

# Comparative Analysis of Apology Strategies of English and Korean Series

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## Comparative Analysis of Apology Strategies of English and Korean Series

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**Abstract.** This study aims to identify the types of apology strategies used by characters in English and Korean series using Olshain and Cohen's (1986) theory. Additionally, this study aims to discover the differences in apology strategies between the English series "Secret Invasion" and the Korean series "Moving." The author employs a descriptive qualitative method in this research. The findings reveal that the English series employs 5 types of apology strategies, namely 2 expressions of apology, 1 offer of repair, 7 explanations of account, 1 acknowledgment of responsibility for the offense, and 2 promises of forbearance. The English series predominantly uses explanations of account because English culture tends to ignore social differences and apology strategies, and does not consider age or social status. In contrast, the Korean series uses only 4 types of apology strategies, namely 33 expressions of apology, 7 explanations of account, 1 acknowledgment of responsibility for the offense, and 1 promise of forbearance. The Korean series frequently uses apology phrases because Koreans pay more attention to age when apologizing and tend to apologize directly, as this is considered more polite and demonstrates feelings of guilt for mistakes made.

**Keywords:** Apology, Apology Strategies, Politeness, Pragmatics

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of speech acts, as outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987), refers to actions performed through speech. When individuals communicate, they are not only conveying information but also executing specific actions. Brown and Levinson's definition encompasses various aspects, including expression, information, exploration, persuasion, and entertainment. These aspects influence how messages are conveyed and interpreted by the receiver, highlighting the crucial role of speech acts in human communication. They aid in sending and receiving information and in establishing and maintaining social relations.

Searle (1969), as cited in Putri (2019), expands on this by defining speech acts as a theory that examines the meaning of language through the relationship between speech and the actions taken by speakers. This theory posits that requests can be conceptualized as a specific type of utterance occurring within a set of repeated utterances, thus avoiding some problems associated with indirect speech acts. Dawson and Phelan (2016) further define speech acts as language use executed solely through action, emphasizing the speaker's intention or purpose in producing an utterance. This definition considers not only the words used but also the contextual implications and the speaker's intentions.

According to Alghazo (2021), a speech act is an action performed based on utterances, with various meanings conveyed to the listener. This conceptualization underscores the fundamental aspect of politeness in language, proposing that speakers perform speech acts to achieve goals such as requesting, informing, or persuading while considering the social context and its potential impact on the listener. Brown and Levinson's theory is instrumental in understanding how speakers use language to achieve communicative goals while maintaining social relations and addressing face-threatening acts. The theory is particularly useful for analyzing deviations from politeness norms in speech acts, offering insights into cultural and social norms.

In the context of apologizing, Brown and Levinson's theory suggests that it is a complex speech act involving not only the literal words spoken but also the speaker's intention and the listener's perception. Apologizing can be a way to correct mistakes, show remorse, and maintain social balance, which is crucial for rebuilding trust and strengthening relationships. Strategies for effective apologies include expressing regret, offering compensation, or promising to prevent similar situations in the future. Understanding these strategies provides insight into the complexity of communication and the negotiation of social relationships.

Fraser (1981), as cited in Hassan (2020), categorizes apology strategies into expressions of apology, offers of repair, explanations of account, acknowledgment of responsibility for the offense, and promises of forbearance. Effective apologies require a deep understanding of the listener's perspective and a willingness to take responsibility for one's actions. The choice of apology strategy depends on the severity of the offense and the relationship between the speaker and listener.

Previous studies, such as those by Abedi (2016) and Hassan (2020), have explored apology strategies using Olshtain and Cohen's framework. These studies have identified similarities and differences between EFL learners and native speakers, with a focus on the expression of regret. However, there is a gap in comparing apology strategies between different cultures using media such as movies. This study aims to fill this gap by comparing apology strategies between English and Korean cultures as depicted in the movies "Moving" and "Secret Invasion." These movies, representing different cultural backgrounds, offer a rich context for analyzing how apologies are portrayed and understood in different cultural settings.

The Korean drama "Moving" portrays a woman's emotional journey through life's hardships, exploring themes of friendship, love, and sacrifice amidst intense internal and external conflicts. Similarly, the English series "Secret Invasion," part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), follows Nick Fury as he uncovers a vast conspiracy, emphasizing themes of security, trust, and the importance of cooperation against threats. Both stories deliver compelling narratives about resilience, hope, and the profound impact of human relationships in navigating life's challenges. This study aims to

compare the apology strategies between English and Korean cultures through these movies, offering insights into cultural differences in communication and apology strategies.

