

A Pragmatic Study of Apology Strategies in English Novel

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Abstract

This study investigates the pragmatic functions of apology strategies in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's taxonomy of apology strategies. The study particularly focuses on how characters utilize various speech acts to navigate social relationships, express regret, and maintain politeness. The research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What types of apology strategies are employed by the characters in *Pride and Prejudice*?
2. How are these strategies pragmatically realized through linguistic forms such as IFIDs, explanations, expressions of responsibility, and concern for the hearer?
3. What do these pragmatic choices reveal about social norms, character development, and interpersonal dynamics in the novel?

The data analysis, based on selected extracts from the novel, identifies a range of apology strategies including illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), explanations, taking on responsibility (explicitly or by minimizing intent), concern for the hearer, and offers of repair. These strategies are examined through different pragmatic lens, drawing on concepts from speech act theory and politeness theory. The findings reveal that apologies in the novel function as complex pragmatic acts- not merely expressions of regret but also mechanisms of social negotiation, self-presentation, and emotional sensitivity. Characters tailor their apologies based on the context, status, and relational distance, demonstrating a high level of sociopragmatic awareness. Mr. Darcy, in particular, exemplifies the shift from impersonal, formal apologies to sincere, hearer-oriented expressions of remorse that reflect his emotional growth. In conclusion, the research highlights Austen's nuanced use of apology as a pragmatic tool to reflect character development and reinforce the thematic interplay between pride, prejudice, and humility. The novel showcases how language operates not just to communicate remorse, but to negotiate power, restore relationships, and conveying personal transformation.

Keyword: Pragmatics, Apology Strategies, Speech Act Theory, Politeness, *Pride and Prejudice*.

دراسة تداولية لأساليب الاعتذار في الرواية الانكليزية

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المخلص

تدرس هذه الدراسة الوظائف التداولية لأساليب الاعتذار في رواية "كبرياء وهوى" للكاتب جين أوستن باستخدام نموذج بلوم-كيلكا وأولشتن وكوهين، مع التركيز على كيفية استخدام الشخصيات لعدة أفعال خطابية للتعامل مع العلاقات الاجتماعية، للتعبير عن الأسف، والحفاظ على الأدب. تهدف الدراسة للإجابة على الأسئلة التالية:

1. ما هي أنواع اساليب الاعتذار التي تستخدمها الشخصيات في "كبرياء وهوى"؟
2. كيف يتم تحقيق هذه الاساليب تداوليا من خلال أشكال لغوية مثل أدوات تدل على القوة الإنجازية للكلام، الشروحات، التعبيرات عن المسؤولية، والاهتمام بالمستمع؟
3. ماذا تكشف هذه الاختيارات التداولية عن المعايير الاجتماعية، وتطور الشخصيات، والديناميكيات بين الشخصيات في الرواية؟

لقد اظهر تحليل البيانات، المستند إلى مقاطع مختارة من الرواية، مجموعة من استراتيجيات الاعتذار التي تشمل ادوات تدل على القوة الإنجازية للكلام، الشروحات، تحمل المسؤولية (بشكل صريح أو عن طريق التقليل من النية، الاهتمام بالمستمع، وعروض الإصلاح). لقد درست هذه الاساليب من خلال الجانب التداولي، بالاستناد إلى مفاهيم من نظرية الأفعال الخطابية ونظرية الأدب. تكشف النتائج أن الاعتذارات في الرواية تعمل كأفعال تداولية معقدة - ليست مجرد تعبيرات عن الأسف ولكن أيضاً آليات للتفاوض الاجتماعي، وعرض الذات، والحساسية العاطفية. تقوم الشخصيات بتخصيص اعتذاراتها بناءً على السياق، والمكانة، وبعد الترابط، مما يظهر مستوى عالٍ من الوعي التداولي الاجتماعي. يُعد السيد دارسي مثلاً على التحول من الاعتذارات الرسمية وغير الشخصية إلى تعبيرات صادقة وموجهة نحو المستمع التي تعكس نموه العاطفي. وفي الختام، لقد ابرزت الدراسة الاستخدام المتقن للاعتذار من قبل أوستن كأداة تداولية لتعكس تطور الشخصيات وتعزيز التفاعل الموضوعي بين الفخر، والهوى، والتواضع. تظهر الرواية كيف تعمل اللغة ليس كأداة للتعبير عن الأسف فقط، ولكن أيضاً للتفاوض على السلطة، وإعادة بناء العلاقات، ونقل التحول الشخصي للفرد.

الكلمة المفتاحية: علم التداولية، استراتيجيات الاعتذار، نظرية أفعال الكلام، التهذيب، كبرياء وهوى.

