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An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics and English language
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Declaration

I confirm that this thesis presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics and English language has

i) been composed entirely by myself,

ii) been solely the result of my own work,

iii) not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.
Abstract

Apology is a critical speech act in everyday language. It has attracted many researchers from different perspectives, apology realisations patterns, apologies in different cultures, apology competence among second language learners, politeness orientations towards negative or positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987), among others. Apology might place some psychological difficulties not just on its performer, but also on its receiver (Lakoff, 2001). In the literature, many studies have investigated the strategies adopted by the speaker, but comparatively little attention has been paid to how these strategies are received by the hearer - that is, how effective they are.

Apology can be performed by using some apology strategies, e.g., an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) e.g., I am sorry, an expression of responsibility, an offer of repair, or a promise of forbearance (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Thus, given that several apology studies (e.g., Holmes, 1990; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021) have documented that their participants prefer to apologise by using a combination of apology strategies, the thesis aims to explore the relationship between combining the IFID (e.g., I am sorry) with one of Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies and the hearer's perception of the apology. An explanatory mixed methods sequential design was used to collect data from native speakers of Saudi
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

Arabic given that Saudi Arabic is widely spoken, and highly relevant for cross-cultural communication and yet is understudied, and hence was used as data for the current study.

I hypothesised in this thesis that an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance, and an acknowledgement of responsibility can function as upgrading devices when combined with an IFID. It was also hypothesised that an explanation when combined with an IFID can function as downgrading device. 99 native speakers of Saudi Arabic participants were recruited, to complete an online rating scale survey based on Latin-square design, examining participants’ acceptance of certain apology combinations based on 12 hypothetical scenarios. Qualitative questions that emerged from the quantitative study were explored using three focus group discussions. Qualitative data were analysed based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework. Analysis of the quantitative results showed that combining an IFID with either an offer or repair or an acknowledgement of responsibility increased its acceptability; however, the results of combining an IFID with a promise of forbearance or an explanation were more equivocal.

The qualitative study suggested that whether or not these combinations were effective depended on the nature of the offence (in the case of the promise of
forbearance) and whether internal or external factors were invoked (in the case of the explanation).

The qualitative findings additionally show that there are two more factors that play a role in motivating the hearer’s perception of an apology; the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors and the act that is being apologised for. I discuss these results in the context of a model of apology combination in which the speaker’s aim is to design a strategy that satisfies the hearer’s social, psychological and emotional needs. Therefore, when a combination fails to achieve its goal (of being accepted), the failure in one way or another might be attributed to the inappropriateness of the apology based on these needs. This tendency would clearly refute the view that the addition of apology strategies will automatically make an apology more likely to be accepted.
Lay Summary

Apology is part of our everyday language. It can help disputed parties to restore their relationship. Previous studies have paid more attention to the strategies that people use to apologise. However, how these apologies are received by the hearer i.e. how effective they are, was not sufficiently explored. Several studies found that people tend to use multiple apology strategies when they apologise. Therefore, in this research I aim to explore how combining an explicit apology (e.g., I am sorry) with other apology strategies presented by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), namely an offer of repair, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an explanation, or a promise of forbearance affect the hearer’s acceptance of the apology. My original expectation was that a hearer would accept the apology if the speaker uses an explicit apology combined with an offer of repair, an acknowledgement of responsibility, or a promise of forbearance. On the other hand, I expected that a hearer would reject the apology if the speaker uses ‘I am sorry’ combined with an explanation. We examined this using two methods, namely a questionnaire which was used to allow participants to rate different apology combinations in different apology situations, and focus group discussion which was used to answer some questions that arose from the questionnaires’ results. The results of the questionnaire confirmed that combining an offer of repair or an acknowledgement of responsibility with ‘I am sorry’ increases its acceptability; however, combining an explanation or a promise of forbearance with ‘I am sorry’ was found to be more ambiguous. The focus group discussion
results showed that the effectiveness of these two combinations (i.e. an explanation and a promise of forbearance) relies on the nature of the offence for the promise of forbearance combination, and for the explanation combination, it relies on whether the speaker suggests external or internal factors that cause the incident. The focus group discussion results also showed that there are other factors that affect the hearer’s acceptance of an apology which are; the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the hearer, and the act that is being apologised for. In this research, I discuss my results in light of a model in which a speaker tends to tailor his/her apology to satisfy the hearer’s social, psychological, and emotional needs. Accordingly, apology failure is attributed in one way or another to the apology’s unsuitability based on these needs. The findings therefore refute the notion that the more apology strategies added by the speaker, the more likely for the apology to be automatically better, and hence be accepted.
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List of Abbreviations

CCSARP A Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns

H Hearer

IFID Illocutionary force indicating device

S Speaker
1 Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background
The speech act of apologising is a topic that has been widely examined by many researchers in the field of linguistics. It has attracted researchers’ attention from different perspectives: realisation patterns, politeness strategies, politeness orientation, gender differences, institutional apology, and public apology, among others. It is an interesting topic due in part to the way in which apology determines our future relationships with others. That is because to apologise is to “express regret for something done or said” (Merriam-Webster.com, n.d.) and by apologising, one can restore the harmony with the offended party (Holmes, 1990).

A distinctive feature of the speech act of apology is the fact that it involves the participation of two parties, the speaker and the hearer. Leech (1983, pp. 124-25) suggests that “an apology implies a transaction, in that it is a bid to change the balance-sheet of the relation between S[peaker] against H[earer]. If the apology is successful, it will result in H's pardoning or excusing the offence”. Therefore, the study of apology is not solely about the speaker’s selection of apology strategies. The hearer’s uptake of those apology strategies is equally important because it determines whether the attempt to repair a violation of social norms is successful, and whether by apologising a speaker can reaccredit him/herself as a member of that society (Tavuchis, 1991).
In the literature, apology has been extensively examined cross-linguistically and cross-culturally, typically focusing on the politeness orientations of apology strategies in light of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory or on the realisation patterns of the speech acts of apologising. However, there is an overall lack of research regarding the hearer’s perception of the apology strategies. This thesis addresses this lacuna, with particular reference to the apology strategies identified by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), as these have been claimed to be potentially universal (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), allowing for cross-cultural differences in precisely how they are used (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989). Therefore, the need arises to examine to what extent the apology strategies are effective from the hearer’s perspective.

Regarding apology strategies, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) suggest that apology can be performed using five strategies: an explicit apology involving an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), e.g., ‘I am sorry’ or ‘I apologise’; an explanation; an acknowledgment of responsibility; an offer of repair; and a promise of forbearance. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) also suggest that one can intensify an apology by utilising internal intensification (e.g. adding ‘very’), expressing concern for the hearer, or more importantly by combining apology strategies with or without an IFID. Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) indicate that intensification can help the apologiser to convey to the offended party their awareness of the offence and their desire to re-establish the relationship with them, hence showing the speaker’s empathy towards and interest in the hearer.
Scher and Darley (1997) examined the effectiveness of an IFID, an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance, and an acknowledgement of responsibility from the hearer’s standpoint, suggesting that the utterance is rated as least apologetic and least appropriate by their participants when it lacks any of the apology forms tested: an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance. However, Scher and Darley did not consider explanation in their study suggesting that it aims to identify an external factor as having caused the harm and thus mitigating the infraction, making these excuses rather than apologies (cf. Austin, 1962; Goffman, 1971; Tavuchis, 1991; Smith, 2008, Battistella, 2014). This signifies one limitation of Scher and Darley’s study, since most studies in the speech act of apologising have considered explanations as apology strategies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Holmes, 1990; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989; Reiter 2000; Nuredden, 2008; Qari, 2017; among many others). Another limitation associated with Scher and Darley’s study is the fact that their study was limited to only one situation (between friends), which prevents the investigation of factors such as power and social distance in the relationship, or the severity of the offence.

Briefly, in the existing literature, apology has been extensively investigated from the speaker’s standpoint, but relatively little work has addressed the effectiveness of the apology strategies from the hearer’s perspective. Given this lack of research on the speech act of apology from the hearer’s perspective, and more specifically given the lack of research regarding the effects of combining Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies on the hearer’s standpoint, despite their claimed universality, this thesis aims to explore how the hearer’s
perception and acceptance/rejection of an apology is influenced by the type of apology strategy combined with an IFID.

Specifically, I explore the idea that we can think of these apology strategies as having upgrading or downgrading effects on the apology, when combined with an IFID. Based on the existing literature, I initially hypothesised that explanation would serve as a downgrading device, whereas an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair, or a promise of forbearance would serve as upgrading devices.

In sum, then, the central questions addressed in this research are associated with hearers’ perceptions of the combination of apology strategies. In particular, is there any effect of combining an IFID with an explanation, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair, or a promise of forbearance on the hearer’s acceptance of the apology?

1.2 Data and methods
The data in this thesis have been collected in Saudi Arabia (using Saudi Arabic as data), using mixed methods approach. The research involved using an explanatory mixed methods sequential design which involves using two different instruments, namely quantitative and qualitative instruments in two sequential phases (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The first phase encompasses the quantitative side of the research while the second phase involves the qualitative side of the research. The qualitative phase aims to “explain or expand on the first-phase quantitative results” (ibid., p. 65), and
ultimately, to explain why the quantitative results turned out as they did (e.g., in respect of their (non)significance).

In the quantitative side of this research, we used a scale rating questionnaire to examine the acceptance of certain apology combinations (e.g., an IFID combined with an offer of repair, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an explanation, or a promise of forbearance) in a set of hypothetical scenarios, 12 in all. In order to examine our hypothesis in the most appropriate way, we constructed the questionnaire based on Latin-square design. Three scale rating questionnaires were distributed to three different groups. Each questionnaire has the same scenarios, but with different apology combination. This allowed us to examine each combination under scrutiny on its own merit, and allowed us to get contrast effects and compare between different possibilities in the same scenario.

In the qualitative side of this research, we used focus group discussion that aimed to address some emerging questions from the quantitative side of the research, namely the equivocality of the explanation and the promise of forbearance combinations. Three online focus groups were conducted, two consisted of three participants each, and one consisted of four participants. The gathered data then were analysed based on Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework.
1.3 The significance of the study

The focus in the literature on apology to date has predominantly been on the realisation patterns of apology or the differences in realising these apologies across cultures, and little has been done to the effect of these strategies taking into account the hearer’s perspective. Therefore, this thesis aims to bridge a gap that exists in the literature and shed some new light on understanding apology from the hearer’s perspective. Given the importance of apology as a social action, understanding its effects better has relevance for communication, including in international contexts, and potentially for technological applications such as artificial dialogue systems.

By conducting a mixed methods approach to explore the effectiveness of combining apology strategies on hearer’s perception, this research aims to quantitatively and qualitatively analyse the data, which should be able to confirm or disconfirm the proposed hypotheses stated above and provide more insights on what might influence apology’s acceptance from the hearer’s perspective. Overall, it is hoped that this research will lead to a better understanding of the notion of apology by extending the research to include the acceptance of the apology strategy combinations from hearer’s standpoint. Furthermore, the study will be utilising data from a language that is understudied yet widely spoken and highly relevant for international communication.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is composed of six chapters. This chapter briefly discusses the background of the study, identifies the research aims and questions, and presents the significance of the research. Chapter Two reviews the literature to identify apology definitions, its
classifications in the light of speech act theory, apology strategies in different languages and in different Arabic dialects, the apology process, the effectiveness of apology strategies, factors that might influence the apology strategies’ perception, and the theoretical framework of this research. Chapter Three discusses the explanatory sequential mixed methods design and justifies its usage in this thesis. The quantitative (scale-rating questionnaire) and the qualitative (focus group discussion) instruments used in this research will be introduced and critically discussed. Chapter Four analyses the data gathered by means of the quantitative instrument, and presents the results and conclusions which confirmed our hypotheses for the offer of repair combination (i.e. an IFID + an offer of repair) and the acknowledgement of responsibility combination (i.e. an IFID + an acknowledgement of responsibility), and raised questions about the ambiguity of the explanation and the promise of forbearance combinations. Chapter Five aims to address these questions (i.e. regarding the vagueness of the promise of forbearance and the explanation combinations) using focus group method. Chapter Six summarises the conclusions of the thesis, its limitations, and directions for future research.
2 Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The thesis examines the effectiveness of combining apology strategies with illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) from the hearer’s perspective. Apology is an important speech act that is crucial to many aspects of people’s interpersonal or public lives, but the effectiveness of apology strategies is less often considered at a linguistic level. This chapter reviews the relevant literature. I begin by introducing the research problem that this thesis tackles (section 2.2). I then review the strands of literature that are most relevant to the approach I take in this thesis. In section 2.3, I discuss the classification of apology within speech act theory, and what this tells us about how apology should be defined. In section 2.4, I review studies of apology strategies which have led to the elucidation of key concepts for this thesis, notably the upgrading and downgrading of apology effects, and in section 2.5 I look at prior work on the effectiveness of apologies. I conclude by briefly summarising the chapter in section 2.6.

2.2 Research Problem

Although the literature has extensively investigated apologies in different languages and cultures (e.g. Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984;
Trosborg, 1987, 2011; Garcia 1989; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989; Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989; Cordella, 1990; Mir, 1992; Sugimoto, 1997; Reiter, 2000; Okumura & Wei, 2000; Hou, 2006; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008; Al-Zumor, 2011; Banikalef et al., 2015; Qari, 2019; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021), little attention has been paid to the effectiveness of these apologies, in terms of the hearer’s acceptance. In the existing literature, the apology perception from a hearer’s standpoint is underexplored. Most of the research has focused on the production of apology, and the strategies used by the apologiser. The importance of the hearer’s acceptance of the apology strategies lies in the fact that apology is a two-end act that requires the other party (i.e. the offended party) to accept or excuse the offence for it to become successful (Leech, 1983). Therefore, it is important to examine how effective these apology strategies are from the hearer’s standpoint.

In this thesis, I focus on the combination of Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies, namely the acknowledgement of responsibility, the offer of repair, the explanation, and the promise of forbearance with the illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) (e.g., I am sorry). Several apology studies have documented a majority of responses involving combinations of apology strategies (e.g., Holmes 1990; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021). Therefore, there is a need to examine whether these combinations have any effect on hearer’s acceptance of an apology.
For reasons that will be discussed in section 2.4, I conjecture that each of the apology strategies has a tendency either to upgrade or downgrade the force associated with an apology, depending on whether it admits, minimises, or denies responsibility for the offence. For example, an offer of repair entails acknowledgement of responsibility (Holmes 1990), and the same can be argued for the promise of forbearance (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984).

Similarly, as I will discuss in more detail in section 2.4.5, a number of researchers argue that there are inherent tensions between apologies and explanations. For example, Tavuchis (1991) proposes that to apologise means to convey to the other party that you have no excuse, whereas to provide an account means to distance yourself from the wrongdoing. He also suggests that an apology is a story that stems from the offender’s full admission of the wrongdoing. An account, like an apology, is a story that could be judged in terms of its value or sincerity and could be rejected or accepted. However, it stems from a different motivation, namely the actor’s attempt to distance himself from the offence by either denying or mitigating his responsibility for it. For this reason, an account may tend to undermine an apology (ibid.).

Taken together, therefore, this thesis attempts to examine how effective apology strategies are, in Saudi Arabic, focusing on the combination of an IFID with one of the other four apology strategies presented by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Based on their classification and internal motivations, we theorised that by combining an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair
or a promise of forbearance with an IFID such as ‘I am sorry’, a speaker can upgrade the apologetic force, and hence enhance the perlocutionary effect (i.e. the acceptance of the apology). On similar grounds, we hypothesised that by combining an explanation with the IFID, one would downgrade the apologetic force of the apology, and hence would reduce the perlocutionary effect (i.e. acceptance of the apology).

By examining the effectiveness of combining apology strategies with an IFID, we aim to shed new light on an understudied topic in apology, using a correspondingly understudied language, namely Saudi Arabic. We also hope that this study will enhance our understanding of the apology from the hearer’s perspective, addressing the questions of whether what speakers say is effective in achieving the intended perlocutionary effect (i.e. acceptance), thus broadening the object of study to include the crucial second participant in the apology process.

Specifically, we test the following hypotheses, which are based on the literature reviewed in below sections:

1. A speaker is usually perceived to be downgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an explanation.
2. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an expression of acknowledgement of responsibility.
3. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an offer of repair.
4. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an expression of a promise of forbearance.

By addressing these hypotheses, we aim to understand whether the combination has an impact upon people’s acceptance of an apology and whether the hypotheses we are testing have the predicted effects. By doing so, we aim to bridge a gap that exists in the literature by shedding more light on the concept of apology from the hearer’s perspective.

2.3 Apology as a Speech Act

2.3.1 Theoretical Background

In sections 2.3.1.1 and 2.3.1.2, to understand where apology fits into the system of speech act, I shall discuss the theory of speech act in general, particularly Austin’s view of the theory of speech act as well as Searle’s view of the theory of speech act. In section 2.3.1.3, I will discuss Austin’s and Searle’s views of apology and how they classify it in their theory of speech act. In section 2.3.1.4, I will discuss which conditions are necessary and sufficient for a speech act to be successfully and non-defectively performed (Austin’s and Searle’s views) and the debate about the apology felicity conditions presented by Owen (1983), Ogiermann (2009), and Murphy (2015). In section 2.3.2, I will discuss how apology has been defined in the literature.
2.3.1.1 Austin’s Theory of Speech Acts

Austin initiated the notion of speech acts in his lectures in the 1950s, which were later published as the book How to Do Things with Words (1962). Austin argues that the meaning of utterances cannot necessarily always be classified based on notions of truth or falsity. Austin’s view opposed the predominant notion at that time among positivist philosophers that statements cannot be meaningful unless they can be verified. Austin (1962, p.5) illustrates this idea with some examples (“I do” in reply to a minister in a marriage ceremony, “I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth”, “I give and bequeath my watch to my brother”, and “I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow”) which cannot usefully be discussed in terms of truth and falsity. In particular, Austin (1962) wanted to say that these utterances bring about actions and cannot be looked at as true or false: for instance, to say ‘I do’ is not “to state that I am doing it: it is to do it” (ibid., p. 6). In such situations, the speaker is not reporting his willingness to get married, naming the ship, giving and bequeathing his watch, or betting it will rain tomorrow; however, he/she is actually becoming involved in it. This kind of utterance was named by Austin as a performative sentence. In the case of apology, for instance, when people say “I apologise”, they are not reporting their apologies, they are actually performing the apology by using an explicit performative. Notably, actions can be performed by using explicit or implicit performatives. Explicit performatives refer to a speaker naming the action he/she intends to convey, e.g. by using the verb “apologise”, while implicit performatives can be achieved by other formulas, e.g. “I am sorry”. Austin argues that saying something often does not mean just stating facts, but in many cases, also performing some sort of action.
2.3.1.1.1 Austin’s Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act, and Perlocutionary Act

Austin (1962) attempts to formulate a list of explicit performatives and, in doing so, faces some difficulties in deciding whether some utterances can be regarded as performatives or not. Austin (1962, pp. 100-101) then proposes to distinguish three fundamental types of speech act, namely locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. To him, “the act of saying something” is regarded as the locutionary act, while the illocutionary act is “the performance of an act in saying something as opposed to the performance of an act of saying something”. In other words, the locutionary act is what is literally uttered by a speaker, whereas the illocutionary act is the function or the force that the speaker is intending to convey by uttering those words. He defines the perlocutionary act as encompassing the “consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts of the audience, speaker, or other persons” brought about by saying something. For example, a speaker who utters the words “I apologise” is using a locutionary act to convey to the other party his apology, which is the illocutionary act that he/she intends to achieve. If the hearer accepts the apology, then the perlocutionary effect (of successfully apologising) has been achieved.

2.3.1.1.2 Austin’s Speech Acts Taxonomy

Austin (1962, pp. 150-163) ultimately proposes a taxonomy of speech acts based on their functions (i.e. at the level of illocutionary act), which identifies the following five categories: verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabitives, and expositives. Behabitives is the class to which apology belongs in Austin’s view. This class involves
dealing with social behaviour or attitudes. Examples are: apologise, thank, deplore, congratulate, condole, and challenge, among others.

2.3.1.2 Searle’s Theory of Speech Acts

2.3.1.2.1 Searle’s refined version of Speech Act Theory

Searle (1969, pp. 23-24) proposes an alternative analysis to that of Austin, in which speech acts can be analysed at four levels, as follows.

- **Utterance act**: This concerns what is literally uttered by the speaker whether it has meaning or not (morphemes and sentences).

- **Propositional act**: This act concerns “referring and predicating”. Taking the example “Abdullah drives his car recklessly”, “Abdullah” is the referring object, while “drives his car recklessly” is the predicated expression.

- **Illocutionary act**: This concerns the speaker intention of certain utterances. For example, “Abdullah drives his car recklessly” is an assertion, while “Does Abdullah drive his car recklessly?” is a question. Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p. 1) suggest that “an illocutionary act consists of an illocutionary force $F$ and a propositional content $P$”. That is, the same propositional content can have different illocutionary force such as Abdullah’s example above. Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p. 2) refer to the notion of illocutionary force indicating devices IFIDs as any linguistics element that “[indicates] that an utterance of a sentence containing that element has a certain illocutionary force”. Performative verbs, words order, and moods are examples of IFIDs (ibid.).
• Perlocutionary act: Following Austin’s notion of perlocutionary act, this act is related to the effects of the illocutionary acts on the hearer.