This study will discuss about types of apology strategies to identify the types of apology strategies in *Secret Invasion* English movie and *Moving* Korean movie series and to investigate the differences between apology strategies in the *Secret Invasion* English movie and *Moving* Korean movie series.

This thesis narrows its focus to simplify the research process by not covering everything. It specifically examines the types of apologies in English and Korean as depicted by all characters in the "Secret Invasion" and "Moving" series. This study offers students insights into the different apology strategies in these two languages, enhancing their understanding of how culture shapes the perception and interpretation of movie narratives. Based on the gap the studies already wrote about, the studies explores and analyzes the comparison of apology strategies between English and Korean.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Pratiwi and H. (2022) conducted a comparative analysis of apology strategies among male and female English Department students. Their study, employing a descriptive qualitative method with content analysis, revealed that both male and female students commonly used expressions of apology and rarely used promises of forbearance. Utilizing Olstain and Cohen's theory, their research aligns with the current study's theoretical framework but differs in its focus on English Department students at Padang State University versus the current study's focus on the English series "Secret Invasion" and the Korean series "Moving."

Hassan (2020) explored apology strategies among Kurdish EFL learners, finding that expressions of apology and offers of repair were most common, influenced by familiarity, offense severity, and cultural factors. This study also uses Olstain and Cohen's theory but examines fourth-year university students in Kurdistan rather than film series characters.

Wardoyo (2014) analyzed written apology strategies in online newspapers using qualitative methods, identifying strategies like acknowledgment of responsibility and promises of forbearance. While both studies employ Olstain and Cohen's theory, Wardoyo's focus is on online newspapers.

Xu (2018) investigated the impact of social power and distance on apology strategies among college students, discovering that social power affects explicit apologies, and social distance influences various strategies. Xu's study shares the theoretical foundation but differs in its focus on college students.

Eliza (2019) examined pragmatic transfer in apologies among Indonesian students, finding frequent use of expressions of regret and explanations, influenced by their first language. This study also uses Olstain and Cohen's theory but focuses on students at Raden Fatah State Islamic University.

Lastly, Abedi (2016) compared apology strategies of native English speakers and Iranian EFL learners, finding no significant differences in their approaches. While sharing the theoretical framework, Abedi's study examines learners in Iran and native speakers of English, contrasting with the current study's focus on film series characters.

### Pragmatics

Pragmatics, as defined by George Yule (1996), is the study of the meanings communicated by speakers or writers and interpreted by listeners or readers, focusing on what people mean in their utterances rather than the words themselves. This field involves understanding how context affects communication and how speakers organize their messages based on their audience and circumstances. Penelope and Brown Levinson (1987) describe pragmatics as investigating the use of language in communicative contexts and its impact on meaning, emphasizing how speakers achieve their communicative goals and interpret implied meanings. Pragmatics examines the relationship between language context and intent, considering situational meaning. Davood (2014) adds that pragmatics involves the appropriate use of language in social interactions, highlighting the importance of pragmatic competence, which includes various adaptive skills processed in the right hemisphere of the brain. Understanding pragmatic profiles through appropriate tools is crucial due to language's significant role in communication.

### Speech Act

According to Cruise in Christianto (2000), speech acts are functional actions that help humans achieve understanding or accomplish tasks through communication. Penelope and Brown Levinson (1987) view speech act theory as crucial for understanding politeness in language use, emphasizing that speakers perform acts like asking, informing, or persuading with consideration for social context and listener impact. The theory suggests that speech acts can be unclear, proposing instead to use more directly provable categories, as in conversation analysis. Requests, a type of speech act, can be conceptualized as specific repeated utterances. Speech acts focus on the speaker's intent and context, which are vital in determining meaning. This approach allows for a nuanced analysis of linguistic expressions, such as apologies, highlighting their interpretation in communication.