1. Introduction

As a form of discourse in literature, language does not merely convey different stories, but is constructed to represent the layered social interaction of people as they experience real-world life moments. Pragmatically, novels also afford rich resources to investigate the nature of speech acts in particular cultural, social settings. Apology is an important factor for social harmony, interpersonal relationships, repairing interpersonal relationships, and mitigating face-threatening acts. In literature apologies are hardly communicative; they are constructed actions which manifest social consciousness and values as well as their own personality and character maturation.

Apology is a pragmatic speech act which is considered to indicate an offence and convey regret within the context of pragmatics. In fiction, however, apologies are treated as special expressions (because apologies are consciously written by the author to represent social forms and character as well as to contribute to the plot). Hence, the examination of apology strategies in literary texts offers important contributions to our knowledge of pragmatic behavior and narrative structuring. However, despite the focus on apology strategies in natural discourse, relatively little research has centered on

the application of these strategies in literary texts. In particular, there has been limited empirical investigation of the pragmatic analysis of apology strategies in canonical novels. It shows up in the fact that studies need to be conducted systematically, exploring how apologies are constructed in literature and performed.

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen, to a great extent, provides the setting for this kind of examination. The novel deals with societal expectations of class, manners, and morality in Regency England. There are important themes of polite speech. The characters' apology is often made in response to misunderstandings, social affronts, and/or an ill-conceived response. Interestingly, the apology patterns of Mr. Darcy and Mr. Collins reveal social strata, personality, as well as moral growth, making the novel a fertile ground for pragmatic investigation. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the use of apology strategies in *Pride and Prejudice* by choosing and studying certain examples of apologies made by important characters. This research, based on theories of speech acts and politeness, aims to consider how these strategies operate in the novel's social and narrative contexts and their role in character development and communication.

1.1 The Concept of Apology

Apologies are sometimes defined according to what are known as their corrective purposes; they are usually based on accepting the responsibility or expressing a sense of regret. Many linguists classify apology as a way to repair an offense. For example, Olshtain indicates that an apology involves either an act or a statement as a corrective [1]. Holmes also describes apology as a speech act to make amends for offense that allows interlocutors to re-establish social balance [2]. Some researchers highlight the link between apologies and responsibility. This approach is supported by Fraser's proposition that to apologize at least means accepting the wrongdoing he/she committed [3]. But this premise is undermined by instances in which the apology stems without taking any real responsibility, like the apology for the unpleasant weather or the condolences. The "I am sorry" statement is common in instances where the speaker is not personally at fault, indicating that the implication of 'apologetically sorry' does not necessarily follow from 'appreciation'.

A lot of linguists correlate apologies with repentance. Leech says apologies are about having made an act against the hearer, and that an apology is an expression of regret by the offending party [4]. Apologies are, he sees acknowledgment of an imbalance in the relationship and endeavours to restore it to evenness. But this definition is one where there is confusion. Thomas criticizes Searlian rules which do not reflect the case of apology not necessarily leading to regret [5]. For instance:

"I'm sorry, I broke your nose."

Indeed, the apology here might not be in the spirit of sincere regret, but in the form of addressing a formal acknowledgment of the act. Thomas argues that speech act rules are not always appropriate in practice, given the complexity of apologies. Fasold differentiates between apologies that are regretful, and those that include statements of regret and apologies that are not and do not involve apology [6]. He calls phrases such as "I'm sorry" indirect apologies and gives one example:

A- *"My aunt Suha died last week."* B- *"I'm sorry."*

A- *"My aunt Suha died last week."* B- *"I apologize."*

The first one saying sorry is sympathy, not an apology, and the second reply is accepting responsibility and neither is appropriate. Most apologies are more ritualistic than real contrition. People also typically apologize for subsequent actions where regret is irrelevant, e.g. they are:

"I'm sorry, but I have to report you."

Sorry, typically after the event, according to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [7], they stress that apologies do not always come right after an event by making them formal. However, speakers might still apologize with foresight to an offense, whether actual or imagined. In light of the above three points for an apology, the following can easily be characterized as: An apology is a communicative practice which involves taking responsibility for an offense, indicating regret or remorse, and addressing the face needs of the offended party with the intention of correcting the offense and restoring social harmony [7]. This definition embraces aspects of affirmation, remorse, and socio-remediation and acknowledges the multifarious components of apologies.

1.2 Apology and face

The degree of agreement around whether apologies are used to please the hearer's face or the speaker's face, as well as the kind of politeness they require, remains unresolved [8]. Apologies are negative politeness strategies, Brown and Levinson (1987) posit, that encourage the hearer to refrain from imposition [9]. As described by Olshtain and Cohen, when a speaker apologizes, the speaker has admitted their fault and accepted responsibility, even if this involves some self-humiliation [1]. Thus, under Brown and Levinson's framing, apologies preserve the hearer's face while imperiling the speaker's [9]. Just as Holmes defines apologies as speech acts responding to the hearer's face needs, addressing an offense, restoring balance to both parties [2].