Searle (1969, pp. 24-25) suggests that, while the utterance act consists of a series of words, propositional and illocutionary acts consist of “uttering words in sentences in certain context, under certain conditions and with certain intentions”. Furthermore, Searle argues that there is a distinction between the propositional act and the complete speech acts, which is justified due to the possibility of performing different illocutionary acts using the same propositional act.

2.3.1.2.2 Searle’s Criticism of Austin’s Taxonomy

Searle (1979) criticises Austin’s taxonomy, arguing that Austin has classified the English performative verbs and not the illocutionary acts. That is to say, not all the classified verbs correspond to different illocutionary acts, and not every verb that has a different, non-synonymous meaning must represent a different illocutionary act. Searle argues for the importance of distinguishing one illocutionary act from another, rather than being guided by what happens to be lexicalised in English. Thus Searle (1979) suggests appealing to the ideas of illocutionary point, direction of fit, and expressed psychological states in order to make these distinctions. Particularly, for example, he proposes the question of “how do the species promise, predict, report, etc. differ one from the other?” (ibid., p. 2) He suggests that three main elements play a vital role in shaping a proper taxonomy, which are:
• **Differences in the illocutionary point**: In Searle’s terminology, the illocutionary point is the purpose of the act. This differs from the illocutionary force because two different illocutionary forces may have the same illocutionary point. For instance, “request” and “command” have the same illocutionary point, which is asking the hearer to do something.

• **Differences in the direction of fit**: Searle argues that there are two directions of fit: word-to-world and world-to-word. The former is related to speech acts in which the speaker attempts to make his/her action match with the facts in the world, whereas the latter relates to speech acts in which the speaker attempts to change the world in accordance with the action. Examples of the first category include statement, description, assertion, and explanation, whereas the second category includes requests, commands, vows, and promises.

• **Differences in expressed psychological states**: This is related to Searle’s concept of the sincerity condition. In particular, Searle suggests that “in the performance of any illocutionary act with a propositional content, the speaker expresses some attitude, state … to that propositional content” (ibid., p. 4) and “the psychological state expressed in the performance of the illocutionary act is the sincerity condition of the act” (ibid., p. 5). Searle (1979) further suggests that it is impossible to construe the illocutionary acts as being based on totally different expressed psychological states, and that in fact some psychological states can underpin multiple illocutionary acts. For example, belief is involved in statements, assertions, remarks, explanations, postulations, declarations, deductions, and arguments.
Searle (1979, p. 15) recognises apology as a kind of illocutionary act and classifies it as an expressive which expresses “the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content” e.g., expressing feelings or attitudes, and has no direction of fit given that the performer is not aiming to convey that the words fit the world or vice versa. However, “the truth of the expressed proposition is presupposed” (ibid., p. 15).

Searle (1975) then discusses the existence of indirect speech acts in which he differentiates between what he calls direct and indirect speech acts. The former are speech acts whose linguistic structure matches their functions, whereas the latter are speech acts that are executed implicitly by performing other speech acts. This would suggest that we cannot identify apologies merely on the basis of their containing specific lexical items.

2.3.1.3 Apology Classification

As has been mentioned above, the speech act of apologising has been classified under different categories by different scholars. Austin (1962) proposed to classify apology as a behabitive, but was not entirely satisfied with this proposed category, and even admits the possibility “that some fresh classification altogether is needed” (ibid., p. 151). He suggests that behabitives are “troublesome because they seem too miscellaneous altogether” (ibid., p. 151), and seem to overlap with other categories. Searle (1979) suggested a need for a new taxonomy in which he allocated the speech acts of apologising to “expressives”, which he refers to as a category incorporating
verbs that “express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content” (ibid., p. 15). This category includes thanking, congratulating, condoling, and deploring. Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p. 211) remark that “most of the expressive speech acts that have acquired special verbs naming them are essentially hearer-directed.”.

Ogiermann (2009, p. 46) notes that other taxonomies for speech acts place more focus on the acts’ social functions. An example of that would be Bach and Harnish’s (1979, p. 39) classification in which they differentiated types of illocutionary acts by types of illocutionary intents, and hence their classifications were based on the expression of attitude. They classified apology under the term “acknowledgements” rather than “behabitives” or “expressives”. They pointed out that words in this type of category “express, perfunctorily if not genuinely, certain feelings towards the hearer” (ibid., p. 51). They suggested that what leads to the performance of these types of speech acts is the speaker’s desire to meet social expectations. For example, in apologising, the speaker expresses his/her responsibility for an offence and regret for it. In this case, the speaker needs to meet the social expectation of showing that he/she regrets doing the act, and the utterance is only considered an apology when the other interlocutor (the hearer) considers the speaker’s utterance as meeting this expectation.
2.3.1.4 Felicity conditions

This thesis focuses on the question of what it means for an act of apology to be successful or unsuccessful. Part of this is clearly dependent on the hearer, as I discuss later in this chapter. But from the perspective of speech act theory, one simple reason why such an act might be unsuccessful is if the act fails to constitute an apology in the first place, a possibility discussed by both Austin and Searle.

In discussing the effectiveness of a speech act, Austin (1962) suggests that the accomplishment of performative acts is not always straightforward. There are instances in which these performatives might go wrong. Austin (1962, p. 14) classifies them as unhappy (or infelicitous) utterances. In order to judge an utterance unhappy, there should be a violation of certain rules, which Austin called “felicity conditions”. He proposed the following rules for an utterance to be classified as happy (or felicitous) (ibid., p.14-15).

- (A.1) There must be in existence an accepted conventional procedure that has a certain conventional effect and which includes the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further,
- (A.2) The particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked.
- (B.1) The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and completely.
- (r.1) Where, as often, the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inaugurations of certain consequential
conduct on the part of any participants, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must, in fact, have those thoughts or feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further

• (r.2) must actually conduct themselves subsequently (Austin, 1962, pp. 14-15).

Principally, Austin argues that if any of these six rules are unsatisfied, the utterance would be unhappy. For illustration, in the context of apology, if your friend offends someone, you cannot apologise instead of him/her as this would make the act of apology infelicitous because it was performed by someone who has not wronged the other party, and hence it violates rule (A.2). In this case, the wronged party is not expected to perceive what you say as an apology.

Austin (1962, p. 27) in discussing rule (A.1), points out that if a Christian husband says to his Christian wife “I divorce you”, his utterance is unsuccessful because this is not an accepted procedure for bringing about the action of divorce. For the utterance to be effective, the utterance should be uttered by the appropriate person e.g., a judge announcing the divorce following certain procedures, in the appropriate place (Duranti, 1997). However, the same utterance uttered by a Muslim husband to his Muslim wife will be successful because conventionally the procedure is accepted. Austin (1962, p. 28) notes that (A.2) refers to the situation where “the circumstances in which [the procedure] was invoked or the persons who invoked it were wrong”, as exemplified in the preceding paragraph. Austin’s conditions (B.1) and (B.2) indicate how a speech act may be unsuccessful if the participants do not complete their part of the
conventional procedure (Duranti, 1997). For example, saying “I bet you sixpence’ is abortive unless you say ‘I take you on’ or words to that effect” (Austin, 1962, p. 37): that is to say, the bet does not take effect unless both parties signal agreement to it. Similarly, apology is a two-end act, and one cannot say sorry and expect his apology to be successfully achieved unless the offended party accepts it or excuses the offence (Leech, 1983).

By contrast, for conditions (r.1) and (r.2), Austin (1962) suggests that violations involve breaches, infractions or insincerities that make the performance of the utterance unhappy but do not void it. An example of this would be saying 'I'm sorry' when I do not regret what I have done. In this example, the speaker has performed the act of apologising because the circumstances were in order; however, the utterance is insincere because the speaker did not sincerely feel the appropriate emotions. Hence, the speaker is violating the sincerity condition.

Searle (1969, pp. 54-71) proposed a refined version of Austin’s felicity conditions, revisiting the question of precisely which conditions are necessary and sufficient for a speech act to be successfully and non-defectively performed. In answering this, Searle (1969) distinguishes between preparatory, propositional, sincerity, and essential conditions. Searle (1969, pp. 66-67) breaks down these conditions for a set of speech acts including requesting, greeting, questioning, asserting and thanking. Although Searle (1969) did not specifically itemise the proposed felicity conditions for apology, this is taken up by Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p. 211). They suggest that apology
has two preparatory conditions: that “the speaker must be responsible for the thing about which the sorrow expressed”, and that “the proposition is true and the state of affairs represented by the propositional content is bad for the hearer”. As highlighted by Murphy (2015), they also discussed a propositional content condition for apology, namely that “if a speaker apologizes for something it must be for something that he has done or is otherwise responsible for” (ibid., p. 16). According to that, if a friend apologises for something that was committed by his/her friend, the apology is infelicitous for violating the propositional content and the preparatory conditions.

However, these formulations have been the subject of extensive additional debate in the literature, in that several subsequent attempts have been made to formulate felicity conditions for apology, notably by Owen (1983), Ogiermann (2009) and Murphy (2015). For example, Owen (1983, p.116-18), based on Searle’s (1969) approach to felicity conditions, attempts to formulate the felicity conditions for apology. She proposed the following conditions:

- Propositional content rule: an act A of the speaker S (or a state of affairs resulting from the act of S) which is either a past act, or an act that S is engaged in at the time of speaking, or a future act whose occurrence is assured.
- Preparatory rule (1): the act A specified in the propositional content is an offence against the addressee H.
- Preparatory rule (2): H would have preferred S’s not doing A to S’s doing A and S believes H would have preferred S’s not doing A to his doing A
• Preparatory Rule (3): A does not benefit H and S believes A does not benefit H.

• Sincerity Rule (1) “Searle”: S regrets (is sorry for) having done A.

• Essential Rule “Searle”: Counts as an expression of regret by S for having done (1 sincerity rule) A.

Ogiermann (2009) likewise attempts to formulate felicity conditions for apologising. In doing so, she draws upon Searle’s (1969, p. 67) rules for the category of expressives. Ogiermann (2009, p.46) proposes the following felicity conditions:

• Propositional content: Past act A done by S

• Preparatory condition: S believes that A is an offence against H

• Sincerity condition: S regrets act A

• Essential condition: Counts as an apology for act A

Although there are some similarities between Owen’s and Ogiermann’s felicity conditions, there are some interesting points of disagreement. Ogiermann (2009) frames her propositional content condition to state that apologising can only be done for a past act, whereas Owen’s (1983) formulation suggests that one can apologise for past, current and future acts. Furthermore, in Ogiermann’s preparatory condition, she emphasises that the speaker believes that the act is offensive to the hearer. This narrows the domain of apology to exclude cases where the act is considered offensive by the speaker, or by a third party (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Battistella, 2014).
Murphy (2015) challenges both Owen’s (1983) and Ogiermann’s (2009) sets of felicity conditions for apologising, focusing in particular on the latter. He queries Ogiermann’s proposal for propositional content with reference to Searle and Vanderveken’s (1985) definition of illocutionary force. Specifically, Murphy (2015) suggests that given that the illocutionary force is considered by Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p. 16) as imposing “certain conditions in the propositional content P” such as “if a speaker apologizes for something it must be for something that he has done or is otherwise responsible for”. An example that they suggested was “a speaker cannot successfully apologize for the law of modus ponens or the elliptical orbit of the planets” (ibid., p. 16).

Murphy agrees with Ogiermann that a speaker cannot apologise for modus ponens, but argues that her construal of whether the speaker actually has to have done the specific act, rather than merely being responsible for it, is too narrow. For instance, a parent apologising for his/her child who spilled his drink on his/her friend’s carpet would be regarded as infelicitous given the wording of Ogiermann’s propositional content condition. However, in the example discussed by Murphy (2015, p.177), the friend’s response “Don’t worry. I’ll do it. It wasn’t very much” indicated that the friend perceived the mother’s utterance as an apology. Murphy notes that this perception is also supported by the apology recipient comprehending that the child may be unaware of their mistakes, and lack the requisite linguistic ability to perform an apology of their own.
Murphy (2015, p.177) proposes that, given Searle and Vanderveken (1985, p. 16), one can apologise for someone else’s behaviour since their formulation leaves “this possibility open by saying that an action which a speaker ‘is otherwise responsible for’ is a legitimate source of an apology.” With this formulation in mind, Murphy (2015) suggests that, in order to successfully apologise, a speaker needs to be implicitly responsible for the act and to be interested in the perlocutionary goal of restoring the harmony between the interactants. On this view, the parent’s apology is appropriate because it is the child’s parent’s responsibility to ensure harmonious social relations between their child and their friends. Therefore, if the victim perceives the offending party’s apology as satisfying the perlocutionary goal, the apology needs to be regarded as felicitous (Murphy, 2015).

Murphy (2015) also challenges the propositional content of Ogiermann’s (2009) proposal, which indicates that an apology is infelicitous if it is associated with any time other than the past. For Murphy (2015), we can apologise for some future acts: a speaker might apologise for their non-attendance at a future meeting, public companies might apologise for future closures of streets or services, and sometimes one might apologise before uttering something that has the potential to be disrespectful of others. Therefore, Murphy agrees with Owen’s (1983) take that apology can be performed with respect to times other than the past.

Murphy (2015) also challenges Ogiermann’s (2009, p.46) preparatory condition “S believes that A is an offence against H”. To refute this concept, Murphy (2015)
presents two claimed counterexamples to the requirement for the speaker to hold the belief that his/her action is offensive to the hearer, the first of which is repeated here as (3).

1) Context: James has just left the bathroom; his partner Emily enters to use the toilet

Emily: For [God’s] sake, can you stop leaving the toilet seat up?!

James: I’m sorry – I keep forgetting. (Murphy, 2015, p. 181).

In the above example, Murphy (2015) claims that he (James) apologised although he did not find his act to be offensive. He explicitly demonstrates that had Emily been leaving the toilet seat up, that would make him happy (ibid.). Despite his acknowledgement of the inoffensiveness of the act, he apologised and argued that his apology was sincere though he believed there was no offence. This example raises a question of whether such an apology (if we can call it that) is infelicitous (ibid.). Murphy (2015, p. 181) suggests that it is an apology: as he puts it, “I know from my world knowledge and from her utterance that my interlocutor does find my action offensive.”

The second example that Murphy (2015, p.181) provides was related to a situation where a speaker (him) comments (using an insult utterance) on a hearer (his brother Craig) and both S and H find their interaction inoffensive, but a third party (their mother) finds it offensive and requests the speaker to apologise to the hearer. The example is given below as (4) with the offensive word expurgated.

2) James: [laughing] You are a total [idiot] sometimes
Mother: Oi! There’s no need for that. Say sorry.

Craig: Mam, it was only a joke

James: Sorry mate

In this context, Craig did not find James’s comment offensive (ibid.). However, the mother finds the statement offensive which led James to apologise to his brother (despite his belief that his utterance was not offensive and there is no damage that need to be repaired) in an attempt to ensure to his mother that he cares about his relationship with his brother (ibid.). James’s apology was also aimed to pacify his mother and repair any damage that might happen to his relationship with his mother due to his comment to his brother (ibid.).

Particularly, Murphy (2015) wanted to highlight by this example that the apology process instigator need not be one of the parties involved in the situation. In the above example, the mother was the instigator of the apology. This concept is consistent with the idea noted by Tavuchis (1991), Battistella (2014) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) that apology might be instigated by either the speaker alone, the hearer alone, both of them, or by a third party who would point out that there was a breach of social contract or morals.

Murphy (2015, p. 182) further criticises the phrasing of Ogiermann’s (2009) sincerity condition by arguing that, despite the fact that sincerity entails regretting of the act on the part of the speaker, it does not originate “from the performance of the actions”. To
argue this, Murphy (2015) highlighted that in example (3), had his wife chosen to avoid openly complaining about him leaving the toilet seat up, he would not feel regret. Therefore, Murphy (2015, p. 182) argues that his “regret stems not from having performed the action, but instead from the potential damage to an otherwise convivial relationship that may have been caused by the action”. According to that, Murphy (2015) argues that the sincerity condition needs to be reformulated to include not just regretting the act but also its outcomes.

To summarise his position, Murphy (2015, p.180-182) proposes a reformulation of the felicity conditions for apology which he believes would cover most of the instances that we encounter in everyday life or in political settings. These felicity conditions are as follows:

- Propositional content: An act done, or to be done in the future, by the speaker or someone for whom the speaker is a formally recognised representative.
- Preparatory condition: S believes that the apology recipient (R), or a contextually relevant third party, believes that the act was an offence against R (or someone who R represents).
- Sincerity condition: Speaker regrets the act or one of its consequences.
- Essential condition: Utterance counts as an apology.

Note that, throughout the above debate, the proposed formulations of felicity conditions are largely focused on the speaker, and do not consider the role of the hearer. Thus, even though apology needs to be felicitous to be count as an apology,
felicity is not sufficient to guarantee acceptance. Accordingly, we need also to examine apology from the hearer's perspective in order to identify which apology strategies are effective and which factors might influence the hearer's acceptance.

2.3.2 Defining Apology

As discussed in the previous subsections, the speech act classifications proposed by Austin and Searle differ. With respect to apology, Austin places it in the category of "behabitives", which deal with social behaviour and attitudes, whereas Searle places it in the class of "expressives", which involve the psychological state of the speaker. In section 2.3.1.3 we revisited this question and looked at other proposed classification schemes for speech acts. However, even if we can agree on how to classify apology as a speech act, this does not in itself explain how apology differs from and can be distinguished from other members of its class. Furthermore, to ensure that the apologies we are examining in this thesis fall under the definition of apology, we need to scrutinise the working definitions of apology in the literature, particularly because of this disagreement of the classification of some cases as highlighted in section 2.3.1.4.

Previous literature has attempted to define apology in several different ways: by characterising the speech act in itself, by exploring the intended social effects of the act, or by examining the consequences of apology for the individual speaker and their self-construal. In this section, I will briefly review some of the most influential ideas in this literature.
Fraser (1981, p. 262) suggests that “to apologise is to do two things: take responsibility for an offensive act, and express regret for the offense”. From a different perspective, Olshtain and Cohen (1983, p. 20) suggest that “the act of apologizing is called for when there is some behavior which has violated social norms”. Olshtain and Cohen (1989) suggest that the importance of apology lies in the fact that apology is usually called for when one breaches some social norms, and this act is deemed by people (or even one person) as breaching a social norm and require an apology. If this happens, one is socially expected to perform an apology. In doing so, the apologiser conveys to the other party that he/she regrets doing that act (ibid.), and admits that he/she shares at least part of the responsibility for the offence (Fraser, 1981). Thus, Olshtain and Cohen (1989, p. 55) argue that “the apology act takes place only if the speaker believes that some act A has been performed prior to the time of speaking and that this act A has resulted in an infraction which affected another person who is now deserving of an apology”.

Holmes (1995, p. 155) defines apology as “a polite speech act used to restore social relations following an offence” and she suggests that “an apology is a speech act addressed to B’s face-needs and intended to remedy an offense for which A takes responsibility, and thus to restore equilibrium between A and B (where A is the apologizer, and B is the person offended).”(Holmes, 1990, p. 159). She argues that the speech act of apology is intended to be addressed to the face-needs of the offended person and it is mainly produced to remedy the offender’s offence and, as a result, put the relationship back into balance again (ibid.). This definition refers to the
concept of face that was first presented by Goffman (1955, 1967) and adopted by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their theory of politeness, in which they suggested that some speech acts are inherently face-threatening acts. That is to say, they threaten two face wants or needs: for positive face, which refers to a person’s wish to have a public-image that is liked by others, and for negative face, which refers to a person’s wish to be free in his/her action and to be subject to no imposition.

Although attempts have been made to define apology from a linguistic perspective, there are some definitions that captured the notion of apology from both a linguistic and a sociological perspective. For example, Goffman (1971, p. 113) defines apology as a “remedial exchange” and as “a gesture through which an individual split himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offence and the part that dissociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule”. Goffman's (1971) definition of apology as a remedial exchange is suggesting that apologies are acts/moves whose meaning could be found in the interaction between interlocutors, which indicates that the act of apologising emerges in an ongoing discourse (Oishi, 2011). That is, “when the speaker recognizes her utterance as an act of apologizing, that is, she utters it as an act of apologizing, she sees herself as an apologizer, who has a part as an offender, and another part as one who recognizes the offence and regrets it, and, therefore, affirms a belief in the offended social rule.” (Oishi, 2011, p. 11).

In the same line, Leech (1983, pp. 124-25) defines apology as an act that “[expresses] regret for some offence committed by S [speaker] against H [hearer]”, but notes that
“[n]evertheless, an apology implies a transaction, in that it is a bid to change the balance-sheet of the relation between S against H. If the apology is successful, it will result in H's pardoning or excusing the offence”. Similarly to Goffman's (1971) take on apology, Leech locates apology in the ongoing discourse between the speaker and the hearer, in which he particularly stresses a transition, which is happening due to “a change from the state in which the speaker offended the hearer to the state in which the speaker is forgiven by the hearer” (Oishi, 2011, p. 13).

