speakers both male and female prefer to use more Acknowledgment ARs ($M = .50, M = .40$) in this situation, where the offender is a boss. Nevertheless, a significant ($p > .005$) mean difference is not observed in the use of AK strategies in this situation.

The results of Evasion strategy indicate that both groups’ male and female tend to use less Evasion ARs. Regardless, BritE speakers are found comparatively using more EV strategies than EuP.

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**Table 2. ANOVA results of situation1 (Employee forgot to pass on an urgent letter)**

| ARs | EuP | BritE |
|-----|-----|-------|
|     | Male | Female | Male | Female | DF | Errors | F | Sig |
| AC  | .08 | .277 | .12 | .332 | .40 | .500 | .40 | .500 | 2(72) | 5.221 | .008 |
| AK  | .60 | .500 | .52 | .510 | .12 | .332 | .12 | .332 | 2(72) | 5.778 | .005* |
| EV  | .08 | .277 | .08 | .277 | .16 | .374 | .16 | .374 | 2(72) | 2.215 | .116 |
| RJ  | .36 | .490 | .40 | .500 | .28 | .458 | .24 | .436 | 2(72) | .400 | .672 |

Note. EuP = Pakistani English speakers, BritE = British English speakers. AC = “Acceptance” strategy, AK = “Acknowledgement” strategy, EV = “Evasion” strategy, RJ = “Rejection” strategy.
Table 3. ANOVA results of situation 2 (A friend promised to return a laptop after a week)

| ARs | EuP Male | EuP Female | BritE Male | BritE Female | DF | errors | F | Sig |
|-----|---------|------------|------------|-------------|----|--------|---|-----|
| AC  | .28     | .458       | .40        | .500        | .60 | .516   | 2(72) | .558 | .732 |
| AK  | .36     | .490       | .36        | .490        | .30 | .483   | 2(72) | 1.923 | .104 |
| EV  | .16     | .374       | .16        | .374        | .40 | .516   | 2(72) | .450 | .811 |
| RJ  | .12     | .332       | .08        | .277        | .12 | .332   | 2(72) | .450 | .811 |

Note. EuP = Pakistani English speakers, BritE = British English speakers. AC = “Acceptance” strategy, AK = “Acknowledgement” strategy, EV = “Evasion” strategy, RJ = “Rejection” strategy.

speakers with a mean of (M = .28; M = .20; M = .12; M = .12) respectively. Hence, a statistically significant difference (p > .005) is not report between the two language groups.

Unsurprisingly, the results of Rejection ARs show that EuP male respondents tend to use more Rejection ARs than female respondents with a proportion of (M = .28, M = .12). In contrast, BritE female respondents prefer to use comparatively more RJ strategies (M = .16) than male participants (M = .12). Nevertheless, a statistically significant difference (p > .005) is not observed between the two language groups.

- **Situation 4 A colleague stepped foot on another colleague’s foot in a crowded elevator**

In this situation in which a colleague stepped foot on another colleague’s foot in a crowded elevator. Here, there is no such power difference between the interlocutors. Both interlocutors and equal social power, neutral social distance as well, and the situation is also non-severe. We can see in the table that as we have observed the trend in this study, English-using Pakistanis both male and female are found using less Acceptance ARs (M = .24, M = .32) as compared to British English speakers (both male and female) who tend to use more Acceptance ARs (M = .56, M = .40) in this situation. Regardless, a significant (p > .005) difference is not reported in the use of Acceptance ARs in this situation between two culturally diverse groups.

Unsurprisingly, English-using Pakistanis both male and female even tend to use more AK strategies in this non-severe situation (M = .52, M = .50) as compared to British English speakers who are found using less AK strategies (M = .12, M = .12). Hence, there is found significant (P = .03) difference in the use of AK strategies between the two groups in this situation.

In terms of Evasion category, results show that speakers of both EuP (M = .12, M = .12) and BritE groups (both male and female) (M = .16, M = .24) tend to use less EV strategies in this situation. Nonetheless, a significant (p > .005) difference in not reported within the two groups. As concerns, the Rejection ARs, alike Evasion strategies both EuP (M = .16, M = .12) and BritE (M = .16, M = .12) tend to use less RJ strategies in this situation. So, a significant (p > .005) difference is not found in the RJ strategies within two groups.