But the face part in apologies can be applied to the speaker's perspective as well. Meier focuses on correcting the speaker's face, not the hearer's [10]. He claims that apologies, excuses, and rationalizations are not limited to politeness strategies associated with face-threatening acts; rather, they work toward restoring the speaker's appearance after a perceived wrong is done. Unlike Brown and Levinson's perspective, Meier argues that the main purpose of remedial action is the restoration of the speaker's face; any thoughts of the harm to the hearer's face are a second effect. From this standpoint, Meier has put forth a theory of apology which centers the speaker [11] as illustrated in the following figure:

S's image => S's linkage to a norm violation => S's damaged image => apology => S's repaired image.

Meier posits that apologizing will help you retain your image [11]. The speaker's worry about how they appear in front of someone is what leads them to apologize in real time. Since it could be in any given moment where the person will assess whether an apology is or isn't fitting and what sort of influence an apology is likely to be effective.

While hearer-supportive, apologies take the hearer's face as its object and not a hearer-supportive consideration, as observed in Brown and Levinson [9], Meier observed that other scholars focus on a broader scope. For example, Leech [4] conceptualizes apologies as positive politeness strategies while Holmes (1990) reflects on the speaker's positive face. Holmes emphasizes that apologies can both suit the speaker's and the hearer's face needs, both at once [12]. One example Holmes cites as a double role in this dual function example: [A is phoning B to warn her of potential inconvenience.]

A: *I'm sorry but I'm going to be a bit late for work. The buses aren't off strike yet and with it being a wet Friday, it'll probably be a while until my taxi arrives.*

B: *Uh-huh as long as you're here by six, cos I'm going then.*

In this exchange, A acknowledges B's possible loss of face with a promise of apology ("I'm sorry") while also guarding their own pleasant face through a rationale behind the delay. Holmes also describes instances in which the speaker tries to restore the hearer's positive face [12]. For example: [Introducing B to C, A has used Mr. instead of Dr. for B.]

A: *Oh I am sorry – its Dr. Jack not Mr. Forgive me.*

[B smiles awkwardly and addresses C.]

B: *Nice to meet you.*

Though apologies could save face, they could also make the speaker sound vulnerable. Deborah Tannen (1998) explores this in her article "Apologies: What It Means to Say 'Sorry'," where she draws on President Clinton's testimony on the Lewinsky affair. He was accused of insufficient apology, but Tannen contends that a more overt apology would have weakened his position. Some people would rather not apologize (fearful of appearing weak), but she explains that the readiness to apologize, while showing that one is powerless, is actually an indicator of strength as it reflects confidence in a person's ability to say they will take responsibility [13]. Ogiermann also notes that some offenses affect positive face and some negative face alike. Since both the speaker and the hearer have these face needs, an apology can have effects of up to four different faces [8]. In order to demonstrate how apologies work in those circumstances, Ogiermann shows the following chart:

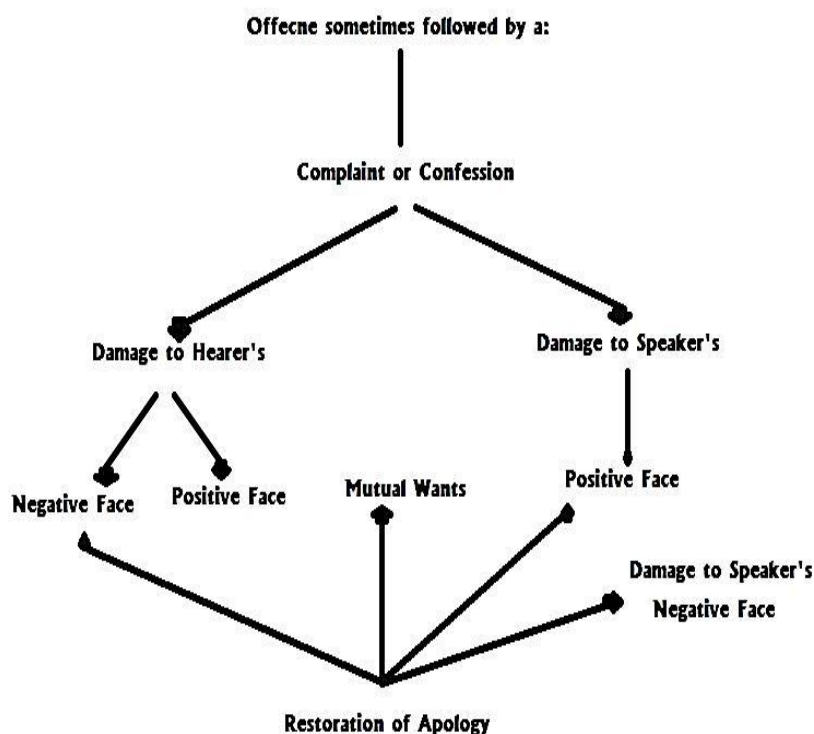


Fig. 1 Face Considerations Involved in Remedial Interchanges [8].