Ogiermann (2009, p. 47) defines apology as “compensatory actions used to restore and maintain social harmony”, noting that, in the words of Goffman (1971, p.140), they allow “the participants to go on their way, if not with satisfaction that matters are closed, then at least with the right to act as if they feel that matters are closed and that ritual equilibrium has been restored”. From a psychological point of view, Lazare (2004, p. 40) defines apology as “an encounter between two parties in which one party, the offender, acknowledges responsibility for an offense or grievance and expresses regret or remorse to a second party, the aggrieved”. Lazare (2004) further argues that apology involves “an ongoing commitment by the offending party to change his or her behavior” (ibid., p. 356).

Tavuchis (1991, p. 13) argues that an apology “speaks to an act that cannot be undone but that cannot go unnoticed without compromising the current and future relationship of the parties, the legitimacy of the violated rule, and the wider social web in which the participants are enmeshed.” Tavuchis (1991) suggests that two components are
considered essential for an apology to be genuine: feeling remorse, and explicitly expressing that remorse. By contrast, other components such as an offer of repair, self-castigation, expressions of shame and embarrassment, or a promise to reform are not fundamental for an apology since they can be used with it, but they are not explicitly conveying ‘being sorry’.

From a different perspective, Smith (2008, p. 21) shifts his attention from “defining apologies and then judging what actions fall within the scope of this definition” to trying to “seek a theory of apologies capable of illuminating how this potentially profound interpersonal gesture can transform our understanding of our social world and ourselves”. Such an approach aims to place more emphasis on apology’s value within our lives, rather than the details of the definition. To do that, Smith (2008) presents his notion of ‘categorical apologies’. For him, categorical apologies “entail a commitment to a shared value, which speaks not only to the prospect of a future free from harms caused by breaches of the shared principle but also to a relationship that may include a shared sense of goodness, justice, or even the meaning of life.” (Smith, 2008, p. 92).

Battistella (2014, p. 8) observes that Tavuchis (1991) and Smith (2008) consider “apology as moral attachment to an offense”, whereas Goffman (1971) “emphasizes an apology’s role as an instrumental social ritual.”. Battistella (2014, p. 8) however, affirms that “Goffman is not a mere instrumentalist. He sees apology in its “fullest form” as disavowing past bad behavior and committing to better future behavior”. Battistella (2014) provides some examples of apologies that cannot be understood without
Goffman’s concept of self-splitting. In particular, he asserts that “it is Goffman’s attention to social ritual and the apology-account continuum … which blend the moral and the social” that helps him to comprehend some public apologies. However, Battistella (2014) also discusses some apology examples which Goffman’s self-splitting failed to explain. The failure of apology was attributed to “a breakdown in the process that leads to reconciliation.” (Battistella, 2014, p. 19). In these cases, Tavuchis’s (1991) apology process (will be discussed in section 2.5.1.3) helped him to locate what caused the apology failure. Battistella’s discussion suggests that both Goffman’s (1971) and Tavuchis’s (1991) account can be of practical benefit to researchers and analysts dealing with apologies.

In the light of this controversy, the aim of this thesis will be to examine apology cases which fall uncontroversially within all the competing definitions of apology in the literature discussed above. That is, the thesis will not consider apology cases which are controversial such as future apologies, conditional apologies, or apologies that were performed by someone on behalf of the actual transgressor.

**2.4 Apology Studies**

In this section, I will discuss some studies to see how apology strategies were classified and distinguished from one another within the existing literature (section 2.4.1). I will discuss the concept of upgrading and downgrading apology strategies and how the apology strategies’ classification and internal motivation might suggest different hypotheses about whether specific strategies upgrade or downgrade an
apology, and thereby make it more or less likely to be accepted (section 2.4.2). Recall that we conjecture that by combining apology strategies with an IFID (e.g., I am sorry), one can either upgrade or downgrade the apologetic force. I will also highlight the debate in the literature about the intrinsic meaning of apologies as compared to accounts, and how this motivates the hypothesis that combining an explanation with an IFID reduces the apologetic force (section 2.4.3). In section 2.4.4, I will discuss some studies on apology in different Arabic dialects, and I will conclude the section by presenting some recent studies on apology in Saudi Arabic (section 2.4.5).

2.4.1 Identifying Apology Strategies in Some Selected Studies

In this section, we will be exploring the way in which apology strategies have been classified and distinguished from one another within the existing literature. Over the last four decades, many scholars have studied the realisation of speech acts with the goal of describing them or comparing them cross-linguistically. Apology realisation has been extensively investigated in various languages (e.g. Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Trosborg, 1987, 2011; Garcia 1989; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989; Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989; Cordella, 1990; Mir, 1992; Sugimoto, 1997; Reiter, 2000; Okumura & Wei, 2000; Hou, 2006; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008; Al-Zumor, 2011; Banikalef et al., 2015; Qari, 2019; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021).
Olshtain and Cohen (1983) suggest that a speaker who wants to apologise can use one or more of the following five potential semantic formulas: an expression of an apology, an acknowledgment of responsibility, an explanation or account, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance. They consider expression of an apology to be a direct strategy, from a speech act perspective, because a speaker can perform this using apology verbs (“I apologise”), although the speaker can also use an expression of regret (“I’m sorry”) or a request for forgiveness (“excuse me”, “please forgive me”, or “pardon me”). Olshtain and Cohen (1983) suggest that the realisation of the expression of apology may vary from language to language, and each language might use some sub-formulas more than others. For example, they note that “I’m sorry” is very common in English. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) note that both the offer of repair and the promise of forbearance are context-dependent. The offer of repair “would be relevant only if physical injury or other damage has resulted … while a promise of forbearance relates to a case where the offender could have avoided the offense but did not do it, perhaps repeatedly” (ibid., p. 23). Moreover, they suggest that an explanation is used to account for what “indirectly brought about the offense” and note that it is typically “offered in addition to or in lieu of the expression of an apology” (ibid., p. 22).

Olshtain and Cohen (1989) posit that the set of five formulas listed by Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) may be universal. However, they acknowledge that there might be differences between languages and cultures in their realisations of the apology strategies, and therefore they propose that the set is used as a benchmark for researchers to “adjust to specific language(s) being studied” (ibid., p. 55). They also
suggest that Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory might provide a good tool in helping researchers to understand the differences in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies. For example, Olshtain and Cohen argue that positive face-oriented societies are likely to apologise less than negative face-oriented societies, and communication failure may occur due to “lack of compatibility between the speaker’s intent and hearer’s standards for acceptability” (p. 61). Olshtain and Cohen (1989) therefore argue that speech acts of apologising need to be examined from both its performer and its recipient’s perspective, given that the apologiser might not succeed in apologising if the recipient does not perceive it as such. Olshtain and Cohen’s (1989) view of the apology speech act as universal with some differences in realisation from language to language has been supported by several later studies (e.g., Bergman & Kasper, 1991, 1993; Nurredden, 2008; Jepahi, 2011, among others).

Following on from Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) work, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) conducted pioneering work within the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP). They illuminated Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) taxonomy by conducting a study to examine the speech acts of request and apology across cultures. They adopted a discourse completion test (DCT) to elicit the realisation patterns of the examined speech acts which consisted of 16 situations (eight for each speech act). Their investigation was conducted in five languages: Hebrew, Danish, German, Canadian French, and three English varieties (i.e. British, American, and Australian), as well as some interlanguages.
Although there are some limitations regarding the research tools used (i.e. DCT; Holmes, 1991; Sbsa, 1992), their study elicited some theoretically consequential data. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) argue that apology realisation involves a head act which incorporates the illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), and supporting moves such as an expression of responsibility, an explanation, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance. An example of the IFID in apologies would be saying “I apologise” or “I am sorry”, among others. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) note that apologies are different from requests in that the former is a ‘post-event’ act while the latter is a ‘pre-event’ act. However, they do also take the view that apologies can be performed for future acts. This is evident in their discussion of the differences between request and apology in which they highlight that “apologies signal the fact that a certain type of event has already taken place (or the speaker might be aware of the fact that it is about to take place)” (ibid., p. 206). However, the claim that one can apologise for future acts is controversial, and this may reflect apology forms being used to convey meanings other than apologising such as attention-getting (Coulmas, 1981), or prefacing a face-threatening act (Deutschmann, 2003; Leech, 2014).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) distinguish two ways in which apologies can be performed: using IFIDs which involve a formulaic expression of regret such as “be sorry”, apologise, regret, excuse, forgive, or pardon, or using one strategy from the apology speech act set (an explanation, an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance, or an acknowledgement of responsibility) with or without an IFID. Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) argue that there are two strategies that are universal and situation independent, which are IFIDs and acknowledgements of responsibility. They argue that these two
types of apology can be used on any occasion regardless of the context. By contrast, the remaining three strategies are situation-specific (an offer of repair, an explanation, and a promise of forbearance).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) suggest that an offer of repair can be achieved in two ways: in a general way (e.g., ‘I'll see what I can do’), or a specified way (e.g., ‘I'll pay for the damage’). Nevertheless, they did not explain how the general version of an offer of repair is contextually constrained. In fact, a general offer of repair could potentially be used in any context whether that context appears to require compensation or not. For example, a student who came late can say to his/her lecturer “I will do anything that would make it up”, and a speaker who has verbally offended someone could use the same phrase, even though no material damage has occurred. Therefore, we conjecture that an offer of repair in its general form can be context-independent while its specific version is context-dependent.

Holmes (1990) investigated apologies in New Zealand English. Her study covers semantic, syntactic, and sociolinguistic features of apologies. She collected her data based on an ethnographic approach that was highly recommended by Hymes (1962, 1964, 1972). Holmes attempted to propose a categorisation of the apology strategies following Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) framework, which was based on four broad categories, “an explicit expression of apology; an explanation or account; an acknowledgement of responsibility; and a promise of forbearance” (Holmes, 1990, p. 167), with some subcategories.
Holmes (1990, p. 167) elaborated upon Olshtian and Cohen's (1983) explicit apology strategy by differentiating between IFIDs, specifically dividing them into three subcategories (offering apology/IFID, e.g. ‘I apologise’; expressing regret, e.g. 'I'm afraid'; and requesting forgiveness, e.g. 'excuse me'; “forgive me”) that are clustered under the broad category of explicit expressions of apology. Holmes (1991) also reclassified an offer of repair from being treated as a broad strategy to being a subcategory under the acknowledgment of responsibility strategy on the basis that, by compensating, a speaker is in principle acknowledging responsibility.

Holmes (1990) indicated that the first category (explicit apology) was the most frequently employed by New Zealanders (occurring in 43% of the data). The second most-employed strategy was the second category (account or excuse). One-quarter of Holmes’ data involved the use of accounts. The results also exhibited that the only strategies that stand alone in the corpus are the first and the second strategies (i.e. explicit apology and account), whereas the other strategies occur in combination. The combination of explicit apology and an account is in fact the second most-employed strategy (28.4%) after the use of explicit apology.

Ogiermann (2009) examined apology in a cross-cultural comparative study that aimed to examine the cultural differences between a Western European language (English) and two languages from a Slavic culture, namely Russian and Polish. Ogiermann (2009) stressed that, in apologising, the IFID does not adequately illustrate speaker's
attitude. In fact, sometimes the other elements of the apology might contradict its apparent meaning, especially with utterances that contain the conjunction *but* which might be interpreted by hearers as expressing an unregretful attitude (ibid.). Moreover, Ogiermann (2009) argued that the use of intensifiers combined with IFID tells us little about the speaker’s attitude, as these is more likely to be added unconsciously by speakers. In other words, they become part of the apology formula (ibid.).

Thus, Ogiermann (2009) suggested that the way the speaker could show his/her intention clearly is through the use of strategies that show the context of the offence and the speaker’s responsibility for the consequences of that offence. Ogiermann (2009) thoroughly discusses the overlaps between explanation and acknowledgement of responsibility in the literature, suggesting that while the “latter has been defined as semantically reflecting the offence, the former has not been defined as lacking this property” (ibid, p. 135). Ogiermann (2009) claims that any expression of responsibility that refers to the offence context would better be classified as an explanation.

Accordingly, Ogiermann (2009) attempted to develop a new category that contains both acknowledgment of responsibility and explanation strategies, drawing upon Bergman and Kasper’s (1991, 1993) attempt to differentiate between explanation and acknowledgment of responsibility strategies by dividing them into upgrading and downgrading categories. Bergamn and Kasper (1991, 1993) suggested that upgraders contain strategies that rest under the category of taking on responsibility including adverbial intensifiers. On the other hand, downgraders contain strategies employed to
downgrade the responsibility and the severity of offence (ibid.). Ogiermann (2009) suggested that their model is different from other models for two reasons: they divided ‘taking on responsibility’ into two categories according to its tendencies towards upgrading and downgrading, and they stress that an expression of responsibility cannot be regarded as an apology on its own.

Ogiermann’s (2009, p. 137) new category ‘account’ was based on “the degree of the responsibility acceptance and the corresponding face-threat inherent in the strategies”. She stresses the importance of context as a salient factor in figuring out the meaning beyond these account strategies. Moreover, she argues that the broad category of account has “proved useful in elucidating culture-specific ways of dealing with offensive situations” (ibid., p. 174). Additionally, she suggests that her analysis shows that the “hearer’s knowledge of the circumstances leading up to the offence” is an essential factor that motivate the selection of certain accounts which refer to the “content of the offence or their formulaic realisations” (ibid., p. 175). Therefore, to her, the results of previous studies that differentiate between taking on responsibility and providing explanation may not accurately show culture-specific preferences (ibid.). Thus, Ogiermann (2009, p. 175) suggested that in order to examine cultural differences “in the perception of the need to restore H’s damaged face and protect one’s own”, a classification of accounts based on the idea of “their upgrading and downgrading” tendencies would be a suitable approach.
Ogiermann (2009, p. 146) divides her ‘account’ category into upgrading and downgrading subcategories. For her, downgrading includes the following strategies: opt out, deny responsibility, act innocently, minimise the offence, excuse, admit facts. However, upgrading includes the following strategies: justification, lack of intent, embarrassment, accept responsibility, and self-criticism.

### 2.4.2 Upgrading and Downgrading

In the literature, Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtian’s (1984) apology strategies were classified differently. These classifications, together with some accounts about the internal motivations for the apology strategies, suggest different hypotheses about whether specific strategies upgrade or downgrade an apology, and thereby make it more or less likely to be accepted. For instance, Holmes (1990) suggests that offer of repair is a subcategory under the acknowledgement of responsibility category, presumably on the basis that one cannot offer compensation without indirectly admitting his/her responsibility. Similarly, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) indicate that one can implicitly acknowledge his/her responsibility for a transgression by promising to forbear.

Bergman and Kasper (1991, 1993) classified the offer of repair as a separate category that stands on its own. They also preferred to classify the acknowledgement of responsibility expressions under the broad category of upgraders which also includes adverbial intensifiers (e.g., ‘very’, ‘terribly’) that aim to enhance the apologetic force. However, they classified the promise of forbearance under the category of verbal
redress which includes also showing concern for the hearer, and making efforts to appease them. Trosborg (2011) however, suggests that an offer of repair and a promise of forbearance are subcategories of what she called ‘remedial support’.

The explanation strategy is categorised by Bergman and Kasper (1991, 1993) as a sub-category of the broad category ‘downgraders’, which involves strategies that aim to reduce the actor’s responsibility for the transgression and expressions that reduce the severity of the offence. They found explanation as reducing the responsibility of the apologiser, through excuse, justification, claiming ignorance, problematising a precondition, and/or denial of responsibility.

Thus, it seems that Bergman and Kasper (1991, 1993), rather than having a broad category that would incorporate responsibility expressions, preferred to classify their explanation and responsibility strategies into upgrading and downgrading categories based on the responsibility tendencies that are rooted in these strategies. On this basis they classified explanation and denial of responsibility as downgraders, and admission of responsibility as an upgrader, alongside adverbial intensifiers.

Ogiermann (2009), adopting Bergman and Kasper’s notion of upgraders and downgraders, provides her category ‘account’ in which she attempts to incorporate all responsibility and explanation or account sub-categories, differentiating between them in terms of their degree of responsibility and severity of the offence. She classifies
excuse as a downgrader; however, she claims that justification should be considered as an upgrader since it suggests that the apologiser is admitting his/her responsibility, and because it serves the interest of the hearer to know what happened.

The classification of “justification” as an upgrading strategy is perhaps the most surprising of these. Ogiermann (2009, p. 146) affirms that “Although justifications do not necessarily constitute apologies when used on their own, the data show that when combined with an IFID, they tend to upgrade its illocutionary force." Ogiermann further explains that justification can function as an upgrader because by justifying, the speaker is accepting responsibility, and justifications thus “contribute towards the restoration of harmony by acknowledging H’s right to know why the offence has taken place.” (ibid., p. 146).

However, this interpretation ignores the idea that, by admitting the wrongdoing when justifying, an apologiser is promoting the notion that the act is not offensive (Austin, 1962; Trosborg, 2011). Trosborg (2011) suggests that justification “[does] not meet the criteria for apologies” (p. 377), and hence classifies it as a subcategory under the opting out category. Similarly, Owen (1983) suggests that justification cannot be categorised as an apology, and she claims that apology cannot cooccur with a justification on the basis that, by apologising and providing justification, one contradicts oneself. Trosborg (2011) also classifies an explanation (e.g., excuse) as an indirect way in which one can apologise. She differentiates between explanation and justification by appeal to their internal motivation. That is, for an explanation or an
account, Trosborg suggests that its internal motivation involves a speaker using it “as an “excuse” for a committed offence” (p. 381) while the internal motivation for justification involves a speaker “not acknowledg[ing] that the offence has occurred” (p. 381). Overall, what seems to be problematic is the apparent contradiction between the concept of apologising and the concept of justification, given that there are differences between the internal motivation for apologising or providing an explanation (Tavuchis, 1991; Scher and Darby, 1997; Smith, 2008; Battistella, 2014) which will be discussed subsequently (section 2.4.3). For example, Leech (2014) discusses the potential goal of explanation when used coupled with an apology. He indicates that using an explanation may serve the speaker’s aim to save his/her face because of the core concept of explanation which he suggests “often serves a self-excusing purpose, making the offense seem smaller” (Leech, 2014, p. 119). Therefore, sometimes, speakers opt to use an explanation to mitigate the offence or to make what seems to be bad news more acceptable (ibid.). It would therefore seem plausible to argue that combining justification with an apology might be perceived as downgrading the illocutionary force rather than upgrading it, on the basis that it does not signal that the apologiser has admitting the wrongdoing.

2.4.3 Apology vs Account

In the literature that involves apology realisations in different cultures, accounts or explanations are widely encountered, suggesting that these forms of apology realisation are used by speakers across a broad range of languages and cultural backgrounds (cf. Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka
et al., 1989; Nureddene, 2008; Jepahi, 2011; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021, among others).

However, some researchers (e.g., Tavuchis, 1991; Scher & Darley, 1997; Smith, 2008; Battistella, 2014) suggest that an explanation need not be understood as an apology. Tavuchis (1991) argues that, because there is a difference in the speaker's intention when he/she performs an apology or an account (an explanation), an apology and an account cannot be treated as similar. For him, to apologise means “to declare voluntarily that one has no excuse, defence, justification or explanation for an action” that somehow causes the other party to be offended (ibid., p. 17). Contrary to that, an account means to “[ask] the offended party, in effect, to be reasonable by giving explanations that are intended to (partially or fully) release [the apologiser]” (ibid., p. 17). Tavuchis (1991) suggests that no matter how sincere the performer is, offering an account would be considered an attempt to shift the focus from the actor towards external factors that caused the wrongdoing (ibid.). This intention thus negates the apologising intention which aims to reach forgiveness for an action that is categorised as “unreasonable, unjustified, undeserving, and inequitable” (ibid., p. 17).

Furthermore, for Tavuchis (1991), apologies put the speaker in a position of being naked or exposed. That is, when an offender apologises, he has no excuses or justifications. Contrary to that, using an account means the speaker is trying to detach himself from the offence by either denying or reducing his responsibility (ibid). In apologising, the speaker aims not to distance himself from his action, but rather to
acknowledge his actions and show his regret (ibid.). Thus, for Tavuchis, apology and explanation differ in the internal motivation underlying the two acts. An apology is a story that stems from the offender’s full admission of the wrongdoing. An account, like an apology, is a story that could be judged in terms of its value or sincerity and could be rejected or accepted. However, it stems from a different motivation, namely the actor’s attempt to distance himself from the offence by either denying or mitigating his responsibility for it. For this reason, an account may tend to undermine an apology (ibid.).

In a similar way, Smith (2008) suggests that, in law, using an account indicates that the offender acknowledges that the action was wrong, but argues that he/she should be excused responsibility for it due to certain factors, and therefore be exonerated. If the offender provides a legitimate account for his/her action, this would result in considering that there was no wrongdoing on the part of the speaker (ibid.). Contrary to that, when the offender seeks forgiveness, he/she finds himself/herself blameworthy, and hence seeks pardon from the offended party (Smith, 2008).