### Apology

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), apologizing is a complex speech act that involves not only the literal words spoken but also the speaker's intention and the listener's perception. By apologizing for a face-threatening act, the speaker shows reluctance to cause harm and partially corrects the impact. Common expressions like hesitation and carelessness can convey this reluctance. Apologies can take various forms, such as expressing regret, offering compensation, or promising to prevent future issues. The effectiveness of an apology depends on the social context and the relationship between the speaker and listener. Holmes (1995) suggests that remedial apologies aim to restore relationships and benefit both parties by supporting their social face. In English, common phrases for apologizing include "I'm sorry," "I apologize," "My apologies," and "Forgive me," used in various situations formally or informally. Understanding these speech acts helps in comprehending the complexity of communication and how language negotiates social relationships.

### Apology Strategies

An apology strategy involves a deliberate approach to expressing remorse and making amends for a wrong committed, which includes acknowledging the harm caused, taking responsibility, and expressing sincere regret. Effective strategies help rebuild trust, maintain relationships, and promote healing. According to Olshtain and Cohen (1986), the five main apology strategies are expressing of apology, offer of repair, explanation of account, acknowledgment of responsibility for offense, and promise of forbearance.

Fraser (1981) also categorizes apology strategies into similar types, such as expressing apology, offering repair, and admitting offense, ranging from simply saying "sorry" to explicitly admitting, "it was really my mistake."

#### A. Expression of Apology

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1986), an apology is used to express regret, fear, or wrongdoing, utilizing words like "sorry," "pardon," "forgive," or "apologize." Apology phrases can be intensified based on the need of the speaker. For example, "I am really/very sorry" is an immediate admission of wrongdoing and regret, while "I apologize" directly expresses regret without additional explanation.

#### B. Offer of Repair

According to Olshtain and Cohen (1986), an offer of repair is an expression used to correct a mistake or address a problem. For example, if someone is late for an appointment, they might say, "How can I make it up to you? Why don't I buy you lunch on Friday?" This is an offer of repair as it suggests buying food to make up for the mistake. Similarly, "Would you be willing to reschedule the meeting?" is another offer of repair, as it proposes rescheduling due to the speaker's inability to attend the original meeting.

#### C. Explanation of Account

Explanation of account strategy involves clarifying the reasons behind a mistake. For instance, if someone is late for an appointment, they might say, "I apologize for being late; I was stuck in traffic. I hope you understand." This explanation helps the speaker justify their tardiness. Similarly, saying, "I was unable to complete the task on time due to unforeseen circumstances," is also an explanation of account, as it provides the reason for the delay.

#### D. Acknowledgement of responsibility for offense

Olshtain and Cohen (1986) describe a strategy for acknowledging responsibility for mistakes, where a person admits their error and its impact on others. For example, saying "It's my fault" shows an acknowledgment of responsibility because the speaker takes ownership of the mistake. Similarly, statements like "I was confused" or "You are right" indicate the speaker's recognition of their error.

#### E. Promise of Forbearance

the promise of forbearance, where a person commits to avoiding the same mistake in the future. For example, saying "I assure you that it will not happen again" demonstrates a promise not to repeat the error. Similarly, "I will do everything in my power to prevent it from happening again" reflects a commitment to avoid making the same mistake.

## METHOD

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative. Descriptive qualitative is a kind of study that seeks to characterize current occurrences and phenomena, both created by nature and by humans. This study compares the apology strategies used in Korean and English television shows. This study uses Olshtain and Cohen (1986) theory to analyze types of apology strategies and differences in apology strategies between English and Korean series. This approach used in this study is pragmatic because pragmatic is an approach that focuses on analyzing meaning in the social context and situation of speech. instrument of this research the writer uses a laptop to enter the data obtained to analyze the data collected. The data sources used in this

research are taken from two movies titled “Secret Invasion” from an English series movie and “Moving” from a Korean series movie. This research used utterances from the characters of the movie. Both movies were released in 2023. Furthermore, the data of this research are the utterance containing apology. To collect data in this study, the researcher watched the British film series "Secret Invasion" and the Korean film series "Moving" to see how the way the characters talk about apologies is portrayed. In the second step, the author read the film scripts thoroughly and highlighted the dialogues that belonged to apology strategies. The final step was to categorize and identify which data showed the types of apology strategies contained in each apology strategy category. In addition the writer took several steps to analyze the data. First the writer wrote down the code to make it easier to count how much data was found. Second categorizes the data that contains apology strategies. Third, classified the data based on the type of apology strategy characteristics. Fourth, calculated the frequency each has found the data. Fifth describes the data based on the table of type of apology strategies, according to Olshtain and Cohen (1986). Sixth analyzed the differences in the characteristics of apology strategies in the series movies. The last step is the writer draws an interpretation of the findings of the types of apology strategies.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The result of this research is based on apology strategies in Olshtain and Cohen theory (1986). This analysis will discuss the differences in apology strategies between English and Korean series. The writer identified 55 instances of apology strategies in the "Secret Invasion" and "Moving" series, categorizing them into five types: expression of apology, offer of reparation, explanation of explanation, acknowledgment of responsibility for the offense, and promise of forbearance. Detailed data on these strategies are presented in tables for each series. This section highlights the discovery of these five apology strategies, with the table illustrating their frequency in English. Among them, the most commonly used strategy by all characters is the explanation of account, with seven instances recorded. Examples of this strategy and their explanations are provided below.