1.3 Direct Apology

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) maintain that an apology generally consists of explicit illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs), such as phrases or formulaic utterances expressing apology or regret [1]. These phrases include, for instance, performative verbs such as “be sorry,” “apologize,” or “excuse.” These apologies represent expressions of regret or apology, and are categorized as direct apologies. Research in English shows that direct apologies are the most commonly used strategy. Holmes (1990) investigated apology strategies in New Zealand English through an ethnographic research approach and collected data from naturally occurring conversations and apology exchanges among college students [12]. Nearly half of the apologies contained an explicit expression of regret for an action, her findings showed.

1.4 Indirect Apology

Apology is not only limited to the use of some performative verbs. Verbs and expressions are different in that we can express or explain the meaning of a speech act [14]. Apologies can be delivered indirectly, in a myriad of ways. Olshtain and Cohen identified five types of these indirect apologies: explanations, taking responsibility for an act, offer of resolution or repair, promise of forbearance and providing an explanation for an action as an indirect apology strategy [1]. This time, the apologizing person provides the reason that the offense occurred. For example, a student who is late to class may say their car tire just blew apart on the way. The cultural, severity, age, gender and situation and so on make this apology acceptable. According to Holmes (1990), adding an explanation for the action was the second most common apology strategy in New Zealand English and the most common form of indirect apology [11].

The more indirect expression of an apology may involve an “acknowledgment of responsibility,” in which the speaker takes the blame or is held accountable for the offense. And the speaker carries this responsibility through different expressions, or, in a different sense, denies it. You see, these expressions can be classified as follows :

- A. taking the blame**, i.e., “*It is my fault*” ,
- B. self-deficiency expressions** such as e.g. “*I was confused*” ,
- C. appreciating he is owed an apology** e.g. “*You are right!*” and
- D. expressing lack of intent**: “*I didn’t mean to*” .

Some speakers even make an apology to repair the damage in the past from their actions. This can mean replacing a damaged item or making up for the inconvenience caused by the offense. If someone accidentally breaks someone else’s computer, if it is another person’s computer they accidentally broke, it may say, “I will buy you a new one.” Whether this repair is needed, in fact, is a question of whether the listener agrees or not. The other indirect apology strategy is something called a promise of forbearance — the speaker pledges through their apologies that the offending action will not happen again. Depending on the situation, this type of strategy is not the primary method for apologizing.

2. Previous Studies

Apology has been widely explored as a central expressive speech act in this field of study, as both a face manager and an instrument of the maintenance of relationships. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [7] are among the most prominent advocates of the apology analysis framework, developing taxonomy: Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs), explanations, acceptance of responsibility, offers of repair, and promises of forbearance. There is a great deal of literature on this model, including cross-cultural studies and focus on discourse-based studies, showing how apology strategies differ considerably based on contextual factors (e.g., social power, social distance, and the severity of the offense). Previous studies conducted by Olshtain [15] and Cohen et al. [16] also confirmed that apologies are semantically and pragmatically variable according to the intention of the speaker and the nature of the interpersonal relationship.

Also, politeness theory has been essential to an explanation of the role of apologies. Brown and Levinson [9] conceptualize apologies as face-saving behaviors designed to relieve the trauma of face-threatening circumstances. In keeping with this view, Holmes [12] posits that apologies serve a speaker- or hearer-related purpose, restoring social harmony and self-image. Ogiermann [8] observes that apologies function simultaneously in terms of positive and negative face dimensions to serve both the needs of the speaker and hearer. Whilst these investigations also shed important light on an appreciation of apology action in natural interaction, they are primarily concerned with spoken interaction as opposed to fictional and literary situations.

Unlike that, relatively limited attention has been given to the apology and the analysis of apology strategies in literary texts. While some investigations have argued that acts of language expression in novels express social norms and contribute to characterization [5, 6]. Typically, they ignore the application of sound pragmatic models. In particular, the application of structured frameworks like the model formulated by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain in classical English literature is underexplored. This shows a clearly missing aspect in the literature, namely, pragmatic analysis of apology strategies in a literary context.