Battistella (2014) suggests that when a speaker apologises, he/she admits the guilt and rejects “a past self”. However, when a speaker opts to provide an account, he/she attempts to convey that he/she is not guilty, hence he/she might deny his/her “responsibility, intent, foresight, competence, or mindfulness” (ibid., p. 3). Battistella (2014) also holds that apologies and accounts are essentially different. An account is an attempt to “rename or reframe an offence” (ibid., p. 98), whereas an apology
involves the speaker acknowledging the offence, and hence regretting it (ibid.). Therefore, “when people try to defend and apologize simultaneously, they place themselves in a double bind. Apology communicates regret. Defense mitigates this regret” (Battistella, 2014, p. 98).

However, Battistella (2014) highlights that although an account and an apology are intrinsically different, an account can be part of an effective apology as it can be employed to provide a clarification for the factual background of the offence. For example, if someone broke someone’s computer, the offended party assumes that the transgressor will explain what happened since they were absent and deserve to be told what caused the damage. Perhaps the offended party’s need to know what happened arises to fulfil their need to assign the responsibility for the offence, i.e. to determine whether what happened was due to negligence on the part of the offender.

Battistella (2014) also suggests that, from a reconciliation perspective, an account or an explanation can evolve to become an apology. However, if a speaker uses them to exonerate himself/herself from the wrongdoing, the account or the explanation can be perceived as an attempt to avoid apologising, and hence categorised as an insincere apology (ibid.).

Drawing on the above distinction between apologies and accounts, therefore, we can argue that explanations or accounts can be combined with apologies; however, their
usage would be expected to affect the perlocutionary effect of the performed apology. Given that Bergman and Kasper (1991, 1993) classify an excuse and a justification (an explanation) as downgraders, and Deutschmann (2003) classifies them as minimising the responsibility, while other authors take the internal motivation of explanation as being to distance the actor from the action (Tavuchis, 1991; Scher & Darley, 1997; Smith, 2008; Battistella, 2014), we might reasonably conjecture that when an explanation is combined with an IFID, an apology is more likely to be downgraded.

Taken together, therefore, based on the discussion in section 2.4.2 and section 2.4.3, the internal motivation of the apology strategies and their classifications can be conjectured to play a vital role in their effectiveness when combined with an IFID (I am sorry). That is, one can conjecture that by combining an offer of repair, an acknowledgement of responsibility, or a promise of forbearance with an IFID (e.g., I am sorry), the apologetic force will be upgraded on the basis that one cannot perform them without explicitly or implicitly admitting the responsibility of the offence. On the other hand, by combining the explanation with an IFID (I am sorry), the apologetic force will be reduced on the basis that the internal motivation of the explanation runs counter to the apology.
2.4.4 Apology in Arabic

In this section, I will be discussing some studies that aimed to examine the speech act of apologising in Arabic. Apologies have been studied in different Arabic dialects (cf. Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008; Al-Adaileh, 2007; Al-Zumor, 2011; Jepahi, 2011; Al-Sobh, 2013; Rababah & Alhawamdah, 2020). Most of these studies have examined apology strategies in the light of politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), specifically with respect to the question of politeness orientation, i.e. towards negative or positive strategies, or with respect to their realisation patterns, often in comparison with other languages, mainly English.

In an attempt to investigate the apology strategies in a Sudanese Arabic dialect, Nureddeen (2008) administered a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to 110 educated adults from Khartoum. Her DCT consisted of 10 situations that differed in terms of social and power distance between interlocutors and the severity of the offence. Her findings supported the universality of apology strategies, but also the idea that their usage is culture-specific.

Nureddeen (2008, p. 290) suggests that taking responsibility is considered “the most explicit, most direct, and the strongest apology strategy”. However, her findings showed that Sudanese Arabic speakers (SAS) rarely use it in all of her situations. Her results also showed that SAS employ an offer of repair when a situation requires
compensation, which is consistent with previous studies that stress the context-specificity of this strategy (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Reiter, 2000).

Nureddeen (2008) also documents that, for less severe offences, more IFIDs and explanations were used. According to her, the use of more explanations might be a way that informants use to escape from explicitly apologising. However, the frequent use of IFID might be “in a ritualistic method” (p. 295). Nureddeen (2008) further suggests that another explanation of the frequent use of IFIDs might be that these constitute a sign of showing sincerity of the apology or, as Tannen (1994, p. 46) suggests, that informants use them in order to create a balance in the conversation. Nureddeen’s (2008) informants are more inclined to use final IFIDs in severe offences. She argues that this can be considered a ritualistic use of IFIDs, as speakers use it as a sign of dissatisfaction with the realisation of the apology so far, and to show the addressee their regret.

Jebahi (2011) investigates the speech act of apology, focusing on apology strategies, among Tunisian undergraduate students. He administered a DCT to 100 students (50 male, 50 female), using 10 apology situations. His results showed that Tunisians frequently choose statements of remorse when the addressee is: his/her close friend, an old person, or has power which might affect the speaker’s future. The findings additionally showed that most of the participants employ explanation to either explicitly show their denial of responsibility or to blame other sources for the offence. However,
the least common strategies performed by Tunisians were: “self-castigation, offer of repair, blaming the victim, invoking Allah’s name, intensification, minimisation, and humour” (Jebahi, 2011, p. 657). Overall, Jebahi’s (2011) findings showed that the most-employed strategies among Tunisians are statements of remorse (64.9%) and explanation (51.5%). The findings were consistent with Nureddeen’s (2008) findings that stress the universality of apology strategies while also acknowledging cultural differences in when, where, how, and in what combination they may occur.

2.4.5 Apology in Saudi Arabic

Although apologies have been studied in various Arabic dialects, relatively little has been done in Saudi Arabic. A few attempts have been made to capture the apology realisation patterns (e.g., Almegren, 2018; Al-Sulayyi, 2016; Qari 2017 & 2019; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021). Some of these studies were conducted to investigate the cross-cultural differences between Saudi apologies and other languages, e.g. English (e.g. Qari, 2017); some were conducted to study apologies among Saudi learners of English (e.g., Almegren, 2018; Qari, 2017); one was conducted to examine apologies among Saudi teachers of English language (Al-Sulayyi, 2016); some examined apologies among monolingual speakers of Saudi Arabic (e.g., Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021); and some focused on sex differences in performing apologies (e.g., Qari, 2019; Alhojailan, 2019).
Alhojailan (2019) investigates apology strategies among native speakers of Saudi Arabic using role-play tasks. In particular, his study used monolingual participants (aged from 50 to 65) to ensure that no effect of learning other languages would impact their usage of strategies. Six participants took place in Alhojailan’s (2019) study; three males and three females. The participants were asked to react to certain incomplete dialogues in which a situation is given to them, and to provide an apology.

Alhojailan’s (2019) results suggested that native speakers of Saudi Arabic tend to opt to use five strategies when they apologise: IFID, offer of repair, explanation, denial of responsibility, and taking responsibility. The results also exhibited that explanation was the most employed strategy among Saudis (63.8%) while taking on responsibility was the least preferred strategy (2.7%). Furthermore, the results indicated that participants might opt for not apologising at all, apologising by using one strategy (e.g., IFID), by using two strategies (e.g., IFID + Explanation), or by using three strategies (e.g., IFID + denial of responsibility + offer of repair), with the preference being to use one or two strategies.

However, Alhojailan’s example of using three strategies seems problematic as it involves a respondent saying “Forgive me. It was not me who did that. I will buy you a new one”. It is not clear why the speaker opted to clarify to the hearer that he has nothing to do with the incident and yet seemed inclined to compensate the hearer. Compensation indicates admitting the responsibility (Holmes, 1990), but this is then explicitly denied. One possibility is that this response was to a scenario presented by
Alhojailan which involves a father apologising to his friend as his child tore a page out of his friend’s book. If this is so, the speaker is clarifying to the hearer that he was not the one who personally did the damage, but he is willing to compensate because he is responsible for the actions of the person who did. This example supports Murphy’s (2015) alternation of the felicity conditions to include apologising for someone whom the speaker is responsible for, as discussed in section 2.3.1.4.

Alhojailan’s (2019) results matched Nureddeen’s (2008) findings that Sudanese speakers tend to employ explanations and IFIDs more than any other strategies when they apologise, and Jepahi’s (2011) findings that Tunisian university students rarely employ taking on responsibility strategies when they apologise. Comparing the results across dialects, Alhojailan (2019) suggested that native speakers of Arabic have a tendency towards using explanation and IFIDs more than other strategies. Similarly, Arabic speakers tend to avoid using offer of repair and taking responsibility strategies when they apologise. Moreover, Alhojailan’s (2019) findings exhibited some consistency with studies conducted on apologies among Saudi learners of English (e.g., Almegren, 2018) and Saudi teachers of English (e.g., Al-Sulayyi, 2016). However, Alhojailan (2019) claims that there are differences in the use of some strategies such as an offer of repair, taking responsibility, and a denial of responsibility which he attributed to the effect of being exposed to different languages (in particular, English), which might influence participants’ apology styles.
Qari (2019) contrasts two different cultures (Saudi and British) focusing on sex differences in the selection of apology strategies. The study was conducted using DCTs with 80 participants (20 Saudi males, 20 Saudi females, 20 British males, and 20 British females). The participants were asked to react to three scenarios, two of which involved a male and one a female hearer. In the first situation, the scenario involves a father asking his son/daughter to wake him up for an important appointment; however, the son/daughter forgot, resulting in the father missing his appointment. The second situation involves a driver (or a personal driver if the participant is a Saudi female) accidentally reversing into someone’s car while parking. The third situation involves a speaker offending his/her (female) colleague during a work-related meeting, and admitting his/her wrongdoing when the colleague mentioned the offence after the meeting.

Qari’s (2019) results disclosed differences between Saudi and British respondents in terms of their apology strategy choices. These differences were attributed mainly to societal differences in that Saudi society is considered collectivist while British society is considered individualist. Of particular interest in Qari’s (2019) findings is her suggestion that Saudis (especially males), when dealing with their fathers, as in the first scenario, tend to be “more submissive, evasive and reluctant to admit their faults perhaps out of fear of dad’s forthcoming punishment” (ibid, p. 91) and opt for non-verbal expressions of remorse such as kissing their father’s head or hand. By contrast, British respondents seems to be inclined to blame their fathers for not setting their alarm. Qari (2019) attributes such differences to the collectivist society being more inclined to show more respect to their parents, given that parents possess higher
status and power in a collectivist society than in an individualist one. As quoted by Qari, Bejanyan et al.’s (2015, p. 1) highlight a similar notion, namely that “in collectivist cultures, families tend to be characterized by respect for parental authority and strong interdependent ties”.

Another interesting result from Qari’s (2019) study concerned the second scenario (a minor car accident). Qari (2019) suggests that there are differences between Saudi males and females in this situation, in which Saudi females tend to opt out of apologising or blaming their drivers or suggesting they are new drivers compared to their male counterparts. Furthermore, Saudi females are not just opting out of apologising, but also tending to avoid any interaction with the other male party, which Qari attributes to the sex-segregation in Saudi society, in which it is expected that women avoid any interaction with non-relative males. Qari (2019) argues that such behaviour is deemed by both parties as not just desired, but also encouraged.

However, it is important to note that Qari (2019) collected her data at a time when women in Saudi Arabia had just been granted the right to drive, but before that decision had come into effect. Her female participants are instructed to respond assuming that the car is being driven by their personal driver (ibid., p. 89). Consequently, they are reacting to a situation that involved an offence that was committed by their drivers rather than by them personally, making it logical for them to opt out of apologising. Indeed, Qari notes that the female participants “scolded their drivers in front of the [hearer] hinting that it was not the [speaker’s] fault that the
accident had happened, but it was rather the driver’s fault because he is either new, cannot drive, or does not know the roads very well” (ibid., pp. 89-90). However, this does not appear to equate to the participants taking personal responsibility for the offence. In short, it would be interesting to know whether results would differ if these participants were also driving.

Using a mixed-methods approach, namely a DCT followed by a semi-structured interview, Alasqah (2021) examines apology strategies in Saudi Arabic. Her findings revealed that apology strategies are culture-specific. The results suggest that Saudis frequently employ an offer of repair, an expression of regret, and an explanation as strategies for their apologies. She suggested that Saudis would also consider the nature of the offence and the social status of the offended party when apologising. Furthermore, Saudis seem to be inclined to use intensification or some religious terms such as saying ‘Wallahi’ (I swear by Allah) to convey to the other party their sincerity. Alasqah suggests that swearing by Allah is deeply rooted in the Saudi Islamic culture and here conveys an attempt to intensify their apology’s sincerity. The findings also reveal that Saudis are inclined to use multiple apology strategies, with 61% of the data being composed of two strategies. Alasqah’s findings are consistent with previous results documenting people’s inclination to use multiple apology strategies (e.g., Holmes, 1990; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998, Alhojailan, 2019).
2.5 The Effectiveness of Apology Strategies

The aim of this section is to discuss past research on the effectiveness of apology strategies. Several studies have focused on apology production under the assumption that apology is an act that threatens the apologiser’s face and might therefore be disfavoured. However, as Lakoff (2001) notes, it also carries some threat to the apologisee’s face. Goffman (1967) suggests that the apology’s recipient usually tend to accept the apology to complete the corrective exchange (comprising challenge, offering, acceptance, and thanks). Several studies have provided empirical evidence on how apology recipients are sometimes constrained to accept the apology even if the offence was considered severe and the transgressor was deemed highly responsible for that transgression (cf. Bennett & Earwaker, 1994). Even so, apology naturally involves two parties, and as Leech (1983) notes, the effectiveness of an apology ultimately depends on whether the offended party is willing to forgive or excuse the offender.

To my knowledge, little research has been done on the effectiveness of apologies in the literature since most of the extant apology studies have been primarily interested either in realisation patterns or in politeness orientation. In particular, few studies have been dedicated to examining the effectiveness of the five apology strategies (IFID, offer of repair, promise of forbearance, explanation, and take on responsibility) presented by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), which have been suggested to be universal.
Some studies claim that by integrating an apology strategy with an IFID, a speaker can intensify his/her apology (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989). Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) suggest that one can make his/her apology stronger and the IFID more intensified by means of some steps, namely using internal intensification (e.g., very) with an IFID, or through an apology verb that “carries inherent strength of regret” (p. 198), by showing concerns to the hearer, or by repeating the same IFID or using multiple IFIDs. In their study, they found some instances where Germans tend to multiply the use of IFID, either by employing more than one type of IFID or merely by repeating the same IFID. They suggest that, by using intensification, a speaker can convey to the offended party that they are aware of the severity of the offence and want to restore the relationship with the hearer, hence showing the speaker’s empathy and interest to the hearer. According to Vollmer and Olshtain (1989), this can also be done through using “concern for the hearer” expressions that would convey to the offended party the speaker’s empathy, which they regarded as another type of intensification.

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) similarly suggested that intensification can be done through internal intensification, expression of concerns to the hearer, or by combining apology strategies either with or without an IFID. Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) suggest that repeating the apology strategies, regardless of their type, also has an intensifying effect. Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) conclude that a speaker may be able to intensify the apology by combining apology strategies; but, on the other hand, a speaker may undermine the apology through strategies such as denying the severity of the offence.
or performing conditional apologies such as “Sorry if I hurt you” (Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989).

Hou (2006) examines the perception of apology in Chinese and English speakers and Chinese English foreign language learners using a scaled-response questionnaire. The questionnaire set out to examine some context internal-factors: severity of the offence, likelihood to apologise, difficulty in apologising, and the likelihood for the apology to be accepted, as well as context-external factors: social distance, social status, speaker gender, interlocutor gender, and the extent of the imposition. The results show differences between Chinese and English speakers in both internal and external context factors. However, the results seem to support the idea that both groups are inclined to apologise more to their acquaintances or those who have equal status to them, together with their tendency to perceive offending a stranger as less severe. From a gender perspective, both groups consider an offence against males as more severe than against females, and hence found apologising to males as more difficult than female counterparts.

Importantly, Hou’s (2006) study also reveals differences among groups in the likelihood of their apology being accepted by the hearer. However, this investigation was based on the speaker’s standpoint: Hou asks the speaker to rate on a five-point scale whether his apology likely to be accepted. By doing that, Hou is neglecting the fact that apology is an act that involves two ends – a speaker and the hearer – and that, for the apology to be successfully achieved, the consent of the wronged party is
needed. Therefore, to accurately examine the likelihood of certain apology strategies to be accepted, asking the participants to be in the place of the hearer would help extend our understanding of the likelihood of an apology to be accepted, and of which factors influence this.

Scher and Darley (1997) investigated the effectiveness of four strategies employed in the speech act of apologising: IFID, expression of responsibility, promise of forbearance, and offer of repair. The main focus of their study was to examine the hearer’s perception of apology. More specifically, they investigated the hearer’s judgement about the speaker and the apology. 32 students (75% female, median age 22 years) at New York University took part in their investigation.

The participants in Scher and Darley’s (1997) study were instructed to read a story about someone named Ralph who has promised to call his friend with crucial information before his friend’s job interview, but forgot to do so. The story ends where Ralph attempts to call his friend. The subjects were instructed to put themselves in the place of Ralph’s friend and imagine how that person would feel. Subjects then were presented with different apologies and they were instructed to read them as if it were the first thing Ralph said when he called his friend. Then, they were instructed to “respond to seven dependent variables measured on a 9-point scale with the end point labelled” (p. 133).
The findings suggested that there is an independent effect for each of these four strategies which enhance the hearer’s reaction to the speaker. That is, the addition of each strategy might result in additional effects on “how appropriate the utterance of the transgressor was and how much the transgressor was blamed and sanctioned for the transgression, and on judgements related to identity of the transgressor” (Scher & Darley, 1997, p. 137).

Specifically, Scher and Darley’s participants judged an utterance as least appropriate and least apologetic when it lacks any of the strategies tested: an expression of responsibility, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance. Moreover, in such cases, subjects suggested that the speaker is to be blamed and they expressed a desire to sanction him. Finally, the study suggested that there is a connection between the perlocutionary effect of apologies and what people might choose to say to apologise. That is, these four apology strategies (i.e. expression of apology, an expression of responsibility, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance) could provide the speaker with what s/he needs in his/her attempt to restore the social harmony between him/her and the addressee who was affected by the infraction.

However, Scher and Darley (1997) do not consider an explanation or an account as a potential apology strategy. They perceive these not to be apologies. Specifically, they adopt the position that an explanation or an account aims to offer an external factor that causes the harm or mitigates the circumstances that led to the infraction, making these excuses rather than apologies (cf. Austin, 1962; Goffman, 1971; Tavuchis,
1991; Smith, 2008, Battistella, 2014). This represents one limitation of Scher and Darley’s study, given that most studies of apology have regarded explanations as legitimate apology strategies (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Holmes, 1990; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989; Reiter 2000; Nuredden, 2008; Qari, 2017; among many others).

A second limitation of Scher and Darley’s (1997) study is that it is limited to one situation, and thus does not permit the investigation of factors such as power and distance in the relationship, or offence severity. A third limitation is that Scher and Darley (1997) asked the same participants to rank the effectiveness of different apology strategies under the assumption that the participants’ rating would be independent of each other. Even though the researchers asked the participants to not be influenced by the previous strategy, participants might implicitly compare strategies, and hence given non-independent responses. Therefore, ideally it would be better if each participant was exposed to one strategy (or combination) for each scenario, in order to ensure that his/her rating is not influenced by the comparison with other strategies.

### 2.5.1 Factors Influencing Apologies.

In this section, I will discuss some factors that might influence the apology perception. In section 2.5.1.1, I will discuss existing work on the effects of contextual factors (such as social distance and power distance between the interlocutors, and the severity of
the offence) on people’s apology or response to apologies. In section 2.5.1.2, I will examine Goffman’s proportionality principle and some empirical studies that aimed to investigate it. In section 2.5.1.3, I will discuss the notion of the apology process and how apology might fail in any of its stages. Finally, in section 2.5.1.4, I will discuss the offended party’s psychological needs and how these needs can be met by means of apology strategies.

2.5.1.1 Contextual Factors

Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 74) suggest that “the assessment of the seriousness of [a face-threatening act] involves” three variables which contribute to the speaker’s selection of certain strategies. These variables are:

- Social distance (D), which represents the nature of the relationship between the interlocutors, e.g. whether they are acquaintances or strangers.
- Power distance (P), which represents the relative power of S over H or vice versa, e.g., whether they are in a boss-employee relationship.
- The ranking of the imposition of an act (R) which represents the degree of that imposition (high or low).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984, p. 209) report that social and power distance and age “might also contribute, within the cultural setting, to intensification of the apology. Thus, in some cultures the need to apologize to an older person or to a superior may be very pronounced”. The impact of these variables was also reported by other researchers
Holmes (1995) suggests that female speakers are in favour of apologising when there is equal power between them and the hearers while males apologise without taking into consideration the status of the hearers. Her findings also reveal that women are more likely to apologise to friends from the same gender; however, males seem to be apologising mostly to females with whom they are not familiar with (i.e. social distance). Al-Sobh (2013) documented that Jordanian speakers are affected by contextual factors when apologising, in that they are inclined to use more intensifiers and a formal way of apologising with people with higher position. However, with people who have equal position or relatives, they tend to use more everyday expressions. Alsulayyi (2016) supported Al-Sobh’s findings by providing similar empirical evidence among Saudi EFL teachers. Alsulayyi (2016) attributed using intensifiers to cultural factors, and in particular to the idea that Arabs are inclined to use intensifiers to convey respect to the other party, as noted by Nureddeen (2008).