- **Situation 5 Junior copied an article from a website for his/her presentation**

In another severe situation, when the transgressor is a junior officer and there is a social power difference between the interlocutors. Again, as has been the trend in EuP ARs, both male and female speakers tend to use a less Acceptance (M = .12, M = .32) ARs though English-using Pakistani females comparatively prefer to use more Acceptance ARs as the mean score indicates. In contrast, British English speakers both male and female prefer to use more AC strategies
(M = .40, M = .52) though British English females tend to use more AC strategies in this situation as the mean score shows. Nevertheless, a significant (p > .005) differences is not reported within the groups.

English-using Pakistani both male and female prefer to use AK strategies more often (M = .60, M = .52) in this severe situation. On the other hand, BritE speakers both male and female tend to use less AK strategies (M = .16, M = .16) in this situation. Subsequently, a significant (p > .005) difference is not stated within groups in the use of AK strategies in this situation.

Unlike AK strategies, EuP speakers both male and female prefer to use less EV strategies (M = .08, M = .12) as compared to BritE male and female speakers who tend to use more EV strategies (M = .32, M = .20). Nevertheless, a significant (p > .005) difference is not indicated in the use EV strategies within the groups.

In terms of Rejection ARs, results indicate that EuP male respondents tend to use more RJ strategies (M = .20) as compared to female (M = .12) in this situation. Similarly, though BritE speakers prefer to use less RJ strategies yet BritE male respondents tend to use slightly more RJ strategies in comparison to female respondents (M = .08) in this situation. Nevertheless, a significant (p > .005) is not described within these groups.

• **Situation 6 Workmate came almost half an hour late to see a colleague**

In this situation, where the offense is non-severe as the colleague comes almost half an hour late and there is equal social power. We can observe that EuP both male and female prefer to use an almost similar number of Acceptance ARs (M = .36, M = .40). In contrast, quite surprisingly BritE male tends to use less AC strategies (M = .36) as compared to female respondents (M = .64) in this situation. In any case, a significant (p > .005) difference is not indicated in the use of AC strategies within these groups.

We can see that EuP speaker both male and female prefer to use more AK strategies (M = .44, M = .48) in this situation. Contrastively, BritE speakers both male and female tend to use less AK strategies (M = .12, M = .16) in this situation. Hence, a significant (p < .005) difference is reported in the use of AK strategies within these groups in this situation.

It can be noticed that both EuP and BritE speakers tend to use less EV strategies in this situation. The mean score of EuP both male and female is (M = .12, M = .12) and BritE speakers is (M = .12, M = .20) though BritE females prefer to use slightly more EV strategies in this situation. Nonetheless, a significant (p > .005) difference is stated in the use of EV strategies within these
groups. In accordance with EV strategies, as we can see, results of RJ strategies are also quite similar. Both EuP and BritE prefer to use less RJ strategies in this situation. Nonetheless, EuP male respondents prefer to use slightly more RJ strategies (M = .20) than female respondents (M = .12) in this situation. In the same vein, BritE male respondents also tend to use more RJ strategies (M = .20) as compared to female (M = .04) in this situation. Nevertheless, a significant (p > .005) difference is indicated in the use of EV strategies within these groups.