This study aims to fill this gap by systematically examining apology strategies in *Pride and Prejudice*. It turns to how characters make use of various apology strategies of sorts to negotiate social relations, act upon moral accountability, and demonstrate personal growth in relation to those individuals in the story.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This paper examines the apology strategies that characterize Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. It also examines how apology strategies are employed in Jane Austen's novel, through language to express regret, repair relationships, and navigate social expectations. Its choice of the novel is deliberate because it offers rich opportunities for interaction where people frequently misunderstand each other and where mistakes are made, and these misunderstandings often result in apologies as a central way of resolving them. Learning about these strategies in a literary context provides linguistic and social insights linking theory with the practical use of language in narrative discourse.

The qualitative research is appropriate as it concentrates on an investigation of the meaning, context, and intention of the apology. More than the numbers and frequencies of quantitative approaches, it allows a more in-depth analysis of how the characters' personal characteristics, social position, and interpersonal relationships impact their apology-making strategies. Analyzing these linguistic styles, the analysis not only uncovers the kinds of apologies used in the text, but also offers an interpretation of their impact and significance to the social and cultural context of the story. The introduction provides a systematic analysis of apology strategies as well as to lead readers through the choices, analyses, and interpretations of the data. It also serves not just as an exemplar of the relationship between the theoretical scaffolding of pragmatics and literary texts but as an illustrative example of how extensive language analysis of fiction can unveil larger patterns of human interaction and social behavior.

3.2 Data Selection

The corpus of this study is a sample of some dialogues taken from Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*. Analyzing the novel indicates that it embodies a variety of social interactions in which characters often make social mistakes and misjudgments and engage in inappropriate acts. Thus, apologizing becomes a significant pragmatic instrument in terms of repairing relationships and restoring social harmony. Therefore, the text offers ample, context-sensitive data fit for pragmatic analysis.

The selection of the literature sample was done from a careful, close reading of the novel. All instances in which a character made an apology, either explicitly acknowledged or indirectly acknowledged what they had done, were identified. These apologies are both categorical (expressing regret) and indirect (acknowledgment of responsibility/justification of what has happened without any application of apology formulas). Only apologies that played a significant role in the interaction, which also served to help people improve their character or fix their relationship, were selected.

The study examines mostly key characters – Mr. Darcy, Mr. Collins and Elizabeth Bennet, as they are the most powerful and diverse examples of apology strategies at play. Minor characters' apologies were included only in order to enhance our understanding of apology use in the novel's social structure. Approximately 35 apology cases were obtained as representative samples for analysis. Each selected case was recorded in detail with its narrative underpinnings, the relationship between speaker and hearer, and the social situations encountered when apologizing. This contextual information was deemed crucial for understanding the rationale underlying the specific apology approach and its workings as they played out in a given interaction. However, by restricting the content to contextually rich and pragmatic examples, the study is able to have a much more focused and detailed analysis as opposed to a very shallow analysis where all events are examined.

3.3 Research Procedures

Data analysis procedures are carried out in a progressive manner so as to get comprehensive results. The researcher adopts an organized methodology guided by the research questions and is objective in answering them. The theoretical context of the texts is chosen so as to be easy to comprehend by readers. To ensure a uniform approach and clarity during analysis, five steps are presented logically and systematically. These steps are intended to help readers easily follow the analysis and be

satisfied with the outcomes. The methodology for carrying out the analysis is presented in the following Table 1:

Table 1: The Adopted Procedures of the Analysis.

Step	Procedure
1	Highlighting the novel acts
2	Selecting Utterances from the Chosen Extracts
3	Exploring the types, functions, and strategies of apology
4	Distinguishing between the acts of apologies in English
5	Applying Blum-Kulka, Olshtain and Cohen [17] model to the adopted speeches.

3.4 The Adopted Model

Applying the model presented by Blum-Kulka, Olshtain, and Cohen [17], this study will examine the selected utterances to better understand the process of apologies in the context of the intention of the speaker, the hearer's assumptions, and how those assumptions are built. Olshtain and Cohen [1]'s model will be used for the analysis of the pragmatic aspects as well as the lexical items of apologies. It also has an empirical basis, drawing data from several languages. The universality: it is good in that it has been proven to work in a multitude of languages [15]. The model shows that a restricted set of verbal strategies is commonly used by those offering apologies.

Blum-Kulka, Olshtain, and Cohen (1984) proposed a simple template:

1. Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs). Formulaic expressions are used here, and this is a very simple sentence in which the speaker expressly apologizes (like sorry, pardon me, I am sorry). The word "apologizer" employs a performative verb to apologize or to ask for forgiveness. Such expressions are as follows: "Please, forgive me/ please accept my apology/ I'm sorry/ excuse me/ I apologize for my mistake".

It is noted that the expression "I apologize" is more frequently used in writing than in spoken English. The use of "intensifiers" such as "really" or "very" also serves to emphasize the type of apology. For example, the speaker might say, "I am very /really sorry" when the weight of the offense is too heavy. Cohen et al suggest that in English, "really" speaks to more regret; "very" more politeness or propriety [16].