Nureddeen (2008) exhibited an impact of social factors in Sudanese apologies, reporting that Sudanese employment of IFIDs is influenced by the social distance between the interlocutors, with more IFIDs being used when the social distance is greater. Sudanese speakers are also inclined to begin their apologetic expression with
IFIDs and close it with what Nureddeen called ‘final IFID’ in an attempt to convey their sincerity to the offended party in severe offences and to convey sympathetic feelings. Nureddeen (2008) suggested that “final IFID” can take two forms, with some Sudanese apologies beginning and ending with an IFID (with another element between them), and others beginning with a different strategy and ending with an IFID.

Nuredden’s (2008) findings were supported by Alsulayyi’s (2016) work on Saudi EFL teachers, which also disclosed effects of social and power distance and the severity of the offence, increases in which were shown to lead to more use of IFIDs. Alsulayyi (2016) also reported that Saudi EFL teachers were inclined to use extended apology strategies e.g., multiple intensifiers, in a close relationship, apparently in an attempt to preserve their own face which Alsulayyi also attributed it to cultural considerations. Intensifiers were more extensively used by Saudi EFL teachers in more severe offences compared to more moderate ones (ibid.). Alsulayyi (2016) also documented that Saudi EFL teachers are more likely to adopt an offer of repair strategy for close rather than distant relationships, presumably reflecting a view on the relative importance of maintaining these relationships.

Binasfour (2014) investigated apologies among Saudi learners of English in comparison to native speakers of American English, in order to assess the intercultural communication competence of second language learners. Power status seemed to have an impact on her participants’ choice of apology strategies, with participants using more apology strategies when the offended party is considered to have power
over them. Qari (2019), in comparing apologies between Saudi Arabic and British English, indicated that Saudi females are more inclined to opt out of apologising if the offended party is not socially close to them as compared to those who are socially close. Qari suggested that their decision stemmed from their intention to keep and sustain their relationship with those who are socially close to them. She attributed the Saudi females’ decision to apologise only in a close relationship to their intention to employ apologies to “support both interlocutors’ positive face, also as a marker of solidarity and an expression of camaraderie between the interlocutors” (ibid., p. 91).

Qari (2019) argued that this view of apology strategies is consistent with Grainger et al.’s (2015, p. 54) assertion that “Arabic-speaking people ... tend to address the participant’s positive face-wants and to be less concerned about negative face-wants”, i.e. that Arabic societies are positive politeness societies (Al-Khatib, 2001). However, Al-Adaileh (2007) argues against the universality of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory in which it is claimed that apology is inherently viewed as directed towards the negative face want, and hence it is considered a negative politeness strategy. Al-Adaileh’s (2007) findings suggest that Jordanian Arabic speakers orient towards positive politeness strategies when they apologise. In particular, this study indicated that Jordanians tend to orient towards indirect apology strategies to preserve their face as opposed to British English speakers who prefer to use direct apology strategies such as IFIDs.
Banikalef et al. (2015), in investigating Jordanian Arabic apologies, suggested that Jordanians pay more attention to the power distance between them and the other party. They suggested that Jordanians “varied their apology strategies according to their perspective about the hearer’s social status, whether the hearer is of higher or of lower social status” (ibid., p. 94). That is, they are more likely to use more formal apologies to preserve their face with people with higher social status. Furthermore, Banikalef et al.’s (2015) participants exhibited a similar attitude towards the social distance relationship between the interlocutors, with smaller distances being associated with less formal apology formulas.

Hussein and Hammouri’s (1998) study on Jordanian Arabic showed that Jordanians tend to use honorific titles such as ‘sir’ and ‘your excellency’ whenever the offended party was of a higher power status. However, whenever the interaction involves equal parties, Jordanians tended to avoid using honorifics and opted for more informal expressions. Qari (2019) revealed that Saudis’ attitudes are distinct from those of their British counterparts in apologies expressed to their fathers and this distinction is attributed to cultural reasoning, specifically to the higher power status of the father in a collectivist society such as the Saudis’ compared to an individualist society such as the British.

Alhojailan (2019) suggested that apologies performed by Saudis are influenced by cultural and contextual factors. For example, in a situation where the speaker arrives 30 minutes late to their friend’s house, the Saudis performed the least number of
strategies which Alhojailan (2019) attributed to either the transgression being perceived as less severe by Saudis or lateness in such a case being culturally accepted among Saudis. On the other hand, in a situation where a package was lost (which is severe), Saudis performed more strategies.

2.5.1.1.1 Responses to Apology Strategies

Bennett and Earwaker (1994) note that apologisees are likely to accept apologies even in more serious offences, and in situations where the apologiser possesses a high degree of responsibility for the offence, with the rejection of an apology being a comparatively rare outcome. This outcome supports Goffman’s (1955) concept that even in severe offences, both parties (speaker and hearer) tend to complete the corrective interchange comprising challenge, offering, and acceptance (ibid.). Adrefiza and Jones (2013) note several studies have also indicated acceptance and forgiveness as the most favoured responses to the apology (Holmes, 1995; Robinson, 2004).

Alasqah (2021) also pays attention to the responses elicited by apologies, following previous work by Holmes (1995) and Saleem et al. (2018). In examining Saudi responses to apologies, Alasqah (2021) suggested that Saudis are more likely to adopt a strategy of acceptance (e.g., ‘that’s okay’) in response to apologies from speakers with power or high social status. The findings are consistent with some studies that explored the effects of the social power in determining the likely apology response strategy (cf. Holmes, 1995; Saleem et al., 2018). Saleem et al. (2018),
studying the apology response of Pakistani English speakers and Pakistani Urdu speakers, revealed that both groups exhibited an impact of the social power of the other interlocutor in their response strategies in which they tend to use acceptance strategies with speakers who have power, and reject apologies more often from people who have less power.

2.5.1.2 The proportionality principle

Overall, the efficacy of apology strategies is influenced by different variables such as social and power distance and the severity of the offence. Another potentially relevant factor that might influence the apology perception is Goffman’s (1971) proportionality principle. Goffman (1971) posits that there are three remedial acts: accounts, apologies, and requests. He suggests that “A common practice among students is to consider these remedial acts as part of “distributive justice”, a sort of payment or compensation for harm done, the greater the harm the greater the recompense” (ibid., pp. 115-116). Goffman (1971) argues that, in minimal offences, people tend to use a simpler form of apology while in severe ones, they tend to use more sophisticated apologies. In particular, Goffman (1971) suggests that apologies need to have an appropriate weight given the offences.

Schlenker and Darby (1981) hypothesised that an apologiser might perform either a brief or a more extended apology based on the size of the offence which is determined by the offence’s degree of severity and the extent of the apologiser’s responsibility for the harm done. Their study supported this hypothesis as the results suggested that
when an apologiser has more responsibility for the offence, or the offence itself was deemed more severe, an extended apology is more likely to be employed.

Goffman’s (1971) notion that the apology and the offences need to be proportionate in order for an apology to be successful (i.e. to remediate the offence) was also examined by Heritage and Raymond (2016) and by Heritage et al. (2019). Heritage and Raymond (2016) quantitively examined Goffman’s notion. Specifically, they analysed the offences under scrutiny by differentiating between what they call ‘distal’ and ‘local’ offences where ‘local’ refers to minor offences and ‘distal’ refers to major offences. Heritage and Raymond (2016) conjectured that apology involves a continuum from the most extended apology (e.g., apology that comprises ‘naming the offence and/or accounting for it’) to the least (e.g., ‘sorry’). They did not discuss other types of apologies, such as offer of repair and promise of forbearance, due to the lack of instances of those kinds in their data.

The results of Heritage and Raymond’s (2016) study broadly supported Goffman’s notion of proportionality between apologies and offences, as far as minor offences were concerned. For instance, they found no examples of minor offences, e.g., self-correction, that made use of extended apologies: for instance, a speaker would not be expected to say ‘I’m sorry that I misspoke’ (Heritage et al., 2019, p. 187). However, they found that Goffman’s principle was not largely supported in major offences. They attribute this discrepancy to other factors, e.g., “relational and contextual contingencies” (Heritage and Raymond, 2016, p. 5), that affect apology construction.
In their discussion of major offences, Heritage and Raymond (2016) indicated some analytical difficulties that they encounter. For instance, the account and apology turn might be separated, in which case a speaker might use a minimal apology (‘I’m sorry’) in the context of a severe offence because an account had already been given earlier in the interaction. They illustrated this with an example in which Vicky was asked by Pam to take some extra hours at work, but Vicky said ‘I have a class on Thursday’, then a few turns later ‘I’m sorry for that’. Heritage and Raymond (2016) claimed that this created the appearance of a departure from Goffman’s proportionality principle as the apology looked minimal due to the separation between the account and the apology forms.

Another analytical difficulty encountered by Heritage and Raymond (2016) was the possibility of a speaker providing an extended account for minimal offences, which would appear to result in an extended apology being offered to the hearer. They provided an example in which Lesley was told that her mother on the phone, and she kept her mother waiting for a long time until she picked the phone up. She then offered an extended apology that included naming the offence and accounting for it. For Heritage and Raymond (2016), these examples challenge the idea of Goffman’s proportionality principle “as a simple linear association between the respective ‘severity’ of virtual offenses and apology formats” (Heritage et al., 2019, p. 188).
However, these apparent violations of Goffman’s proportionality principle may admit other explanations. For example, in the example of separation between account and apology discussed above, they did not discuss the possibility that Vicky considers herself not to be blameworthy, and hence opted to account for not being able to work extra hours due to a legitimate reason, in which case her utterance ‘I’m sorry’ could be taken merely as an expression of sympathy at having let Pam down. This is suggested by Pam’s response ‘it’s not your problem’ which indicates a lack of assignment of blame. Therefore, we need to take into account that, as discussed earlier, people sometimes use apology formats to achieve different goals such as getting someone’s attention, as a politeness marker, or as a way to express sympathy (Leech, 2014; Deutschmann, 2003; Coulmas, 1981).

In a similar vein, Heritage and Raymond’s (2016) analysis of their second example (Lesley and her mother) ignores the interpersonal implications of the incident. In our interactions, we tend to account for our action when the other party is absent to avoid any misunderstanding that might happened (Battistella, 2014). Lesley’s provision of an account may just reflect this precaution. Therefore, although Heritage et al. (2019) highlight that the proportionality principle was not straightforwardly applicable in these examples, these examples do not necessarily reflect an absence of proportionality in the selection of apology strategy.
2.5.1.2.1 **Speaker variation versus Goffman’s proportionality principle**

Heritage et al. (2019) discuss the implications of differences between speakers for Goffman’s proportionality principle. They examine this using “a constitutive approach to the design, deployment, and negotiation of apologies in sequences of interaction” (ibid., p. 185). Using a telephone corpus collected by Gail Jefferson that contains examples from UK and US English, the researchers examined 200 apology cases. They discuss in depth two case studies which are similar in circumstances, but different in the apologies provided by the speakers. In particular, the two cases involve Lesley (who is a leader of a local voluntary organisation) calling some friends and associates to ensure they would attend the organisation’s upcoming meeting. On the afternoon before the meeting, Lesley calls two women, both of whom turn out not to be planning to attend the meeting, and neither of whom has called Lesley to notify her of this. Heritage et al. (2019) argue, that although the offences are identical, the ways in which the women deal with the incident are distinctively different.

The differences between the speakers (Joyce and Myra) reside in how the speakers perceive not attending and not notifying Lesley. For instance, Joyce seems to find not notifying Lesley as an incident that does not require an apology, and therefore opts not to apologise for it or even account for it. However, Myra has apologised for both offences (i.e. not attending, and not calling to notify Lesley). Heritage et al. (2019) note that, while both speakers avoid naming the offence, the formats of their apologies differ. Joyce’s apology “is agentless, lacks any form of intensification, and noticeably involves the withholding of an account” (Heritage et al., 2019, p. 196). By contrast, Myra’s apology “includes an overt expression of agency, various intensifiers (both
lexical and prosodic), and an elaborate account in the form of a narrative which directly addresses her nonattendance in terms of an inability to attend and which also indirectly mentions circumstances that have prevented her from calling sooner” (Heritage et al., 2019, p. 196).

Heritage et al. (2019, p. 196) highlighted differences between Joyce’s and Myra’s apologies in respect of their “timing and iteration”. Joyce apologises only after missing two opportunities in the dialogue to do so, and also withholds her account despite the opportunities that were available for her to offer one – Heritage et al. itemise seven such opportunities. When a speaker opts to avoid accounting for their action despite several chances being available, it suggests “a significant pattern of withholding” (Heritage et al., 2019, p. 196). By contrast, not only did Myra opt to apologise at the first available opportunity, but she repeated her apology in every other occasion during her interaction with Lesley. Therefore, Lesley’s response to her was different than her response to Joyce’s minimal apology (ibid.). That is, Lesley did not acknowledge Joyce’s apology in what she said in response (‘right then’) while her responses to Myra’s apologies involved constantly providing absolution (e.g., ‘that’s alright’, ‘yes, that doesn’t matter at all’, ‘No no’, and ‘No, not to worry’) (ibid.), “designed to minimize or erase the virtual offense” (Heritage et al. 2019, p.196). Heritage et al. (ibid.) suggest that Lesley exonerates Myra from the offence “with increasing force. This is manifested in terms of pitch, intensity, spread, and positioning, and also in increasingly explicit rejections of the assumed foundations from which the virtual offense is constructed”.

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Heritage et al. (2019) discuss how the differences in these two speakers’ responses to a similar situation of offence challenge Goffman’s proportionality principle, which in theory should determine the kind of response that is available. Heritage et al. (2019, p. 197) consider three perspectives one could adopt towards Goffman’s proportionality principle, namely:

i) The principle is an ex post facto lay rationalization of apology actions which has no status in fact,

ii) the principle is a statistical generalization which, like any other, includes many exceptions, and

iii) the principle is a constitutive norm for the interpretation of apologies and is protected from inductive disconfirmation by ad hoc secondary elaborations of belief.

Heritage et al. (2019) take the results of Heritage and Raymond’s (2016) study to support the first interpretation, in that the researchers found support for the proportionality principle only for minor offences. In particular, their study suggested that the association between the weight of apology and the offence is not stable (Heritage et al., 2019). Heritage et al. (2019) interpret their examples (Lesley and Joyce, Lesley and Myra) as also supportive of this position, since the same offences were dealt with in different apology formats. However, they also acknowledge that there are some examples related to apology “in which participants show themselves to be oriented to the principle and to be motivated to manage interactional issues arising from failures to implement it appropriately.” (ibid., p. 197).
One example that Heritage and Raymond discuss in detail concerns a phone call between Gordon and his friend Dana, in which Gordon attempts to apologise three times for a misunderstanding the previous day. The first two apologies were not accepted by Dana, who responded noncommittally to the first attempt and did not acknowledge the second as an apology. After a long exchange following these two attempts, Gordon apologises again, but his apology was extended to contain the utterance “it was a bad move”. Only then, Dana acknowledges the apology by replying “it was”. Heritage et al. (2019, p. 193) analyse this dialogue as one in which, “across a series of apologies, Gordon eventually adjusts the weight and orientation of his apologies in reaction to Dana’s withholding of absolution so as, by the end, to accept responsibility for his virtual offense and to account for its perpetration.”

With regard to the second position (ii), Heritage et al. (2019) suggested that the claim of a statistical generalisation is supported by Heritage and Raymond’s (2016) findings as far as minor offences are concerned. Heritage et al. (2019) note that, if position (ii) is true, then their two examples are just contingent exceptions in which both speakers performed inappropriate apologies, a very minimal one in Joyce’s case and a needlessly extended one in Myra’s.

The third position discussed by Heritage et al. (2019) is that the proportionality principle is ‘constitutive’: that is, it is related to the way in which interlocutors assess how to formulate an apology or construct it. On this view, “the relationship between a speaker’s assessment of a virtual offense and the apology s/he constructs is
unavoidably a part of the process in which apologies are formulated and received” (ibid., p. 197). Therefore, Heritage et al. (2019, p. 197) suggested that “proportionality is less a matter of empirical outcome than it is a matter of the ‘lens’ through which apologies are inevitably considered as a matter of normative convention.” According to Heritage et al. (2019, p. 197), in this view, an apology will be assessed based on ‘the operation of the principle’ and whenever the principle was found to be observed, it will be treated as a case of the principle being supported. However, if the instances suggest non-compliance with the principle, it is the duty of the participants or the observers to account for its failure, thereby “reconstituting the normativity of the principle even while registering that the principle has been departed from” (Heritage et al., 2019, p. 197).

In the examples they discuss, a possible explanation is that further external factors such as interpersonal relationships might have influenced the speakers’ decisions to offer different apology formulas. For them, Joyce’s decision to use a minimal apology format and withhold from offering an account suggests a close relationship with the caller (Lesley) which indicated that the wrongdoing is minimal and it is unlikely to cause any harm to their relationship (ibid.). This is evident in Lesley’s shifting the topic to “an adversarial story about a man they both dislike” (ibid., p. 198) which was taken by Heritage et al. (2019) as a sign that the relationship was not threatened. By contrast, Myra’s extensive apologising would be compatible with a circumstance in which she is new in town, and hence wishes to avoid making a negative first impression in her relationship with Lesley (Heritage et al., 2019).
2.5.1.3 Apology process

In this section, we will look at some accounts of the apology process as a whole, from different scholars and different perspectives. In section 2.5.1.3.1, we will discuss Goffman’s and Tavuchis’s accounts of the apology process. In section 2.5.1.3.2, we will highlight how the needs of the offended party have been characterised in the literature. The importance of the apology process and the offended party’s needs lie in the idea that the above apology strategies (section 2.4) that were identified in the literature can be used to convey to the other party (the offended) that the apologiser in selecting his/her apology strategies has taken into account the intention to meet the offended party’s needs. Thus, the failure or success of an apology may depend on whether the apology is seen to meet those needs.

2.5.1.3.1 Goffman’s and Tavuchis’s apology process accounts

Goffman (1967) introduces his concept of face, in which he argues that there is a parallel relationship between the speaker’s face and the face of others. In particular, Goffman (1967, p. 10) suggests that the speaker’s face “can be his most personal possession and the centre of his security and pleasure, it is only on loan to him from society; it will be withdrawn unless he conducts himself in a way that is worthy of it”. Goffman (1967, p. 10) adds that “Just as the member of any group is expected to have self-respect, so also he is expected to sustain a standard of considerateness; he is expected to go to certain lengths to save the feelings and the face of others present, and he is expected to do this willingly and spontaneously because of emotional identification with the others and with their feelings. In consequence, he is disinclined
to witness the defacement of others.” Thus, Goffman (1967) asserts that the speaker wants to achieve the preservation of his own face and the face of the other interlocutor.

Brown and Levinson (1987) adopted Goffman’s notion of face and formulated their politeness theory in which they suggest that some speech acts are intrinsically face-threatening. They suggest that there are two face wants: a positive and a negative want. The positive face want refers to the speaker’s desire to be liked and the negative face want refers to the speaker’s desire to be free. Thus, a speaker who needs to use a face-threatening act usually appeals to some strategy selections that take into account their own face wants and those of the other interlocutor.

Goffman (1967, pp.20-22) suggests that there is a corrective interchange that takes place when face is damaged, which consists of four moves:

- Challenge, by which participants take on the responsibility of calling attention to the misconduct.
- Offering, whereby a participant, typically the offender, is given a chance to correct for the offence and re-establish the expressive order.
- Acceptance, in which the persons to whom the offering is made can accept it as a satisfactory means of re-establishing the expressive order.
- Thanks, in which the forgiven person conveys a sign of gratitude to those who have given him the indulgence of forgiveness.
Goffman (1955) suggests that the corrective interchange is usually completed by the interlocutors even in more serious transgressions. Bennett and Earwaker (1994) provided empirical support to Goffman's notion by identifying that participants in their study tend to accept apologies despite the transgression being deemed severe and the apologiser being deemed highly responsible for the offence.

Tavuchis (1991) suggests that a successful apology sequence is embedded in a social process that starts with a call for an apology and ends with a reconciliation. In particular, Tavuchis (1991) suggests that the concept of apology is part of a social process that can only be enacted when there is a call for apology that can only be negotiated “through the faculty of forgiving” (ibid., p. 20) and not through an account (ibid.). That is, in order for the act to be categorised as an apology, the discourse between the participants need to be an apology discourse which can be recognised by a call for an apology; otherwise, different interpretations and formulations are possible (ibid.).

Tavuchis (1991) suggests that, when the mistakes are deemed as minor, there will be likely no need to call for an apology. That is, apology is unnecessary if the offender's responsibility for an offence was categorised as “minimal or the consequences as trivial or accountable” (ibid., p. 21). This might explain why some people opt to use an explanation instead of apologising. They might regard the incident as not requiring an apology given the offender is not fully responsible for the incident, or his action is justifiable, and hence the transgression is minimised. On the other hand, contrary to
Goffman’s (1955) suggestion that the corrective interchange is usually completed by
the interlocutor even if the situation is severe, Tavuchis (1991) suggests that severe
offences might exceed the purview of apology, and apology cannot restore the
situation in cases of what are deemed unforgivable acts. Under these circumstances,
an apology would be perceived as understating the wrongdoing, and hence might lead
to worsening the situation as the other party would be more offended (ibid.).