**Table 4.1 Apology Strategy in English Television Series “Secret Invasion”**

No	Types Of Apologies	English		Korean <i>Moving</i> series
		<i>Secret</i> series	<i>Invasion</i>	
1	Expression Of Apology	2		33
2	Offer Of Repair	1		-
3	Explanation Of Account	7		7
4	Acknowledgment Of Responsibility for Offense	1		1
5	Promise Of Forbearance	2		1
	Total	13		42

In the table above, <sup>8</sup> the most widely used apology strategy by all characters is explanation of account, in English series *Secret Invasion 7*, and in Korean series *Moving* 33 data was found. Below are examples of the data and their explanations.

#### A. Types of Apology Strategies

##### Expression of Apology

In the secret invasion television series, expression of apology strategy used by Lee Min Hyun once in the television series.

**(EOA01)**

Sales aunt "aigo tonghwaleul ....."?"

Oh my, what ....."?

**Lee Mi Hyun "jeosonghamnida"**

**im sorry**

In the Moving series, expression of apology strategy used by Lee Min Hyun once in the television series.

**(EOA01)**

Sales aunt "aigo tonghwaleul ....."?"

Oh my, what ....."?

**Lee Mi Hyun "jeosonghamnida"**

**im sorry**

The utterances above occurred when the seller's aunt and lee mi hyun met at the stall, the seller's aunt was rather angry because lee min hyun brought a big bag into the stall and covered the stall phone. thus, le min hyun only responded with a polite apologetic expression because the seller's aunt was older than lee min hyun. Lee Min Hyun apologized by bowing to the sales lady's aunt that the letter would remain after the meal.

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##### Offer of Repair

Offer of repair used by Vasily Poprishchin in *Secret Invasion* once in the television series.

**(OOR02)**

Nick Furry "Honest answer"

**Vasily "I'm sorry ....."**

The above dialogue that Vasily said contains an apology because it shows that Vasily tried to offer Nick Furry the idea of meeting at another time because Vasily already had an appointment with his wife. Then Nick Furry asked the question "ohh who do you have an appointment with?" Then Nick Furry sat on

Vasily's chair as if he didn't want to meet another time, Nick Furry guessed that Vasily lied when he claimed to have a wife and actually had an appointment with Giah to deliver a bomb.

<sup>8</sup>

#### **Explanation of Account**

In explanation of account, there are several characters in *Secret Invasion* who apologize and then explain their mistakes in the film. It has been found seven times in the movie.

#### **(EOA01)**

Nick Furry” have a dirty bomb?”

**Vasily Poprishchin “i’m sorry i do not understand dirty bomb?”**

In this series *Moving* of scripts, use an apology explanation of account strategy

#### **(EOA01)**

**Kim Bong Seok “Mian, solijighi jeoneun chinguleul jib-e chodaehan jeog-i eobs-oyo”**

**(i’m sorry, i’ve honestly never had a friend over)**

Jang Hee Soo “cheoem?”

(First?)”

In English Series Nick Furry asked Vasily if he had a dirty bomb, because Nick Furry suspected that Vasily made a bomb and then sold it to Giah and Vasily lied that Vasily had a wife when he had an ex-wife but lived in a different city. Vasily apologized and then explained the denial that he had a bomb.

In Korean Series the conversation above occurs when Kim Bong Seok and Jang Hee Soo are given a lot of food by Kim Bong Seok's mother and then Jang Hee Soo tries to finish her food even though she is full. then Kim Bong Seok apologizes because Jang Hee Soo insists on eating his food and wants to tell him that Kim Bong Seok has invited a girl friend to his house for the first time.