2. Account / Explanation: The most typical response to an apology is to seek self-justification by articulating that the fact was caused by circumstances outside of the speaker's control. For example :

a) Explicit: The Traffic was terrible .

b) Implicit: Traffic is always so heavy in the evening.

3. Taking on Responsibility: To pacify the hearer, the speaker may opt to accept responsibility for the offense that prompted the apology. Multiple sub-strategies can exist to achieve this admission of offense, which may include:

a) Explicit self-blame: The apologizer accepts the offense they committed, takes responsibility for leading to the offense or infraction. But what is the level of this acknowledgement determined by the seriousness or depth of the offense? To the most extreme degree, you may just go all in and accept full blame (e.g., say, "I'm really sorry. Yes, it was my fault/my mistake," or "Please forgive me for hurting you.) "

b) Lack of intent: Here the speaker's aim is to explain the offense was unintentional. If the act did not happen with the intention of having it be done, this could reduce its effect [18]. Things that could be expressed like *"I didn't mean to"* or *"You shouldn't"*.

c) Expression of self-deficiency: The speaker does not deny his part in the offense but refuses to take full responsibility. For example: *I didn't see you / I was confused / I forgot*.

d) Expressing embarrassment/regret: The expression of embarrassment enables the speaker to demonstrate true affection towards the hearer. This sub-strategy is especially prevalent in situations in which women are involved, such as the offended party or the offender [18]. Some examples are: *I feel awful about it*.

e) Self-disparage. It is considered a "dispreference" for "public self-exposure of an individual," driven by underlying cultural norms and values. Examples include: *I'm such a dimwit!*

f) Justifying the hearer. The speaker conveys to the hearer that they completely understand their feelings and reactions. Examples include: *You're right to be angry*.

g) Refusal to acknowledge guilt. The speaker completely denies responsibility for the offense through one or more of the following approaches:

- **Denial of responsibility**, such as: *It wasn't my fault*.
- **Blame the hearer**, such as: *It's your own fault*.
- **Pretend to be offended**, such as: *I'm the one to be offended*.

4. Concern for the hearer. It indicates that the wrongdoer attempts to show concern for the offended person to reassure and soothe them. Examples include: *I hope I didn't upset you/ Are you all right?*

5. Offer of repair: The apologizer may offer some form of compensation or reparation for the damage or offense caused by their mistake or wrongdoing. For example, if someone arrives late for an appointment with a friend, they might apologize by saying: *"How can I make it up to you, Why don't I buy you lunch on Sunday?", "Would you be willing to reschedule the meeting?", "Oh, I forgot today is your birthday! Don't be angry, I'll take you out for a grand dinner tomorrow."* [19].

6. Promise of Forbearance. When the speaker feels a strong sense of guilt, they may feel compelled to promise not to repeat the behavior that led to the offense, ensuring that it won't occur again. For example, they might say, *"It won't happen again."*

4. Data Analysis of the English Novel 'Pride and Prejudice'

This analysis applies the apology strategies framework proposed by Blum-Kulka, Olshtain, and Cohen [17], supported by Brown and Levinson's [9] politeness theory, to selected extracts from *Pride and Prejudice*. The analysis categorizes each apology according to the strategy it employs, including illocutionary force indicators, explanations, self-blame, concern for the hearer, offers of repair, and promises of forbearance.

4.1 Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)

Extract (1):

"I must beg leave to apologize for not having paid my respects before." [20].

This is Mr. Collins's apology to Mr. Bennet in Chapter 13. Mr. Collins adopts a formal and deferential tone in his apology. The formulaic phrases "I must beg leave" and "to apologize" act as

Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) (Blum-Kulka&Olshtain, [7], making the speaker's intent explicit in accordance with the norms of polite society.

Extract (2):

"I am sorry, exceedingly sorry, that you have ever been informed of what may, in a mistaken light, have given you uneasiness." [20].

And so, this is Mr. Darcy's apology to Elizabeth in Chapter 58. He apologizes with the phrases "I am sorry" and the intensifier "exceedingly," a gesture of softening and disclosure, which underscores his sincerity. The conditional form ("that you have ever been informed...") works as a face-saving tool, softening the apology and preserving sincerity, a compromise that is emphasized in politeness theory [9].

4. 2 Explanation / Account

Extract (3):

"I happened to overhear the gentleman himself mentioning... My total ignorance of the connection must plead my apology." [20]

In Chapter 18, Mr. Collins apologizes when he learns of the connection between Mr. Darcy and Lady Catherine de Bourgh. The phrase "must plead my apology" is actually a formal apology marker. Collins provides this explanation to avoid a perceived breach of propriety on account of his lack of acknowledgment at first, and so reinforces his social respect.

Extract (4):

"The part which I acted is now to be explained... On this subject I have nothing more to say, no other apology to offer." [20].