For Tavuchis (1991), a call for apology is the start of what he called a ‘moral syllogism’.
Apology is superfluous if there was no call for it and hence there is no need of the
call→apology→forgiveness process. Conversely, when there is a call and the offender
reacts to that call by performing an apology, he is attempting to reaccredit himself as
a member of society by explicitly acknowledging what has he transgressed (ibid). By
doing that, the situation becomes an apology situation that leads the interactants to
undergo a discourse “about the moral requisites of interpersonal, group, or collective
membership” (ibid., p. 22).

Battistella (2014) highlights that Tavuchis’s (1991) apology process works as follows:
a call for an apology is reached by both parties, acknowledging the breach that
occurred, and that they both agree that apology would solve it. Battistella (2014)
suggests that the call for apology may arise through different participants: the offender,
the offended party or by a third party that indicates the breach to the offended party.
For example, a call for an apology could be generated by the offender himself in which
he acknowledges that he has wronged the other party, by the offended party’s reaction
to the speaker, or through a third party who points out the offence (Battistella, 2014; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984).

Battistella (2014) concurs that in order for an apology to take place, both parties need to agree that what happened was a breach of social morals and that there is a possibility to reconcile such a breach through apologising. When both parties agree on these terms, the transgressor will perform an apology which in return allows the offended party to judge their apologies (ibid.). If the offended party finds the apologiser sincere and morally worthy, their social ties would be restored again, and hence the apology would be accepted (ibid.).

Battistella (2014, p. 20) suggests that Tavuchis’s (1991) apology process involves two parts, which can be termed the “naming aspect” and the “complementary aspect”. The naming aspect involves admitting the wrongdoing and the offender showing awareness of his mistake, while the complementary aspect involves the language that the offender uses to convey his regret of the offence (ibid.). The apology process also involves the offended party’s response to an apology which might be either to accept the apology, reject it, or when the apology is insufficient, embark on further negotiation towards a resolution (ibid.). Furthermore, when the offender's apology is deemed by the offended party as insufficient, that might worsen the situation by either further offending the offended party or reinitiating the apology process, i.e. returning to the call to apology stage (ibid.).
Battistella (2014) highlights that the apology could fail at any stage of the apology process, such as the call to apology phase or even at the response phase. For the former, an apology could fail if both parties did not agree on the call to apology (ibid.). For example, if an offender finds himself not guilty and what he did is not offensive while the offended party finds the opposite, the apology process will fail. The apology could also fail if the offender fails to name the offence, and hence avoids apologising about the actual offence (ibid.; Lazare, 2004). Furthermore, an apology could be unsuccessful if the language used by the offender is insufficient, vague, or is deemed by the offended party as showing insincere regret (Battistella, 2014; Lazare, 2004). At the response stage, the apology process will fail if the apology is rejected (Battistella, 2014).

2.5.1.3.2 The offended party's psychological needs
One important goal of apologising is restoring the equilibrium between the interactants and hence placating the hearer. As I mentioned above, apologies involve a process which the interactants undertake and which leads to either accepting, rejecting, or negotiating the apologies proposed. The concept of apology process raises some questions regarding the way in which apologies could restore a damage relationship (Lazare, 2004).

Lazare (2004, p. 68) suggests that, in order for an apology to heal the damaged relationship, it need to fulfil one or more of seven psychological needs. Lazare (2004) acknowledges that these needs are not always distinct, but sometimes overlap,
making it harder to differentiate them. In this section I shall discuss each of the proposed needs separately.

1. Restoration of self-respect and dignity.

The first need involves mainly shifting the power and humiliation from the offending party to the offended party (Lazare, 2004). That is, the offended party is assumed to be humiliated when an offender offended them; therefore, by apologising, the humiliation is shifted away from the victim to the offender (ibid.). Similarly, shifting the power involves the offended party becoming the one with the power of forgiving (either to forgive or not) instead of the offender whose power was his ability to hurt the offended party (ibid.). By shifting the power and humiliation from the offender to the offended party, apologies might restore the offended party’s dignity and respect (ibid.).

Smith (2008) called this a recognition of victim as a moral interlocutor which usually goes unnoticed by people since they are mainly focused on the apologetic discourse. Smith (2008) suggests that, in a conflict, the offender and the offended party participate in what he called “a process of corroborating the factual record, accepting blame, identifying each harm and the principles underlying each harm, and expressing a shared commitment to those principles” (ibid., p. 65).

By this process, the relationship between the interlocutors undergoes some changes in relation to the interlocutors’ status before the conflict: the victim would transition
from an inferior position to a superior position while the offender would experience the opposite (ibid.). Accordingly, if the offender did not recognise the offended party as a moral interlocutor, that would be interpreted negatively as the offender admits he/she commits the wrongdoing, but he/she assumes the offended party does not “deserve recognition” (ibid., p. 65).

Smith (2008) postulates that the lack of the recognition of the victim as a moral interlocutor may justify how the offended party might perceive the offender’s failure to apologise for an offence as more severe than the act itself. The failure to apologise would signal negative messages such as disrespect which might then further offend the offended party (ibid.). In explicating his concept, Smith (2008) suggests that in small offences such as stepping on someone’s toe, Smith expects the other party to apologise or at least express sympathy; otherwise, Smith might perceive the offender’s action as a sign of disrespect.

2. Assurance that both parties have shared values.
Lazare (2004) suggests that facilitating the apology success involves the offending party confirming to the offended party that they share the same values. This can be achieved through admitting the wrongdoing, regretting it, and promising that the offence will not happen again (ibid.). Lazare (2004) argues that when an offender apologises, he conveys to the other party that he abides by the rules or values that they both share, and hence he is essentially saying “I really am the person you thought I was” (ibid., p. 80) which would eventuate in enhancing the trust between the
interactants and restore the relationship to being safe and predictable again (ibid.). By considering this need, we take into account that we are human beings; therefore, we are not perfect and we are expected to make mistakes, breach some social principles, and our relationship with others might go awry. However, we have the ability to redress our mistakes, abide by the social principles, and restore our relationships (ibid.). But if an offender opts to avoid admitting his wrongdoing, the relationship cannot be restored as the offended party no longer trusts the offending party (Lazare, 2004).

3. Assurance that the offenses were not [the apologisee's] fault.
The third psychological need involves the offended party's need to know that they do not share the blame with the offending party. This usually occurs when the offended party is not sure whether their conduct was the reason why the offending party has wronged them (Lazare, 2004). Therefore, one of their needs is the offender affirming to them that they are blameless and that the entire offence is the offender's fault (ibid.). The offender can convey this feeling to the offended party by using an acknowledgement of responsibility (ibid.).

4. Assurance of safety in their relationships.
The fourth psychological need that Lazare (2004) proposed is the offended party's right to be assured that he/she is physically and psychologically safe. That is, by apologising, the offender needs to provide the other party further information that would help them to determine the future of their relationship, such as whether or not it is to be maintained (ibid.). However, this need appears vague, and it is not clear how
the offended party can be assured of the required safety. On this point, Lazare suggests that the offender needs to answer a long list of questions about their intention, their motive for committing the offence and whether they would do it again. However, with the exception of the last question, the answers to these questions cannot be part of the apology formula. Instead, they can potentially be part of the interaction between the interactants before or after the offender presents the apology.

5. Seeing the offender suffer.
The fifth psychological need that Lazare (2004) proposed is the need for the offended party to see that the offending party suffers from their offence. That is, in some situations, apologies might succeed because the offender has put him/herself in a position of humiliation, in which they await the offended party’s decision about forgiveness. Lazare (2004) argues that such an attitude would be interpreted by the offended party as a sincere way to convey the offender’s regret for the offence. Therefore, the offended party’s acceptance of an apology may take some time in order to guarantee that the offending party has adequately suffered (ibid.). This need overlaps with other needs e.g., restoring dignity and respect (Lazare, 2004). This is because by having the offending party suffering from their mistake, the power shifts from the offending party to the offended party who has the right to forgive or not, which positions him over the offending party (ibid.).

6. Reparation for the harm caused by the offense.
The sixth psychological need is offering compensation, which Lazare (2004, p. 95) defines as “repairing, undoing the damage, making amends, or giving satisfaction for an acknowledged wrong or injury”. Lazare (2004) notes that sometimes the offer of repair is considered a dominant aspect of apology that overshadows other aspects of apology. In such a case, failing to compensate would eventuate in not repairing the psychological damage caused by the offence (ibid.).

7. Having meaningful dialogues with the offenders. The seventh psychological need that Lazare (2004) proposed is that apologising involves both parties engaging in a reciprocal dialogue. In particular, both parties enact a dialogue, an interactive process, or a negotiation that might be instigated by either one of them (ibid.). In this interactive process, the offended party conveys to the offending party that they are offended and explains their suffering (ibid.). However, Lazare (2004) did not elaborate on what would happen after the offended party communicate their suffering to the offender. Perhaps he wanted to emphasise that apology involves negotiation and is intrinsically not a one-sided act.

The concept of the offended party’s needs was mentioned by other authors, including Tavuchis (1991) and Smith (2008). Tavuchis (1991, p. 3) notes that an important aspect to the offended party is that the apology entails “acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the violated rule, admission of fault and responsibility of its violation, the expression of genuine regret and remorse for the harm done.” Smith (2008) supported Lazare’s (2004) idea that the offended party wants to ensure that they do not share
the responsibility for being hurt, and the apology can serve to convey that they are not at fault. Furthermore, Smith (2008) notes that failed apologies sometimes happen because the offending party sometimes intends to deceive others rather than placating them. Such an instance is more likely to be regarded as a self-serving move (ibid.).

Drawing on the above, we can argue that an apology may succeed or fail during various stages of the apology process, such as the call of apology phase, apologising phase, or response phase. Furthermore, we can explore the idea that different apology strategies that have been identified and studied in the literature (which was discussed in section 2.4 above) can be seen as addressing distinct psychological needs on the part of the offended party. Thus, based on the above needs, we might expect the offended party to assess the apologies provided in the apologising phase and then move to the response phase by either accepting or rejecting the apologies or by further negotiating the suitability of the apology provided.
2.6 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I presented the research problem and reviewed the literature, focusing on apology as speech act in which I presented a theoretical background featuring Austin’s and Searle’s theories of speech acts. I also discussed some selected apology studies. Finally, I discussed the factors influencing the effectiveness of apology strategies, featuring the effects of the contextual factors, Goffman’s proportionality principle, the notion of the apology process, and the offended party’s psychological needs.
3 Chapter Three: Methodology and procedure

3.1 Introduction

This thesis employs an explanatory sequential design which involves using quantitative and qualitative methods in two sequential phases (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The first phase involves the quantitative side of the research while the second phase involves the qualitative side. The aim of the qualitative follow-up study is to “explain or expand on the first-phase quantitative results” (ibid., p. 65), and ultimately to explain why the quantitative results turned out as they did (e.g. in respect of their (non)significance).

This chapter aims to explain and justify the methods used in this thesis with reference to how they have been discussed and applied in social science research. In section 3.2, we look at mixed methods research, the rationale behind using it, and its limitations. In section 3.3, we look at the research design and the procedures we are following in undertaking the studies in this thesis. In section 3.4, we look at the first phase of this thesis (i.e. the quantitative part). This section presents our hypotheses and research questions, followed by a background discussion about the method and procedures for the quantitative research phase, including the instrument we used, the Latin-square design that we implemented for our questionnaires, and the sample size. In section 3.5, we look at the qualitative part of the thesis. The section aims to present the qualitative research questions and hypotheses that we aim to explore by means of focus group discussion, followed by a discussion of the procedures for this phase.
of the research, including discussion of the focus group as a research instrument, sample size, how many focus groups are enough, limitations of the method, question selection, analysis methods, data validation and reliability.

### 3.2 Mixed Methods Research

Mixed methods studies begin in the 1980s with several authors from different countries arriving at the same notion around the same time (Creswell & Clark, 2017). Green et al. (1989, p. 256) presented the first definition of mixed methods studies as follows:

In this study, we defined mixed-method designs as those that include at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words), where neither type of method is inherently linked to any particular inquiry paradigm.

Another definition of mixed methods was presented by Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007) who asked the leading figures of mixed methods studies to define mixed methods research (i.e. Bazeley, Caracelli, Chen, Creswell, Currall, Formosa, Greene, Hunter, Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, Kelle, Mertens, Miller, Morse, Newman, Patton, Preskill, Sandelowski, Shulha, and Tashakkori & Teddlie) in an attempt to derive from their definitions a comprehensive definition that summarised their views. They derived the following definition which aggregated different perspectives (ibid., p. 129)
Mixed methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results.

In their definition, they provide a new insight into the nature of mixed methods as a methodology that has its own paradigm which they claim yields better results that complement what might be obtained from the quantitative or qualitative paradigms.

Creswell and Clark (2017, p. 5) presented core characteristics which they take to describe mixed methods research. On their account, a mixed methods study is one in which the researcher:

- Collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data rigorously in response to research questions and hypotheses,
- Integrates (or mixes or combines) the two forms of data and their results,
- Organizes these procedures into specific research designs that provide the logic and procedures for conducting the study, and
- Frames these procedures within theory and philosophy.

3.2.1 Rationale for Mixed Methods Approach
The 1980s mark the beginning of mixed methods research as a new methodology in the field of research, and within a decade, mixed methods research had become a
credible approach (Creamer, 2018). Creamer (2018) attributes this to the efforts of authors who presented typologies describing the mixed methods studies in terms of the rationality underlying their usage (e.g. Bryman, 2006, 2007; Greene et al., 1989; Rossman & Wilson, 1985).

Specifically, Creamer (2018) credits Rossman and Wilson (1985) as the first researchers to explain the rationale for mixed methods research. Rossman and Wilson focus on three goals for mixed methods research, which they call corroboration, elaboration, and initiation. Corroboration (or triangulation) refers to the concept in which a researcher seeks consensus in their results from different types of data (Creamer, 2018). Elaboration refers to the process in which sequential phases of data collection are employed in order to obtain in-depth data about certain phenomena and in which qualitative data is used to explain the results from quantitative data (Creamer, 2018). Initiation refers to a more complex design which aims to “uncover paradox and contradiction and deliberately seek further exploration of areas where results do not converge” (Creamer, 2018, p. 26). As Rossman and Wilson put it (1985, p. 633 as quoted in Creamer, 2018), “it can therefore initiate interpretations and conclusions, suggest areas for further analysis, or recast the entire research questions”. The nature of these studies is purposefully orchestrated to be provocative (Creamer, 2018).

An alternative perspective is provided by Greene et al. (1989), who analyse 57 empirical mixed-method evaluations and, on the basis of these, propose the following typology of mixed methods research:
• Triangulation → involves seeking “convergence, corroboration, correspondence of results from the different methods” (ibid., p. 259).

• Complementarity → involves seeking “elaboration, enhancement, illustration, clarification of the results from one method with the results from another” (ibid., p. 259).

• Development → refers to using “the results from one method to help develop or inform the other method, where development is broadly construed to include sampling and implementation, as well as measurement decisions” (ibid., p. 259).

• Initiation → represents studies that aim to explore “paradox and contradiction, new perspectives of frameworks, the recasting of questions or results from one method with questions or results from the other method” (ibid., p. 259).

• Expansion → denotes extending “the breadth and range of enquiry by using different methods for different inquiry components” (ibid., p. 259).

Bryman (2006) developed an expanded typology of mixed methods based on practice, which yielded 17 rationales. His typology was derived from a thorough review of articles and writings about methodologies. He presented a content analysis of 232 articles from different disciplines in social sciences that use mixed methods. The study scrutinised the reasons given by researchers to conduct mixed methods relative to their employment of them in their research. His results suggested that there are discrepancies between the reasons given and the way the studies were executed. For instance, Bryman’s (2006) study revealed that only 19 out of 29 articles that suggest that they are using triangulation as a rationale for their studies were actually using their
mixed methods in that way. Moreover, according to his analysis, Bryman found that 80 of the articles investigated used a triangulation approach; however, most of them (three-quarters) reported other rationales than triangulation.

Creamer (2018) differentiates between typology “to capture patterns of how mixed methods are actually being used in practice” from that “generated to provide a menu of models that might be effective in guiding or shaping practice” (ibid., p. 29). Creamer (2018) presented a typology that is derived from Greene et al.’s (1989) typology with expansions to the development and initiation categories, in addition to a new category she proposed, evaluation/intervention. The evaluation/intervention category refers to “collecting qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention, program, activity, class, or workshop” (Creamer 2018, p. 31).

From the above discussion, there are several possible reasons for a researcher to adopt a mixed methods approach, and these reasons may be clear before the study or emerge during it. For example, triangulation refers to using two different data collection approaches in order to find agreement between their results. Given such a purpose, the decision to use mixed methods should be made prior commencing the research. However, if a study was quantitatively conducted and the results needed more clarification, a decision to use the mixed methods methodology to conduct a follow-up study may be made after conducting the initial research. In this thesis, the initial aim was to conduct a quantitative experiment, but emerging questions about its
results motivated the use of a follow-up study to examine them: hence, this thesis employs a mixed method explanatory sequential design (Creswell and Clark, 2017).

**3.2.2 Limitations of Mixed Methods Inquiry**

Although mixed methods might be regarded by some researchers as a better approach to examine certain phenomena, other researchers consider the arguments for mixed methods to be problematic. Golicic and Davis (2012) argue that appealing to mixed methods is beneficial when it allows researchers to avoid a risk of method bias that would occur by reliance on one research method. However, they suggest that these advantages are balanced by the challenges of implementing mixed methods design given the time needed to collect the data, analyse them, and draw inferences from them (ibid.). Similarly, Ponterotto et al. (2013, pp. 56-57) note that a risk of using mixed methods is that a researcher may attempt to achieve “too much in a single study and therefore dilut[e] both the quantitative and qualitative components of the research design”.

Furthermore, Ponterotto et al (2013) add that another problem that is associated with implementing mixed methods in research is that the research design might “continue to promote quantitative research within the positivist and postpositivist research paradigms, though in more subtle ways” (ibid., p. 57). Giddings (2006, p. 202) claims that mixed methods research does not provide the ‘best of both worlds’ – qualitative and quantitative – because “the ‘thinking’ of positivism continues in the ‘thinking’ of mixed methods, its postpositivist pragmatic underpinnings assumed. The positivist scientific tradition continues to be privileged as a way to know; its dominance is
strengthened, rather than challenged, by mixed-methods research”. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) discuss in more detail some of the conceptual issues and challenges that are encountered in contemporary mixed methods research. In their handbook, they highlight some issues related to conceptual stances, research questions and research problems, design and analysis issues associated with mixed methods, as well the language of mixed methods, among other issues. However, I do not attempt to engage with these foundational methodological critiques in this thesis.

### 3.3 Research Design

The thesis employs an explanatory sequential design. The explanatory sequential design, as mentioned above, involves two detached phases. The thesis initially employs a quantitative approach to examine hypotheses that were derived from the literature, and then a follow-up qualitative study to attempt to explain how certain results emerged from the quantitative study. Figure 2 below depicts the different stages of the explanatory sequential design.
Figure 1 Explanatory Sequential Design

Figure 3 below illustrates the order in which the research procedures are undertaken. These involve interpreting the quantitative and qualitative data independently and then providing an explanation of how the qualitative results help explain the quantitative result. It shows the two separate but sequential phases involved in this research. In this design, we begin by establishing the quantitative hypotheses and questions, followed by quantitative data collection, quantitative data analysis, and quantitative conclusions. Qualitative research questions that need to be explored are then
identified from the results of the quantitative analysis. The following procedure is data collection within a qualitative approach, followed by qualitative data analysis, qualitative conclusions, and how the qualitative data help explain the quantitative data.

![Figure 2 Research Procedures](image)

3.4 Phase One: Quantitative Approach

3.4.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

This thesis explores the idea that certain discourse moves can function as upgrading and downgrading devices when combined with an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID). Specifically, it addresses these research questions:

1. Does the combination of an IFID and an explanation result in the downgrading of an apology?
2. Does the combination of an IFID and an acknowledgement of responsibility result in the upgrading of an apology?
3. Does the combination of an IFID and an offer of repair result in the upgrading of an apology?
4. Does the combination of an IFID and a promise of forbearance result in the upgrading of an apology?

Correspondingly, the hypotheses tested in this thesis are:

1. A speaker is usually perceived to be downgrading an explicit apology by combining it with an account.
2. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an explicit apology by combining it with an acknowledgement of responsibility.
3. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an explicit apology by combining it with an offer of repair.
4. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an explicit apology by combining it with a promise of forbearance.