#### **Acknowledgment of Responsibility for Offense**

In the film script in *Secret Invasion* that contains this apology, there is an apology that contains acknowledgment of responsibility for offense once in the conversation from the entire data.

#### **(AORFO01)**

**Pedestrian” Sorry, ……………”**

Talos “Thank you”

In this series *Moving*, Jang Joo won uses Acknowledgement of responsibility for offense once in his conversation from the total data.

#### **(AORFO01)**

**Jang joo won “jeosong hamnida ……………”**

Hwang ji hee “joesonghal geo……………”

(There's nothing ……………”

In *Secret Invasion* Starting from the pedestrian who suddenly bumped into Talos and dropped Talos' cellphone, then the pedestrian said "sorry, i believe this is yours" apologized and picked up the cellphone that he had dropped and gave it to Talos.

The utterances in *Moving* above includes an acknowledgment of responsibility for offense because after expressing an apology Jang Joo Woon helped pick up the glass that he had dropped, then responded well by Hwang Ji Hee by answering because we collided which caused the glass to fall and break.

**Promise of Forbearance**

In the television series *Secret invasion*, the promise of forgiveness strategy was used by Varra in the television series.

**(POF02)**

Nick Furry "which you have ....."?"

Varra "....., sorry darling"

In the script of this movie, Lee Min Hyun used the promise of forbearance because he promised to take care of Kim Bong Seok.

**(POF01)**

Lee Min Hyun "..... mianhae jeongmal mianhae"  
(..... mom will protect you, sorry .....)

Kim Bong Seok "eomma"

The utterances in *Secret Invasion* shows the strategy of apologizing for the promise of patience, when Varra promises not to hurt her lover Nick Furry, Varra does this with the aim of making James Rhodes silent because Nick Furry knows Varra has spoken to James Rhodes before and will hurt him.

The utterances in *Moving* above shows that Lee min Hyun uses the apology promise of forbearance by saying "eommaga neol ango isseo, eomma neol mianhae" to his son and promising to take care of his son. The word mianhae shows that there is an age difference from old to young, seen from the pronunciation of his apology.

**B. Differences Apology Strategies between English series “*Secret Invasion*” and Korean series “*Moving*”**

This section discusses the differences in apology strategies between the English series "Secret Invasion" and the Korean series "Moving".

**Table 4.3 Differences between English series “Secret Invasion” and Korean series “Moving”**

No	Types of apologies in English	Types of apologies in Korean
1	Expression Of Apology	Expression Of Apology

2	Offer Of Repair	8	-
3	Explanation Of Account	1	Explanation Of Account
4	Acknowledgment Of Responsibility for Offense	1	Acknowledgment Of Responsibility for Offense
5	Promise Of Forbearance	1	Promise Of Forbearance

The table above reveals a similarity in the English series "Secret Invasion" and the Korean series "Moving": both main characters rarely use apologies that acknowledge responsibility for offenses. However, there are notable differences in apology strategies between the two series. In the English series, characters often provide explanations for their actions after apologizing, reflecting a cultural tendency to overlook social differences and age or social status. In contrast, the Korean series emphasizes expressions of apology, with a strong focus on politeness and respect, particularly in interactions involving age differences. Younger characters in the Korean series frequently bow their heads and bodies when apologizing to older individuals. These distinctions highlight how English culture tends to favor explanatory apologies, while Korean culture prioritizes spontaneous, respectful apologies. Overall, the series demonstrate the differing apology strategies between English and Korean characters, illustrating the influence of cultural norms on these interactions.

## 2 ONCLUSION

Based on the research data findings and discussion, the study identifies five types of apology strategies: expression of apology, offer of repair, explanation of account, acknowledgment of responsibility for offense, and promise of forbearance. In the "Secret Invasion" series, there are 2 instances of expression of apology, 1 offer of repair, 7 explanations of account, 1 acknowledgment of responsibility, and 2 promises of forbearance. Conversely, in the "Moving" series, there are 33 expressions of apology, 7 explanations of account, 1 acknowledgment of responsibility, and 1 promise of forbearance. The study highlights a difference in apology strategy characteristics between English and Korean series. English characters more frequently use explanations of account, reflecting a cultural tendency to downplay social differences and disregard age or social status in apologies. In contrast, Korean series characters use expressions of apology more often, as Korean culture places a high value on age and spontaneous apologies, which are considered polite and indicative of awareness of mistakes.

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