Darcy explains his actions regarding Jane Bennet and Mr. Wickham in the letter to Elizabeth (Chapter 35). Phrases like "is now to be explained" and "no other apology to offer" suggest he wants to clarify his behavior. By offering a detailed explanation, Darcy applies the explanatory strategy of an indirect apology—what Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) categorize as an "account," intended to reduce the offense's severity through clarification [7].

4. 3 Taking on Responsibility

A. Explicit Self-Blame

Extract (5):

"I have been a selfish being all my life, in practice, though not in principle... What do I not owe you!" [20].

In Chapter 58, Mr. Darcy offers a candid admission of his past arrogance, attributing his transformation to Elizabeth's influence. He acknowledges how his upbringing fostered pride and selfishness, and he expresses sincere gratitude for the lesson she taught him. This instance of explicit self-blame, noted by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [7], and marks a turning point in Darcy's character. He openly accepts fault and signals personal transformation rather than preserving his face.

B. Lack of Intent

Extract (6):

"If I have wounded your sister's feelings, it was unknowingly done..." [20].

In his letter to Elizabeth, Mr. Darcy discusses his hand in separating Jane and Bingley. He acknowledges his role but insists that any harm done was unintentional. According to Brown and

Levinson, Darcy employs a common mitigating technique to minimize the face-threatening force of the apology, as he appeals to a lack of intent but still accepts responsibility.

4.4 Concern for the Hearer

Extract (7):

“You are too generous to trifle with me. If your feelings are still what they were last April, tell me so at once...” [20].

In Chapter 58, Mr. Darcy's second proposal represents an appreciation for Elizabeth's autonomy and feelings. His acquiescence to her choice without argument marks his emotional maturity and empathy. This utterance prioritizes her comfort over his desires, indicating hearer-oriented politeness.

Extract (8):

“If, in the explanation of them... I am under the necessity of relating feelings which may be offensive to yours; I can only say that I am sorry.” [20].

Darcy predicts his explanations could aggravate Elizabeth and proactively expresses regret (Chapter 35). His preemptive sorrow also demonstrates Darcy's sensitivity to Elizabeth's feelings and demonstrates the politeness principle of face needs on the part of the hearer, as argued by Brown and Levinson.

4.5 Offer of Repair

Extract (9):

“He had done all this for a girl whom he could neither regard nor esteem. Her heart did whisper that he had done it for her.” [20].

Darcy's secret responsibility in solving the Lydia-Wickham scandal shows he is trying to amend the damage caused by past actions. By not offering any public recognition, he shows self-sacrifice and a real interest in Elizabeth's well-being. As Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [7] point out, non-verbal behaviors (e.g., attempts to apologize and to set the record straight) can be a powerful form of amelioration, and these are precisely the types of remedial behavior Darcy's actions represent.

Extract (10):

“...If I am under the necessity of relating feelings which may be offensive to yours, I can only say that I am sorry. The necessity must be obeyed, and further apology would be absurd.” [20].

Darcy grants the emotional impact of his statement and offers an implicit apology coupled with justification. By emphasizing necessity, he draws on Elizabeth's understanding, emphasizing his earnestness and commitment to the repair of relationships.

4.6 Promise of Forbearance

Extract (11):

“Be not alarmed, madam, on receiving this letter... I can no longer help thanking you for your unexampled kindness to my poor sister.” [20].

In this letter, Darcy makes amends for his actions and indirectly pledges that he will not interfere again in Bingley's affairs, which he later confirms by encouraging Bingley to return to Jane. And

while the promise is implicit, it speaks to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's [7] observation that contextual cues often indicate such undertakings in face-sensitive cultures.

Extract (12):

"My affections and wishes are unchanged, but one word from you will silence me on this subject forever." [20]

This is a clear pledge to not propose again or push the issue if Elizabeth is not interested. He offers the conditional promise of forbearance and his willingness to remain silent if rejected showcases his growing deference and respect for Elizabeth's autonomy.

5. Results and Discussions

As evidenced by analyzing twelve apology extracts from *Pride and Prejudice*, apology strategies reveal a fine-grained use that demonstrates characters' personalities, social roles, and evolving relationships. These apologies, grouped under Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's [7] framework, demonstrate that both Mr. Darcy and Mr. Collins use various strategies to manage face-threatening acts and preserve social harmony.

1. The Prevalence of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs)

Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (e.g., "I must beg leave to apologize," "I am sorry") appear often in apologies made by Mr. Darcy and Mr. Collins. But where Mr. Collins uses them in a formulaic way, and often overly deferentially, in order to reinforce social hierarchies, Mr. Darcy's use is much more sincere and emotionally weight-laden, particularly in later chapters. This is indicative of Brown and Levinson's [9] proposal that language politeness shows power dynamics and personal transformation .