3.4.2 Quantitative methods in the thesis

As I mentioned in chapter 2, the nature of my research questions is concerned with the apologisee’s perception of combining apology strategies with an IFID. One way to examine that could be using corpora. In the literature there are several studies that attempted to investigate the speech act of apologising using corpora (cf.
Deutschmann (2003) conducted a study to examine the apology speech act in British English but using the British National Corpus (BNC). He analysed over 3000 apologies instances that he found in the BNC. His study examines the social variables such as age, gender, social class, and the power and social distance between the interlocutors associated with the apologies he identified. In his analysis, Deutschmann attempted to present his idea of prototypical apologies in which he differentiates between real, formulaic and face attacking apologies. Using the corpus, Deutschmann also suggests that his data include nine different offences that lead to the apology with the hearing offences (such as “Not hearing, not understanding, not believing one’s ears” (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 64)), the lack of consideration, and the breach of consensus were frequently used in his BNC data than others. Deutschmann investigates the apology strategies and suggested a difference between taking on and reducing responsibility strategies. Particularly, Deutschmann suggests that the data include explicit apologies that use an additional strategy that serves to minimise the responsibility such as explanation and justification, a strategy that involve taking on responsibility, or a combination of both reducing and taking on responsibility strategies. His results suggest that reducing responsibility were frequently used more than taking on responsibility in BNC.
Murphy (2015) investigates the speech act of apology in British English using corpus of parliamentary apologies made in the House of Commons, particularly 56 apologies were investigated by Murphy in his study. Murphy discusses the apology felicity conditions that were presented by Owen (1983) and Ogiermann (2009) and proposed some changes to them based on his analysis of the parliamentary corpus (see chapter 2). Then he discussed how the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) apology strategies need refinement to account for the indirect apology strategies which are common in the political arena.

Heritage and Raymond (2016) also use a corpus in their investigation of Goffman’s (1955) proportionality principle. They analysed the offences under scrutiny by differentiating between what they call ‘distal’ and ‘local’ offences where ‘local’ refers to minor offences and ‘distal’ refers to major offences. Heritage and Raymond (2016) conjectured that apology involves a continuum from the most extended apology (e.g., apology that comprises ‘naming the offence and/or accounting for it’) to the least apology form (e.g., ‘sorry’). They did not discuss other types of apologies, such as offer of repair and promise of forbearance, due to the lack of instances of those kinds in the corpus.

Similarly, Heritage et al. (2019) also investigate Goffman's proportionality principle, using “a constitutive approach to the design, deployment, and negotiation of apologies in sequences of interaction” (ibid., p. 185). Using a telephone corpus collected by Gail Jefferson that contains examples from UK and US English, the researchers examined
200 apology cases. They thoroughly investigated two identical cases that were treated differently in their corpus. In particular, the two cases involve Lesley (who is a leader of a local voluntary organisation) calling some friends and associates to ensure they would attend the organisation’s upcoming meeting. On the afternoon before the meeting, Lesley calls two women, both of whom turn out not to be planning to attend the meeting, and neither of whom has called Lesley to notify her of this. Heritage et al. (2019) argue, that although the offences are identical, the ways in which the women deal with the incident are distinctively different. They concluded that the different uptake of the apology and how the apologiser decided to apologise were due to the effect of the interpersonal relationship between the apologiser and the apologisee.

Furthermore, Kohnen (2017) uses the Old English corpora, namely the electronic *Thesaurus of Old English* and the *Dictionary of Old English A-G*, and the large *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* collected by Bosworth and Toller (1898, 1921) to examine whether Anglo-Saxon society use the speech act of apology. He first searched the corpora for the performative ‘apologise’ and the descriptive use of it e.g., ‘*she apologised*’. However, he could not find any results in all three corpora which raises a question of whether the Old Anglo-Saxon society uses the speech act of apology or not. Given that there was no lexical item equivalent to the performative ‘apologise’ found in the corpora, Kohnen suggested a need to “start with typical manifestations associated with apologising today (or earlier) and search relevant uses in the *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*” (p. 45). To do that, he first locates the forms of apology in the Old English compared to contemporary English using examples such as ‘*I am sorry*, ‘*pardon me*’, ‘*forgive me*’, and ‘*excuse me*’, suggesting that expressions that refer to “sad feelings,
regretting, excusing and forgiving are likely to have been prominent manifestations of apologising in the past centuries” (ibid. p. 45). Relying on this, Kohnen extracted all the instances that refer to expressions of sad feelings (e.g., sorry pattern), expressions of regret (e.g., excuse pattern), and expressions of forgiveness (e.g., forgive pattern) from Old English Corpora. Wherever he finds apology instances, he uses philological intervention to examine whether they function as an apology or not based on the Oxford Dictionary definition of apology, Deutschmann’s (2003) basic components of apology which involve an offender, an offended party, an offence, and a remedy, and the apology felicity conditions following Searle’s (1969) theory of speech act. Ultimately, he suggests that the old Anglo-Saxon society did not verbally use apology given that most of the examples he found were related to seeking forgiveness from God, and thus he posited that the ‘heroic’ Anglo-Saxon society might consider apology to be a weak act, and thus avoid it, or realise it by non-verbal means. However, ultimately, he was reluctant to take this result for granted and suggested a need for more philological intervention from people with good knowledge of the Old English to validate this claim.

Taking into consideration the studies discussed above, the use of corpora was a candidate methodology for the current study. However, using corpus for my study is constrained with the fact that the corpus needs to be a spoken corpus for the language under investigation (i.e., Saudi Arabic), and no suitable corpus currently exists, with the principal corpora of Saudi Arabic being based wholly on written sources.
Consequently, to address the research questions of this study, I would need to build my own bespoke corpus. One possible way to obtain a spoken corpus was to generate it using a TV show. I explored the possibility of using Tash Ma Tash as the source of such a corpus. Tash Ma Tash was a Saudi TV show consisting of 18 seasons of 30 30-minute episodes (a total of 270 hours). However, my exploratory work on this suggested that I would nevertheless run into issues of data scarcity due to the relatively few apology instances that were relevant to the needs of my study. That is to say, there were very few situations involving the use of combinations of apology strategies, namely the combination of the acknowledgement of responsibility, the offer of repair, the promise of forbearance, or the explanation with the IFID (I’m sorry). A similar limitation has affected other work on apology. For instance, as noted above, Heritage and Raymond (2016) were unable to discuss the offer of repair or the promise of forbearance because they couldn’t find any instances in their corpus that involve these two strategies. Heritage et al. (2019) also omitted discussion of these strategies for the same reason.

Another issue associated with using corpora is the fact that using such a method might limit the discussion to the form of apology and not the function. Corpus researchers usually use key words to locate the speech act, they are investigating. In the case of apology, they might use performatives (apologise), expressions of regret (sorry), or expressions seeking forgiveness (forgive me; excuse me). By relying on key words, researchers risk accounting for instances that use the form of apology but do not function as apologies. For example, Heritage and Raymond (2016) presented an example in which they claimed the speaker apologised to her boss who asks her if
she can work more hours on Thursday. The speaker replied by saying “I have a class on Thursday”, and then after a few turns, she said “sorry for that”. Heritage and Raymond (2016) claimed that what she did here is an apology, and they discussed how she first accounted for not being able to cover for more hours, and then apologised after missing some turns to apologise. However, it could be argued that the speaker did not in fact apologise: rather, she accounted for her inability to meet the request, and then uttered ‘sorry’ to acknowledge that she was letting her boss down, rather than because she considered herself blameworthy. This analysis is supported by the boss’s response “that is not your problem” which clearly shows that the discourse was not an apology discourse. Similarly, Ogiermann (2004) argues that only 36% of the apologies identified by Deutschmann (2003) according to formal criteria actually function as apologies.

Recall that Kohnen (2017) also relies on searching for word forms associated with apology (such as equivalents of sorry, forgive and excuse) in his corpus of Old English. He suggests that their absence points to the surprising conclusion that this relatively advanced society did not have apology as an available speech act. However, an alternative explanation is that the speech act of apology was manifest in different ways, e.g., via indirect apology strategies or through explanations. This is one of the limitations of using corpus that can only be overcome by manually searching the corpus for the indirect apology strategies.
Indeed, the use of key words in searching the corpus will exclude the indirect apology strategies. This is perhaps why Heritage and Reymond (2016), and Heritage et al. (2019) couldn’t account for the offer of repair and the promise of forbearance in their studies. Garcia (2015) explicitly addresses this limitation by using a combination of computerised corpus analysis and line-by-line manual engagement with the data to locate the indirect speech acts. This follows the approach of, for instance, Koester (2002), who conducted a study using a 34,000-word corpus derived from conversation in workplace to locate speech acts of suggestions and apologising. In doing that, she opts first to search the corpus for words such as ‘suggest’ or ‘apologise’ and then engage in reading the corpus line by line to locate the speech acts she is investigating. Although her findings suggest the use of these performatives in her data (directly), most of the speech acts that she identified in her data were indirect and could only be identified using line by line analysis. In the same vein, Garcia (2004) used line by line analysis of the corpus that she examined to identify examples of Searle’s speech acts taxonomy (e.g., directives, expressives, etc.). She suggested that using line by line conversation analysis enabled her to “identify speech act utterances that may or may not include words presumed to have illocutionary force” (p. 31).

Additionally, the use of the form without considering the function of the identified form may make the results invalid. For example, taking the word ‘sorry’ as apology in all instances might risk making the results invalid because sometimes the function of ‘sorry’ is not to signal an apology, as argued earlier. Lynch (2013) investigated the function of the word ‘sorry’ in the ICE-Ireland Corpus and found out that in Irish English, ‘sorry’ can signal an apology but can also perform ten other functions such
as a discourse marker, a request, or to demonstrate a hearing offence such as “the
speaker has not heard or understood what the hearer has just said” (ibid., p. 30), etc.
Lynch (2013, p. 48) suggests that ‘sorry’ could be used by Irish English speakers in
their directive speech acts such as “request for excusal” and as a way to convey
sympathy to the hearer, among other functions such as after ‘social gaffes; (sneezing
or coughing), in ‘breaching of consensus’ (such as disagreeing or refusing among
others), in ‘talk offences’ (such as a slip of the tongue), etc. Several other studies have
also documented that ‘sorry’ does not always function as a marker of apology as it can
also be used in a face attacking apology (Deutschmann, 2003), or as an attention
getter (Coulmas, 1981), or preceding a face-threatening act (Leech, 2014). Therefore,
researchers who use key words in searching corpus for speech acts need also to
consider the function of the examples they identify. Ideally, they can combine
searching the corpus using the key words with line-by-line analysis of the corpus which
will enable them to identify the function of the form under investigation and to account
for indirect speech acts.

However, although combining a corpus-based research technique (i.e., using the key
words to search the corpus) and the line-by-line analysis is in principle possible, with
large corpora it is implausible and time consuming. Perhaps this is why Koester (2002)
relied on 34,000-word corpus which is not large and can be handled manually. By
contrast, the BNC contains over 96 million words which makes it hard for a researcher
to manually search it for speech acts. In Arabic, the written corpus established by King
Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) encompasses more than 700
million words. It is impractical to apply line-by-line analysis to such a corpus.
Given these limitations and the aims of my research, I ultimately concluded that corpus methods were not suitable for my study. I concluded that the best option that would fit my research needs to examine the phenomena that I intended to investigate was a close-ended questionnaire, namely the scale rating questionnaire that is constructed using a discourse completion task (DCT).

DCT is a well-known instrument in the field of pragmatics, particularly for cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics studies. It was established by Levenston and Blum-Kulka (1978) in their attempt to examine second language lexical acquisition which would allow them to compare native and non-native speakers' performance or the performance of the non-native speakers at different proficiency levels (Ogiermann, 2018). The DCT was then adopted by Blum-Kulka (1982) as an instrument to elicit speech act realisations.

Ogiermann (2018) notes that a DCT “[consists] of a number of scenarios (typically between 8 and 12) describing different situations to which the participants are asked to react” (p., 232). In a DCT, researchers usually ask their participants to react spontaneously without much thinking (ibid.). Some researchers prefer to ask their participants following the situations to react to the situations while other might specify what they want their participants to do. For example, one might say following a complaint scenario, what would you say? Or might you apologise?
DCT was used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) in their CCSARP project, and following their work, DCTs were extensively used in eliciting different speech acts across languages and cultures (cf. Reiter, 2000; Al-Adaileh, 2007; Nuredeen, 2008; Jepahi, 2011; Hedayatnejad et al., 2016; Qari, 2017, 2019; Saleem et al., 2018; Alasqah, 2021). Ogiermann (2018) suggests that DCT has contributed to examining understudied languages such as request and apology in South African Indian English (Bharuthram 2003), request in Korean (Byon, 2006), apologies in Sudanese (Nureddeen, 2008) and Tunisian Arabic (Jepahi, 2011) and apologies in Lombok Indonesian (Wouk, 2006). The DCT was also used to examine apologies in Saudi Arabic (Qari, 2017; 2019; Alasqah, 2021), and Jordanian Arabic (Al-Adaileh, 2007).

Ogiermann (2018) discusses different forms of DCTs found in different studies. The DCT might typically consist of a situation followed by a space in which the responder needs to write down his/her response to those scenarios. One issue with more specific instructions, such as 'how would you apologise?', is that it is then unclear whether the respondent would spontaneously apologise in such a situation if not instructed to do so. Therefore, although in principle specifying the need for a certain speech act might fit the need of a given study, it might affect the findings (ibid.). In the above example, as Ogiermann (2018, p. 238) puts it, we can “produce findings on how people apologise in different languages but not whether they do or do not apologise in comparable situations.”
Given that the purpose of my study is to examine the hearer perception of combining apology strategies, I need to construct a close-ended DCT. That is, I need to establish a situation that would require an apology, in order to follow that situation by an apology combination that I aim to examine. Then, I would ask my participants to rate to how likely they would be to accept the apology in the given situations. See the example below:

**Situation:** You went to a bank to do some transactions. After you finished, you found a car parked behind yours. While you were waiting, you found out that the owner of that car is your boss.

He said: I’m sorry, it was an urgent matter, and I could not find a parking space, so I had to park behind someone’s car.

How likely would you be to accept the apology?

More likely – likely – neutral – less likely – more less likely

In constructing my DCT based on the scale-rating questionnaire, I was able to examine the perception of combining apology strategies, and hence examine my hypotheses of whether these combinations can function as upgrading or downgrading the apologetic force. I shall discuss my design in more detail in section (3.4.5.1.1). Below I shall discuss the specific techniques that are used in the quantitative part of this thesis and explains the justification for them as methods.
3.4.2.1 Questionnaires

One of the most versatile research techniques within the social sciences is the use of questionnaires. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009, p. 1) attributed this to the fact that “the essence of scientific research is trying to find answers to questions in a systematic manner”.

Brown (2001, p. 6) defines questionnaires as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers”. Thus, questionnaires enable a researcher to obtain data from participants by asking them questions and requiring them to provide, or choose among, answers (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). Brown (2001, p. 6) suggests that one advantage of using questionnaires is their potential to elicit “data on a large-scale basis”. Brown (2001) further distinguishes between self-administered questionnaires and group-administered questionnaires. The former involves a researcher sending out his/her questionnaires to be filled in by potential participants, whereas the latter involve a researcher distributing his/her questionnaires in the same time and place (ibid.). Brown (2001) suggests that group-administered questionnaires can help a researcher to avoid some issues related to the self-administered questionnaires, namely the possibility of having fewer respondents, as well as issues associated with the researcher’s absence, such as the impossibility of answering participants’ questions about the questionnaire and resolving ambiguities, or establishing the conditions under which participants fill out the questionnaire (ibid.).
Tests are considered similar to questionnaires in that they involve participants answering questions; however, the answers to test questions are pre-classified as either right or wrong, while the answers to questionnaires are not, their task being to pin down participants’ perspectives (Iwaniec, 2020). This explains why employing questions that do not suggest specific answers is categorised as a fundamental feature of a good questionnaire (Iwaniec, 2020).

There are three potential types of data that questionnaires can elicit: factual, behavioural, and attitudinal data (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). The factual data comprises the background data about the respondents such as race, age, educational level, profession, social and economic status, among others (ibid.). These data may be regarded as fundamental to the process of explicating the survey results (ibid.). The behavioural data concerns participants’ experiences such as their lifestyles, their past history, their actions, and so on (ibid.). The attitudinal data signifies the way in which people perceive things, including their ways of thinking such as their “attitudes, opinions, beliefs, interests, and values” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009, p. 5).

As for any method, the use of questionnaires has advantages and disadvantages. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) note that questionnaires cannot deeply investigate an issue since they require a simple structure that is easy to follow by responders. Questionnaire responders vary in their motivation to participate in answering, which might affect the quality of the results (ibid.). Furthermore, in responding to a questionnaire, participants might purposefully or accidently opt out of answering some
questions, and in some cases they may misunderstand the questions, which would lead to potentially misleading answers (ibid.). Despite these limitations, Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) note that questionnaires are more efficient and cost-effective to employ than other ethnographic methods. Iwaniec (2020) notes that this is particularly the case for online studies, which can be shared through social media and can target specific populations (e.g. speakers of a particular language). Online questionnaires are not only cheaper to administer but also admit straightforward data analysis via spreadsheets etc. Furthermore, they facilitate anonymous participation, which can be important: Iwaniec (2020) notes that many participants decline to give their email addresses when invited to participate in a prize draw, in order to maintain anonymity. Questionnaires also give participants the freedom to respond in their own time and in a place of their choosing.

The form of a questionnaire varies based on the purpose of the research. If the aim of the research is to examine perceptions, opinions, belief, or attitudes, closed-ended questionnaire items are ideal (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). Although the term closed-ended covers various kinds of questionnaire, what they have in common is asking participants to select among predetermined responses, whether or not their preferred options are among them (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009), closed-ended questionnaires are simple in the process of coding and tabulation which mitigates any potential rater subjectivity, hence they are categorised as “objective” items. Furthermore, another advantage of closed-ended questionnaires lies in the fact that they produce items that can be quantified numerically using a computer, and hence makes them convenient for statistical analysis (ibid.).
3.4.2.2 Web-based Survey

As has been mentioned, online questionnaires are one option that researchers might use to conduct their studies due to their accessibility and cost-effectiveness (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009; Iwani, 2020). In the past decade, many online survey platforms have emerged with numerous options and templates for many research purposes. These platforms have also teamed up with educational establishments to provide access to their employees and students. Furthermore, these platforms provide researchers with some tools that would help them transfer the data with one click to analytical software such as Excel and SPSS. In addition to these advantages, web-based questionnaires have become more important than ever given the outbreak of the COVID-19 and the social distancing measures that were implemented worldwide.

Web-based surveys are less costly than the traditional surveys (Dörnyei, 2007). They do not require administration in person, which facilitates the researchers’ task (ibid.). Online surveys also have a “high level of anonymity” which may result in participants responding more honestly and sincerely (Dörnyei, 2007), compared to in-person research which lacks anonymity, even though participants may be potentially identifiable due to technological limitations. Furthermore, using an online survey will facilitate recruiting heterogenous potential participants, or participants from a “small, scattered, or specialised population which would otherwise be difficult to reach” (ibid., p. 121).
Gosling et al. (2004) report a study to investigate the reliability of web-based studies, in which they compared a large internet sample (n=361,703) to traditional samples (n=510). Their investigation addresses six perceptions about web-based studies from the literature. The first perception that was examined is presented by Krantz & Dalal (2000) in which they assumed that the web-based sample lacks demographic diversity. Gosling et al. (2004) suggested that this notion “is driven by the widely held idea that the Web is dominated by rather narrow segment of the society, such as “techies” or “nerds”” (ibid., p. 94). Moreover, while Krantz & Dalal’s (2000) argument might have been realistic 20 years ago, it is not applicable now, especially in the post-COVID-19 era which has transformed the way in which people interact online, clearly resulting in more demographic diversity. Relatedly, the second perception was that of Kraut et al. (1998) who suggested that online samples have distinctive characteristics, related to a stereotype that internet users are socially isolated, maladjusted or depressed. The third perception was that of Azar (2000) who argued that, across presentation formats, the web-based data cannot be generalised. Basically, according to Gosling et al., the presentation of questionnaires in the Internet has different styles, hence there is a chance that the questionnaire presentation will not be the same for each participant i.e. “not every participant will see the exact same presentation of a questionnaire” (p. 100), hence Azar (2000) question the results of the online questionnaire and whether different formats would affect the results. The fourth perception, due to Buchanan (2000), was that the web-based samples lack motivation: that is, responders might not be serious when filling in the online survey, which then would affect the survey outcomes. The fifth perception was that of Skitka and Sargis (2005), who suggested that online surveys suffer from the anonymity of the responders, and their data might be subject to fabrication, e.g., repeated responses.
The sixth perception, again due to Krantz & Dalal (2000), was that the results of web-based samples are distinct from those obtained by traditional methods.

However, Gosling et al.’s (2004) study found that Dalal’s (2000) perception is not true and although the samples are not entirely representative, they are more diverse than the paper-and-pencil method. Gosling et al. (2004) also found that Kraut et al.’s (1998) perception is unsupported and there are no differences between internet users and offline users. Gosling et al.’s (2004) study further refutes Azar’s (2000) perception by noting that some studies (e.g., Srivastava et al., 2003) were able to replicate their findings using different online sampling formats, suggesting that the presentation format did not considerably impact “the nature or the quality of the results” (ibid, p. 100).