5. Discussion
It can be noticed that Acceptance strategies are expressed through a number of subsidiary speech acts as mentioned by researchers (Adrefiza & Jones, 2013; Holmes, 2006; Waluyo, 2017), and similar kind of responses can be noticed in the current study. Both male and female participants’ responses have similar illocutionary indicating force device (IFID) as Acceptance apology responses are represented through Absolution including dismissal based on the terms of “That’s OK”, “That’s alright”, “It’s fantastic”, “That’s fine”, “No issue”, “No problem” and “Don’t need to worry”. Wu and Wang (2016), Adrefiza (2011), and Adrefiza and Jones (2013) suggest that such an expression is uttered quite frequently as it indicates an Absolution comprising an indexical term “That’s” followed by an evaluation “OK”, “Fine”, “Alright” etc. including dismissal remarks signaling that the respondent does not agree with the wrongdoer’s claim to have triggered a transgression (Saleem & Anjum, 2018a, 2018b; Waluyo, 2017; Wu & Wang, 2016). Another aspect can be noticed that is the use of religious and cultural-specific AR expression of EuP. The respondent is found using the religious term “Inshallah” and cultural-specific term “Chan G” to show harmony with the interlocutor. It also shows Islamic teachings’ impact (or the term “Inshallah” is overstated in daily interactions in Pakistani culture) on the respondent to display solidarity and concern for the offended person. These utterances depict that the offender has not done any harm or damage. These utterances entail that the wrongdoers negative face is saved and balance is recovered.

Further, the significant mean differences in the score of Acknowledgement ARs (see Tables 2, 5, and 7) can as well be proof of a diverse demonstration of politeness and face principles in the two groups’ conversation styles. Allowing the perpetrator free completely (accepting the apology from the offender), for most of EuP participants, may be looked at somewhat that accounts harm to their immodesty and self-esteem, whereas for many British English speakers, it can be looked at the other, a mean of preserving face by not permitting a severe transgression. As a result, both male and female of EuP speakers, in a way, may agree to regret weakly in their Acknowledgements, making the violators with a certain type of face-risk manifestation. As noted, Acknowledgement category clearly exhibits EuP speakers’ preference for the use of cultural-specific and socio-religious ARs. In the current study, Acknowledgement ARs are expressed through a number of subsidiary speech acts.

The Acknowledgement category is illustrated through such face-risk utterances, somewhat, weaken the level of Acceptance in the ARs (Adrefiza, 2011; Saleem & Anjum, 2018a). Such ARs, primarily, signal that the speakers depart from those of complete “Acceptance”. The example above illustrates the responses from EuP and BritE data, the Absolution speech act is expressed through “It’s OK”, “Okay” at the start of the utterances. The speech act of expressing emotion (disappointment) “but amazing thing for me is that you didn’t even bother to tell me about it” by EuP speaker and (suggestion for upcoming event) “but please return me tomorrow” uttered by the BritE speaker in the above example depict a face-risk toward the transgressor and denote the AR as an instance of Acknowledgment.

The female speakers also tend to use the Dismissal “Ma’am, no worries at all” from EuP and “no worries”, from BritE data to show their intent to approve the excuse. Nevertheless, the Elaborative term comprising “Please you go, don’t worry about me”, from EuP respondent, in fact, undermines the Acceptance as they risk the transgressor’s public image. One exciting trend can be noticed here that English-using Pakistanis female speakers tend to use elaborated expressions to show solidarity with the speakers. But one thing need be kept in mind that this response has occurred to the
addressee of higher status, and the speaker has again and again used the honorific “Ma'am” to mitigate the face loss of the interlocutor. On the other hand, if we see the response of BritE female speaker that is quite simple and short “No worries, I'm Ok” indicates that the speaker is not influenced by the status of the addressee, and still defuses the situation by protecting the offender's public self-image. Nonetheless, the use of “Dismissal” in addition to “Requesting” indicates the reply as an Acknowledgement.