2. Explaining as a Face-Saving Measure

An apology is also often accompanied by justifications and explanations, which is the case for Darcy's letters, for example. These serve to minimize the severity of the offense and to protect the speaker without being defensive. That is in line with the "account" strategy in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's taxonomy, which asserts that speakers seek contextual clarity, not an explanation, for regret. For Darcy, these tactics allow his dignity to be preserved while reconciliation is offered .

3. Self-blame with no Intent: Taking Responsibility

Mr. Darcy's admissions of blame, particularly when he says, "I have been a selfish being all my life," are integral to the story. Such a move is consistent with the "explicit self-blame" strategy and in evidence of true character growth. On the flip side, he sometimes makes reference to lack of intent ("If I have hurt your sister's feelings...") to recognize harm while tempering the blow of his choices. These methods remind us of how very difficult it can be to admit guilt and face it.

4. Concern for Hearers and Hearer-Oriented Politeness

A significant moment in the novel is Darcy's move into a hearer-centered politeness strategy. He starts to think more directly about Elizabeth's emotional state and autonomy, especially in the second proposal he makes ("One word from you will silence me on this subject forever"). His concern for her comfort shows a certain maturity of character and an explicit negative politeness strategy described by Brown & Levinson [9] intended to give Elizabeth a degree of choice without pressure.

5. Offer of Repair and Non-Verbal Apologies

Although there are many verbal apologies, Darcy's actions and his resolution of Lydia's scandal can be read as an implicit apology. He uses a repair strategy that goes beyond what he says by

acknowledging responsibility and doing something about the results of his previous actions. Such amends are needed when verbal apologies are inadequate, say Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [7].

6. Promise of Forbearance as a Marker of Transformation

Darcy's indirect promises—such as not to force anything upon Elizabeth but instead respect her choice and refrain from pressing her—reflect the concluding stage of his transformation. These assurances of forbearance implicitly indicate that he has learned from his earlier mistakes and will not repeat them. These strategies are often contextually suggested and not spoken, particularly in context-appropriate exchanges [7].

7. Mr. Darcy to Mr. Collins Comparison

They are especially in opposition to Mr. Darcy and Mr. Collins. Mr. Collins's apologies are formulaic, long and frequently self-serving—illustrating his wish to please authority figures and adhere to social standards. Mr. Darcy's apologies, on the other hand, change from a show of defensiveness and pride to ones of respect and realness—a constant reflection of his growth as well as his growing rapport with Elizabeth .

Last but not least, the study reveals apology tactics in the classic *Pride and Prejudice* to involve the development of characters, patterns of social power and relational dynamics. Mr. Darcy's evolution from an indirect, defensive apology to a more direct, hearer-led apologetic represents both a mature emotional state of self and an evolved focus with one's relationship partners. The framework of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain [7] is effective in identifying the pragmatic functions of these apologies, and Brown and Levinson's [9] politeness theory extends the analysis of face work and relational sensitivity. Combined, these results highlight how pragmatic strategies define not only the physical, but also the thematic depth of characters represented in the novel.

6. Conclusions

Based on speech act theory, and using the apology strategies classification by Blum-Kulka, Olshtain, and Cohen [17], this study has pragmatically assessed apology strategies in *Pride and Prejudice*. By examining multiple apology extracts from the novel, a number of pragmatic conclusions can be formulated:

1. The study primarily studied how apology strategies were adopted in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, focusing on apologies as a way of acknowledging improper behavior and re-establishing social relationships in the novel.
2. The research answered the essential research questions by demonstrating that apology strategies used in the novel differ according to context and reflect factors such as social class, interpersonal relationships, and nature of the offense.
3. This study effectively identifies and categorizes various apology strategies employed by the characters in specific contexts under a qualitative pragmatic approach, as articulated in the framework of Blum-Kulka, Olshtain, and Cohen [17].
4. For authentic, honest, and full reconciliation, expressions of regret and acknowledgments of responsibility are the most often used strategies, while indirect or justificatory strategies are often employed in the same setting to protect social image or mitigate personal responsibility.
5. There were distinct demarcations in the different characters in terms of their use of apology techniques. Characters like Mr. Darcy offer genuine and heartfelt apologies that show moral

growth, while those on the other side like Mr. Collins rely on formal or self-centered apology forms that would reduce the interpersonal value of their apologies when it comes to impact.

6. As such, the findings show that apology strategies in literary discourse perform functions other than manners, acting as instruments for the development of characters and the progression of the novel's narrative, and representation of social norms within its structure.
7. Overall, the findings make it clear that pragmatic theories of apology in general can be successfully applied to literary texts, and provide an understanding of language's function in fictional discourse and how this reflects social reality in social interaction.

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