In the current study, Pakistani English speakers seem to use less Evasion ARs as compared to British English speakers who are found favoring the use of this strategy. Though EuP speakers are supposed to be uncertain and unclear in their responses yet this trend is not observed in their AR behavior. They prefer to use more direct strategies even though their ARs are quite elaborate and prolonged than BritE speakers' responses. Nevertheless, in the current study, BritE speakers are found using more Evasion ARs than EuP speakers. BritE respondents do not offer obvious or direct approval or Rejection in their reactions. Rather, they attempt to deviate their reactions through different manners, such as by expressing cultural-specific religious term “Oh God” by EuP male speaker, and “Oh gosh” by BritE male speaker, and clarifying or explaining the importance of the task as the response from EuP speaker illustrates “It was not just writing a report. It was our only hope to win the trust and annual appraisal from the committee members”, and BritE respondent’s expression is “I really wasn’t expecting you to be late”, and expressing an expectation about past event as in EuP “Honestly speaking, I have very little hope upon you”, and BritE “Let’s haste now, we got to be honest with our job”. In the second example of females’ data, it can be noticed that there is not any sign of acceptance and rejection of apology, rather female speakers prefer to use Evasion ARs with questioning, “why you did this?” From EuP data, “how could you do that” from BritE data. The “Evasion with Deflection and Questioning” responses expressed here do not clearly reveal either the excuse is approved or denied. The responses in this category are speaker-oriented not the hearer-oriented (Bippus & Young, 2020; Dhami, 2012; Holmes, 2006; Jones & Adrefiza, 2017). The responses are negative in nature and remain face-threatening for the interlocutors, though an effort is made to restore equilibrium between the speakers, regardless, the addressee is not out of trouble completely.

It is noticed that speakers of both communities tend to use less Rejection ARs as reported in the previous section. However, as the numbers mentioned, EuP speakers tend to use more Rejection ARs as compared to British English speakers. The response of the EuP male speaker begins with Questioning expression “How can you forget?” seems quite face-threatening, further makes it more negative with the use of another Questioning “Honestly tell me, are you interested in doing job or not”, and using Refusal “Listen don’t kill your time and my time”, including an offer of Advice “be careful next time”. In contrast, the BritE speaker uses the Refusal expression straight away “I don’t think I’m going to tolerate this negligence”, including Advice “You got to be more careful next time”. These remarks indicate the respondents' Rejection with the act of Refusal enclosed. The highlighted remarks, in the examples given above, represent the Refusal, showing that the respondents decline the wrongdoers' promise of forbearance and lack of intent, that is, “I forgot to pass it you”, “It won't happen again”, as an effort to take care of the issue. In a way, the Refusals also signify the respondents’ feelings. This aspect informs us that one prolonged reaction could have more than one additional conversation act (Adrefiza, 2011). Despite the fact that there is no obvious or immediate leading act of Rejection uttered, like “I can't forgive you” or “Your apology is not accepted”, these reactions in the illustrations above offer enough signs to recommend a Rejection; the participants are severely harmed by the transgressors' negligence of forgetting to give an urgent letter and find it difficult to absolve. The remarks of Rejection in the above perspective peril the wrongdoers face and the effort to recover the individual balance between the speakers' collapses (Adrefiza, 2011).
The response from one female EuP speaker is quite elaborate and seems pretty face-threatening for the addressee as well. It begins with address term “Gentleman” and Advice “You got to make it sure that such stuff is not going to happen in future” including “if it happens again, mind you, without delay even for a moment, I will dismiss you from job” further explaining the Warning “I will not keep in mind, how many kids you have to feed with” adding extremely face-threatening idiomatic expression “Buzz off”. The following response indicates quite positive pragmalinguistics attitude of the speaker but seems negative as far as sociopragmatic target language culture knowledge is concerned because the speaker has typically displayed the native nature of handling the situation and has translated the Urdu language strings in the target language. In contrast, the BritE response begins with Advice “Be mindful of your responsibility”, including a Warning “I’m not gonna tolerate this ignorance next time”. The BritE response does not seem as much face-threatening as EuP speaker’s response is, moreover, BritE response is quite short as compared to EuP response. It suggests that English-using Pakistani speaker has displayed the kind of intent that is more negative in nature than the British English speaker’s response triggering the phenomenon of negative sociopragmatic transfer in the target language.

### 5.1. Conclusion

The realization of Acceptance ARs by English-using Pakistanis, and British English speakers was realized in similar forms exhibit a marked preference for the use of usual apology response expressions (Absolution) “That’s/it’s Ok!” or the intensified forms of Absolution that are Ok, really that’s Ok/, and Dismissal “no issue/no worries/it doesn’t matter!”. The expressions of ARs throughout Acceptance category in two groups data functioned partly as a phatic strategy in particular for expressing remission and pardon rather than performing an AR function in spite of their high mean score. However, in the Pakistani context, such Acceptance expressions were used as apology response strategies according to the participants' preference and perception. Other strategies like Acknowledgement (Absolution plus, Dismissal plus, Advice/suggestion, Accepting remedies and Accepting promises) were categorized in this study as positive politeness strategies. Accepting remedies and accepting promises in both Pakistani and British cultures function to restore harmony in a verbalized way; specifically, in the Pakistani context, it is shown that it is religiously compulsory to accept the promises and remedies rather than just declining and keeping ill-will. At the same time, accepting remedies indicated the less self-private dimension in Pakistani culture; this was evident in the real Acceptance of remedy and promise in the situation (2) when a friend forgot to return the laptop in time. On the other hand, advice/suggestion was used as a way to ensure a smooth continuation of harmonious communication. Thus, both approaches served the function of apology responses; in particular, maintaining social relationships. Though EuP exhibited positive sociocultural transfer occasionally, their collectivistic nature triggered them to realize ARs through native content and models of ARs. The apology reaction techniques followed by terms of empathy and kinship revealed the essence of Pakistani collectivist society, even within an overtly religious context.
was clear in apology reactions for individual offences irrespective of the effects of the offence on larger communities or culture as a whole. This is due to the fact that the conception of the face varies in Pakistani settings from more individualistic societies. The results, however, display a few extra phenomena of interest. Two groups are generally both speaker-oriented (SO) and hearer-oriented (HO) in their apology responding actions. It is manifested by the mean score of Acceptance and Acknowledgment strategies realized by the participants in each of the groups. Simultaneously, the recurrence of Acknowledgement is clearly rich in EuP data signaling that in Pakistani culture, positive politeness has prodigious domination in apology responses (Gillani & Mahmood, 2014). At the same time, the use of Acknowledgment ARs also indicate that EuP speakers do not let the offender off the hook completely illustrating the influence of cultural traits in their AR realizations. They want to keep their public self-image intact, preserving their self-dignity and authority over the hearer. The worth noting fact regarding EuP speakers’ sociocultural transfer is that Acceptance and Acknowledgment strategies are the most favored response of the four strategies. This appears to be in line with the Pakistani society’s cultural characteristics, who are believed to belong to two fundamentally diverse types of cultures. According to Saleem et al. (2021b), Pakistan is generally associated with Eastern and collectivist culture, while the UK is commonly thought to be Western and individualist. The two cultures are said to vary from one another in many characteristics, such as the way personal and social relations in society are preserved. According to Saleem et al. (2021a), in Pakistan, as a collectivist society, social and personal relations are customarily powerful than those in individualist nations such as the UK,
because public encounters are discussed in meeting much more regularly than in an individualist community. One more exciting trend is the mean score of Evasion techniques in use. The reason that English-using Pakistanis display the least occurrence in EV than the British English speakers seem to encounter one of the typical generalizations about the conversation designs of the two groups. These generalizations develop in a typical difference made about interaction behaviors between High Context Perspective and Low Context Perspective societies (Saleem & Anjum, 2018b). Basically, Pakistan is believed to be HC, thus, their conversation behaviors seem to be regarded uncertain, implied, and indecisive (Sultana & Khan, 2014); Westerns, in contrast, are usually supposed LC and direct, open, and candid (Adrefiza, 2011). Evasion actually is an HC attribute as it reveals a large degree of intricate and indirectness on the part of the speaker (Adrefiza, 2011). Thus, individuals from an LC lifestyle sometimes find it tough to understand individuals from HC as their conversation purpose can be uncertain (Adrefiza, 2011). Saleem and Anjum (2018b) claim that such conversation functions are popular in the Pakistani community. The current research, however, reveals that such functions do not operate noticeably in Pakistanis responses in English. Amazingly, English-using Pakistanis seem to go to express themselves less evasively than usual. Further, the traditional concepts of politeness suggested that the level of politeness can be improved by indirectness while executing apology response conversation act behavior. In the current study, the exact reverse is reported; responding to apology straight and clearly increases social connections and helps to save the upset person’s face due to directness which is related with positive social standards like solidarity, religious concern rather than being indirect while responding to an apology. The English-using Pakistanis Acceptance and Acknowledgment ARs were more prolonged and overstated than British English speakers’ apology responses, clearly indicating the operation of sociocultural transfer by using local language-specific and culture-specific AR models. Such apology response strategies included using techniques of solidarity and deference as an attempt for preserving both the apologizer and the apologizee’s face. The current research also differed from facets of Brown and Levinson’s concept of politeness (1987) particularly the hearer-oriented face-saving act. This was indicated through how English-using Pakistanis, and British English speakers’ apology responses aim to preserve not only the offender’s face but also to preserve the speakers’ own face. Moreover, sometimes religiously for the sake of Allah. Therefore, responding to apology in Pakistani culture is a multi-dimensional communicative act. For example, English-using Pakistanis preferred the use of positive AR strategies (Acceptance and Acknowledgment). Though EuP tend to use more positive strategies yet their Acknowledgement ARs seem to be more face-threatening tailored with culture-specific formulaic expressions. In contrast, British English speakers favored the use of both positive and negative AR strategies (Acceptance and Evasion), and even comparatively semantic content of their negative strategies seem less face-threatening. Regardless, the responses of two groups speakers were a combination of speaker-oriented and hearer-oriented speech act behavior. Further, responding to an apology is a universal conversation act, yet it can be executed in a different way and serve different purposes when compared across “languages” and societies. The English-using Pakistanis here often were responding to apologies using strategies whose main content shows their cultural beliefs and values. This was noticeable in the frequent use of apology responses containing words of brotherhood connections and referrals to religious concepts whereas the British English speakers preferred to resort to more typical forms of apology responses in English. The common use of apology responses by EuP prefixes such as by Allah, dear, brother/bhai, yar, chan g etc. Apology responses restore the social stability with the addressee: the face of the interlocutor can be saved. The face-saving act can be executed by responding to apology to reform a relationship by a combination of absolution, dismissal, thanking, advice/suggesting accepting remedies and so on. The excessive use of apology response strategies and the increased feeling of satisfaction are within repertoires of a speaker’s choice for marginalizing the offender. From a gender perspective, in general, individuals in the two groups’ data do not reveal different AR techniques, although in many cases the variations were relatively small or minimal.
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Appendix A Apology Response Scenarios

Instructions

Please put yourself in the following situations and assume that in each instance you will have to say something. Write down what you would say in English in the space provided.

(1) At the office, your employee forgot to pass on an urgent letter to you. The next day you complained to your employee that he/she did not pass it to you. He/she says:

Employ: Sorry Sir/Ma’am, I forget to pass it on to you. It won’t happen again.

You: __________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________

(1) Your friend promised to return your laptop after a week. However, he/she kept it for almost two weeks. Then you asked your friend to return it. He/she says:

Friend: O’ Sorry yar, forgot, really I’ll give you tomorrow, promise.

You: __________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________

(1) You are a junior officer in an organization. Your head forgot to inform you to join the meeting so you missed it because of your head’s negligence. Your head talked to you about his fault. He/she says:

Head: I’m really sorry dear; it just skipped out of my mind.

You: __________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________

(1) In the officer’s mess, a senior officer stepped on your foot passing by you. Senior officer says?

Senior officer: Ouch! Sorry dear, I didn’t see you coming. Are you OK? Hope I didn’t hurt you.

You: __________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________

(1) You are a senior officer, your junior copied an article from a website for his/her presentation, which you found out. Your junior officer says:

Junior officer: I beg pardon Sir/Ma’am, forgive me this time, and assure you it won’t happen again.

You: __________________________________________________________  
______________________________________________________________
(1) You were assigned to do a report with your workmate. You were told to see him at the main door of the meeting room but your workmate came almost half an hour late. The reason of being late was because he missed the first bus. He says:

**Workmate:** Sorry yar I missed the train. Mom didn’t make me to wake up early. And buses you know mostly come late but today came well in time and I was late.

You:

-