In response to Buchanan’s (2000) perception, Gosling et al. (2004) suggested that the concept of participants being less motivated to seriously take part in online surveys can be extended to offline surveys too. However, there are some steps and techniques that researchers can use to identify whether the online survey was affected by non-serious responses such as looking for nonresponsiveness signs such as “long strings of identical responses” (ibid., p. 100). Gosling et al. (2004) further suggested that Skitka and Sargis’s (2005) claim is baseless given that repeated responding can be prevented by following appropriate procedures in the survey administration. Finally, as regards Krantz & Dalal’s (2000) claim, Gosling et al. (2004) suggest that, although
more data are needed to refute this perception, data so far demonstrates that the findings of the internet samples are consistent with the traditional methods.

In summary, Gosling et al.’s (2004) study suggested that the data obtained from web-based settings are not different than those obtained by traditional methods. Furthermore, the web-based data are believed to be more diverse in terms of “gender, socioeconomic status, geographic region, and age” (Gosling et al, 2004, p. 93). Web-based findings are considered to be able to “generalise across presentation formats” (ibid, p. 93), and there is little evidence that fake responses or repeated responses substantively influence the findings of the web-based internet studies (ibid.).

Similar work has attempted to validate the use of online studies in empirical linguistics research. In particular, Sprouse (2011) examines the differences between the traditional laboratory method and a web-based version of syntactic acceptability judgements. Sprouse conducted two similar acceptability judgement experiments, one using a web-based service, and one in an offline laboratory experiment. Each experiment had 176 participants, making a total of 352. The results revealed that the online data were overall indistinguishable from those gathered in the laboratory setting, supporting the idea that web-based experiments can be safely used.

Although web-based surveys have clear advantages, they also have some drawbacks, as for any research tools. In particular, Gosling et al. (2004) note that the nature of
collecting data via internet involves the researchers having less control over the participants’ environment. Overall, Gosling et al. (2004) comment that their study does not suggest that web-based studies are better than the traditional methods, nor are they flawless. However, there is liberty inasmuch as researchers could choose whichever tool best suits their needs (ibid.).

3.4.2.3 Rating Scale

Questionnaires can take different forms based on the type of questions included in them, such as open-ended questionnaires or close-ended questionnaires. Open-ended questionnaires involve asking informants to write their own response to questions, whereas close-ended questionnaires require participants to choose between candidate answers provided (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009).

A well-known example of a close-ended questionnaire in social sciences is the use of a rating scale. A rating scale may be informally defined as "a closed-end question whose answer alternatives are graduated or organized to measure a continuous construct, such as an attitude, opinion, intention, perception or preference" (Peterson 2000, p. 61). Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009, p. 26) suggest that scale rating allows “the respondents to make an evaluative judgment of the target by marking one of a series of categories organized into a scale”. Rating scales are widely used within social sciences, with response ranges such as "good" to "bad", "frequent" to "rare", "very much" to "not at all", and "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", depending on the kind of target being studied (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009).
Roberts (1985 as cited in Weller & Romney, 1988) suggests that there are some limitations associated with rating scale questionnaires. One example would be response effects in which participants might have a preference to choose certain options on a scale, namely the first, the middle, and the last option. This might complicate the researcher’s task of comparing and contrasting between the respondent’s data. Roberts suggests that even apparent enhancements such as adding more points to the scale do not resolve this issue. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) add that, in a larger scale, respondents may provide unreliable responses due to the fact that they cannot clearly differentiate between different levels of agreement or disagreement.

Nevertheless, Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009) note that scale rating questionnaires are advantageous as they can be used to investigate anything, which has made them one of the most frequently used measurement procedures in the field of psychology. The simplicity of administration is also a factor in their popularity (Robert, 1985 as cited in Weller & Romney, 1988).

### 3.4.2.4 Likert Scale

One of the most common used rating scales in research is the Likert scale (Likert, 1932). The Likert scale is regarded as “extremely versatile and can be used to measure frequencies, likelihood, and importance” (Iwaniec, 2020, p. 330). A Likert scale comprises two segments: a statement that is under investigation, followed by
responses typically representing five categories from which informants choose, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Peterson, 2000; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). These response categories do not change when statements under investigation change (Peterson, 2000). A Likert scale can involve seven or even ten categories (Dawes, 2008). However, Krosnick (2010) suggested that Likert scale is often conducted using a 5-point scale, while semantic differential scale employs 7-point scale and equal-appearing interval methods are conducted using an 11-point scale.

3.4.3 Latin Square Design
In conducting the quantitative study in this thesis, the aim was to construct questionnaires in the most appropriate way for testing the hypotheses. One way to do that was by constructing a questionnaire that included 12 hypothetical situations, followed by four apology combinations, and to ask each participant to select the most appropriate apology combination for the scenario. However, from an analysis perspective, asking each participant to choose between different options might result in marginal preferences and strong preferences being treated equally, and make it difficult to determine which possibilities were and were not acceptable in a given scenario. Hence it would be preferable to ask participants to judge each apology combination in isolation, which suggests a different design, such as a Latin square.

In this subsection I discuss the Latin-square design and how it works.
Richardson (2018, p. 949) defines the Latin square design as “a grid or matrix containing the same number of rows and columns (k, say). The cell entries consist of a sequence of k symbols (for instance, the integers from 1 to k) inserted in such a way that each symbol occurs only once in each row and once in each column of the grid”. The concept of the Latin square design can be traced back to Fisher (1925) who employed it to control differences in soil fertility (Richardson, 2018; Rogers & Revesz, 2020). Kirk (2009) noted that the Latin square design is regarded as powerful compared to alternatives such as randomised block design, because the Latin square design can help isolate two nuisance variables whereas the randomised block design can isolate only one (a nuisance variable being “an unwanted variable that is typically correlated with the hypothesized independent variable within an experimental study but is typically of no interest to the researcher”; Salkind, 2010, p. 937). Rogers and Revesz (2020) suggested that if the experiment involves using more than one data collection tool, Latin square would be frequently employed, with the aim “to help control against test- and task-order effects” (ibid., pp. 137-138).

An example of a 3x3 Latin square design is shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A1</th>
<th>B3</th>
<th>C2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>A3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1 Latin square*
This design could be used to examine the perception of different strategies (1, 2, 3) as responses to different scenarios (A, B, C). If we divide our participants into three groups and expose each group to the strategy/scenario combinations of one column – that is, group 1 is given A1, B2, C3; group 2 will be given B3, C1, A2, and group 3 is given C2, B1, A3 – then each participant is exposed to each scenario once and each strategy once, and each strategy/scenario combination is experienced once in the experiment.

As with any experimental design, the Latin square design has advantages and disadvantages. The main strength of Latin square design lies in its ability to control over the effects of nuisance variables (Daily, 2017). Daily (2017) further points out that the analysis of Latin-square design can be straightforward if the design was conducted in a proper way. The simplicity lies in the fact that Latin-square design allow researchers to examine “one value per treatment in each column and each row, leading to a model that is orthogonal.” (ibid., p. 849).

Furthermore, the Latin square design may help researcher to obtain richer data in fewer tests by combining these factors. Daily (2017) highlights that if a researcher is examining a phenomenon that involves two factors with four levels and four levels of treatments, the total number of combinations that need to be tested will be 64; however, using Latin-square design will reduce the number of combinations to only 16.
A useful application of Latin-square design lies in studies involve different versions of tests (e.g. pre-test, post-test, and delayed test), or studies that aim to examine order effects between tasks or tests. Rogers and Revesz (2020, p. 139) note that one consequence of repeated-measures designs is the possibility of order effects: results might be partially influenced by “the order in which the different types of treatment conditions are administered rather than the difference in the conditions themselves.” For instance, results may improve due to increased task familiarity or worsen due to fatigue or boredom. The use of a Latin square design can “counterbalance the order of administration of various conditions across different participants or groups of participants in a within-subjects design” (Richardson, 2018, p. 95). For example, Lambert et al. (2017) examined the effects of task repetition on second language learner L2 oral fluency using a Latin square design. Participants were asked to take part in four tasks, three monologue tasks (instruction, narration, and opinion) and one involves opinion dialogue task. In order to avoid any effect that might happen due to the order of tasks, the researchers randomly divided their participants into four groups based on their level of proficiency and used the Latin square design to offset the order in which these tasks were performed, ensuring that each group completed their task in a different order than the others.

Despite the advantages of a Latin square design, there are also some limitations associated with its use. One of these disadvantages lies in the fact that the Latin square design must have equal number of rows (nuisance factor) and columns (treatments) which makes it unsuitable for studies that involve a large number of treatments (Daily, 2017; Kirk, 2009).
Latin-square design can be used with fewer treatments if the researchers assume that there are significant effects of more than one factor (Daily, 2017). This can be conducted by replicating the Latin square design, essentially treating each square as “an independent replication of the experiment” (Daily 2017, p. 848). For instance, a questionnaire based on a Latin square design can be implemented by having a different situation in each row and different treatments in each column, or vice versa. As will be discussed in section 3.4.5.1.1, the current study uses the rows to represent different scenarios and columns to represent different apology strategies for each scenario. The goal is for each participant to be exposed to one apology strategy or combination for each scenario. This will permit us to examine the participants’ perception of each of these apology strategies or combinations relevant to the scenarios under which these apologies were used.

3.4.4 Sampling and sample size
How to obtain participants, and how many to obtain, are questions that a researcher needs to consider before conducting his/her study. Gliner et al. (2017, p. 137) remark that “Sampling is the process of selecting part of a larger group of participants with the intent of generalizing from the sample (the smaller group) to the population (the larger group)”. In order for the results to be generalised to the entire population, the sample needs to be representative, and the sample size needs to be large enough to permit the generalisation to be made with a sufficient degree of statistical confidence.
There are two types of sampling procedures that are used in research: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Dörnyei, 2007; Gliner et al., 2017; Dewaele, 2018; Stockemer, 2019). Dörnyei (2007, p. 97) observes that the former “involves complex and expensive procedures that are usually well beyond the means of the applied linguists”. Stockemer (2019, p. 58) suggests that in many social settings, researchers are unable to “match the population characteristics in the sample”, and hence researchers often appeal to a random sampling technique which would help “to offset the confounding effects of known and unknown factors by randomly choosing cases” (ibid.). The randomisation aims to ensure that each member of the population has equal chances to be part of the selected sample (Stockemer 2019; Rooney & Evans, 2019).

However, Rooney and Evans (2019) indicate that such random sampling techniques are not common in the social sciences since researchers “are typically testing theories, not generalizing to entire populations” (ibid., p. 133). That is, in social sciences, researchers might conduct a study with as little as one participant (i.e. a case study), and even in a large sample size, their decision is usually driven by their perceptions of statistical confidence. Lucas (2003, p. 236) suggests that “When testing theories, all measures are indirect indicators of theoretical constructs, and no methodological procedures taken alone can produce external validity”. Lucas (2003) advocates for the importance of theory in determining the external validity in a given study as opposed to the conventional notion that certain methodological approaches uphold either high or low external validity. Lucas (2003) argues that generalisability depends on replication: “As a theory escapes falsification in multiple tests, we begin to have
confidence that the theory will hold in diverse situations.” (ibid., p. 247). Furthermore, he adds that there are five criteria that can be applied to a given study to assess its external validity which are “Do the measures of the study accurately reflect theoretical constructs, does the test meet the scope conditions of the theory, are we confident that the findings would hold if the study were repeated, do findings support the theory under test, and has the theory escaped falsification in diverse settings?” (ibid., p. 249). If and only if these questions are answered in the affirmative, research results can be generalised across settings and population, and hence the research has produced a contribution to general knowledge (ibid.)

In sum, using non-probability sampling techniques is common in social sciences research. However, Rooney and Evans (2019, p. 133) acknowledge that “random assignment of participants to groups is a very common procedure and is an important assumption of several statistical procedures”. Therefore, as will be discussed in section 3.4.5.1.3, although the current study employs non-probability sampling (a convenience sampling technique), participants were randomly assigned to each group.

Applied linguistics research typically uses non-probability sampling methods such as convenience sampling, purposive sampling, volunteer sampling, and snowball sampling (Stockemer, 2019; Dörnyei, 2007). Dörnyei (2007, p. 98) suggests that non-probability samples are “less-than-perfect compromises that reality forces upon the researcher”. Kemper, Stringfield, and Teddlie (2003, pp. 273–274, as quoted in
Dewaele (2018) highlight that “it is in sampling, perhaps more than anywhere else in research, that theory meets the hard realities of time and resources”.

Dornyei (2007) discusses three non-probability sampling methods, namely quota sampling, snowball sampling, and convenience sampling. Quota sampling involves starting off “with a sampling frame and then determin[ing] the main proportions of the subgroups defined by the parameters included in the frame. The actual sample, then, is selected in a way as to reflect these proportions, but within the weighted subgroups no random sampling is used but rather the researcher meets the quotes by selecting participants he/she can have access to.” (ibid., p. 98). Snowball sampling involves “a modification of convenience or accidental sampling that is used when the participants of interest are from a population that is rare or at least whose members are unknown to you. These might be persons with unusual attributes, beliefs, or behavior patterns and that do not belong to known groups with identifiable lists of members” (Gliner et al., 2017, p. 151). Convenience sampling involves recruiting people who are available or accessible to take part on a study (Stockemer, 2019).

Having discussed what types of sampling are available, we must consider the crucial question of how many participants are sufficient? Barkhuizen (2014) notes the importance of this question and how complicated the answer might be. He indicates that his answer to this question is always “Well, it depends” (p. 5). Barkhuizen (2014) notes that one participant is adequate if the aim is to examine a case study. But the required number might jump to in excess of 100 participants if the purpose of the study
is to examine certain language norms that require sequential trials to be implemented. Thus, Barkhuizen (2014, p. 5) suggests that “Choosing the most appropriate number of participants … requires finding the right balance between achieving the research goals, meeting the requirements of the relevant research methodological procedures, and managing constraints set by practical and human circumstances.”

Barkhuizen (2014) further suggests that there are some factors that researchers need to take into account while deciding how many participants they need. These factors are divided into two parts: factors that are not under the researchers’ control such as “the specific requirements of the research design and methods, the availability of the participants, constraints of time and human resources, and organizational structures within research sites, such as class size and timetabling” (Barkhuizen, 2014, p. 7), and factors that are in the hands of the researcher such as “determining the purposes and goals of the study, planning for and monitoring access to participants and research sites, and gauging feasibility in terms of scale of the project, time constraints, and one’s own research knowledge and skills” (Barkhuizen, 2014, p. 7).

Dörnyei (2007) tries to provide a numerical answer to this question by highlighting that the number of participants depends on the types of the procedures used in a research study. Dörnyei (2007) remarks that numerous scholars have suggested that, in quantitative research, at least 30 participants are needed in a correlational study while at least 15 participants are needed in a comparative and an experimental procedure; however, research that involves employing multivariate procedures needs 100
participants. Similarly, Rooney and Evans (2019) highlight that the sample size for quantitative research can be determined by looking at the power of the statistics used by the researcher: “parametric statistics such as the t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) have a great deal of power, but chi-square, a nonparametric procedure, has relatively low power” (ibid., p. 141). Thus, Rooney and Evans (2019) argue that a larger sample is needed when chi-square statistics are being used. Gliner et al. (2017, p. 153) demonstrate that sampling size differences “depend on differences in types of designs, measures, and statistical analyses, but they also seem to be based in good part on custom.” For example, usually nearly 1000 participants are typically recruited in national surveys, hundreds of participants in sociological and epidemiological studies, and 10 to 20 participants in each group in psychological and clinical experiments (ibid.).

Based on Gliner et al.’s point above, therefore, a researcher might need a large sample because he/she wants their sample to be representative of a large and diverse population (e.g., opinion polls for a national election). Alternatively, it may suffice to have a very small sample, for instance because a researcher assume that everyone responds in the same way to something (e.g., when a linguist relies on their introspective judgements of sentence acceptability, he/she can use a sample size that is as low as one). However, Dörnyei’s point is more about statistical power: in a multivariate analysis, a researcher is estimating a large number of parameters and then needs more data to power the analysis, and hence needs a larger sample. This is not the case in this thesis. Here I have aimed to recruit a minimum of 20 participants for each group based in part on the customs described above, and also because none
of the reasons connected with statistical analysis that would call for larger sample size are in effect here.

3.4.5 The First Study: Quantitative Approach
Based on the above discussion about the sampling size, the research tool, and design, the first empirical study in this thesis utilises a web-based close-ended questionnaire, namely a 5-point scale rating questionnaire. The study employs a Latin square design to examine the effectiveness of combining the illocutionary force indicating device (e.g., ‘I am sorry’) with one of Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) other apology strategies, i.e. an offer of repair, an explanation, an acknowledgement of responsibility, or a promise of forbearance. Below I shall discuss the methodology, specifically the design, the instrument, the population, the materials, the experimental procedure and the data analysis procedure.

3.4.5.1 Methodology
3.4.5.1.1 Design
In this experiment, as discussed in section 3.4.3, a Latin square design was employed. The following table illustrates how the stimuli are distributed across the groups (in the first half of the study; the second half involved offer of repair and promise of forbearance in place of explanation and acknowledgement of responsibility).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>IFID</td>
<td>IFID + explanation</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Recall that, by doing this, we ensure that each option obtains a rating on its own merits. We eliminate any potential effects of asking participants to rate more than one apology combination for the same situation, and consequently are able to get contrast effects and compare between different possibilities in the same scenario.

In this experiment, I construct my questionnaire based on close-ended DCT, namely scale rating questionnaire. I also constructed my apology items based on Latin-square design to ensure that each apology combination (or strategy) is examined on its own merit. This will allow me to have contrast effects and a possibility of different accounts associated for each situation. Furthermore, in constructing my questionnaire, I manipulate my situations to incorporate different contextual variables (Brown & Levinson, 1987) such as different social and power distance between the interlocutors, and different severity of offence. However, most of my situations were associated with severe offence given that low severity offences might lead people to accept an apology.
if a speaker merely says sorry. Below is a table (table 3) containing the situations and the distribution of the contextual factors associated with each situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Social Distance</th>
<th>Power distance</th>
<th>Severity of the offence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Boss parking a car) You went to a bank to do some transactions. After you finished, you found a car parked behind yours. While you were waiting, you found out that the owner of that car is your boss.</td>
<td>High Distance</td>
<td>S &gt; H</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(A friend leaving his friends) You have three best friends whom you meet every day. One day one of them decided to leave you as he/she thought that you might be holding him/her back from doing something in his/her life. After a while, he/she discovered that he/she could not live without you. So, he/she decided to return to your group.</td>
<td>Low Distance</td>
<td>S = H</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scenario</td>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>(Wrong letters) You come to your colleague’s office with a few typed letters he/she asked you to type. When you give them to him/her, he/she realises he/she has given you the wrong letters. (Reiter, 2000).</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>S &gt; H</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(Deleting files) Your friend took your computer to play online games. While he/she was playing, he/she pressed a button, and all of a sudden, he/she deleted some important files.</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>S = H</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(A student forgetting to return a book) Your student borrowed a book from you. Today is the day to return it, and while he/she was walking at the school, he/she ran into you and remembered that he/she did not bring it with him/her. (Reiter, 2000).</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>S &lt; H</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(Returning a book to a library) You are a librarian at a university. You sent an email to a student</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>S = H</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
recalling a borrowed item. The item must be returned within 2 days. However, the student returned it five days later.

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<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>(a car accident) Your colleague borrowed your car to do some errands downtown. On his/her way to give the car back, he/she had an accident. (Reiter, 2000).</td>
<td>Low distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>(Late Student) You are a professor at a university. One of your students arrived 30 minutes late.</td>
<td>High distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>(Breaking screen) You bought a new computer. Your new colleague at the office asked you to use it for a while. While he/she was serving the internet, he/she accidentally dropped it and damaged the screen (Reiter, 2000).</td>
<td>High Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>(Late employee) You agreed to cover for one of your employees at work while he/she is out to run a few errands downtown</td>
<td>High distance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
which he/she expected may take him/her an hour. After attending to an urgent matter, he/she returned and realised that he/she had been away for more than an hour and a half. (Reiter, 2000).

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td>(Postponing paperwork)</td>
<td>High distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You asked your secretary to finish work on some documents before he/she goes home. He/she thought that you did not want them soon, so he/she decided to do them early the following morning. The next day, you immediately asked him/her about them as you need them for a meeting.</td>
<td>S &lt; H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td>(Damaging a rare book)</td>
<td>Low Distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have a home library that contains some rare books which one of your friends is really interested in reading. So, he/she started borrowing some of these books and one day, while he/she was reading one of them, he/she</td>
<td>S = H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
accidentally spilt some 
coffee on it and ruined 
some pages.

| accidentally spilt some
coffee on it and ruined
some pages. |
| --- |

Table 3 Distribution of the contextual factors associated with each situation

As can be seen from table 3 above, although I took into consideration the contextual variables presented by Brown and Levinson’s (1987), namely the social and power distance between the interactants, and the degree of the imposition, the variables were not systematically varied. Apparently, I have six situations that involve equal power distance between the interlocutors but vary in their social distance and the severity of the offence. Situations 6 (Returning a book to a library) and 9 (Breaking screen) involve high social distance between the interlocutors, and high severity of the offence for situation 9 and low severity for situation 6. Situations 2 (A friend leaving his friends), 4 (Deleting files), 7 (Car accident), and 12 (Damaging a rare book) involve low distance between the interactants, and high severity of the offence. I intended to make the severity constant here because I assume having a low distance in relationship might lead to more tolerance should I use low severity.

Table 3 also shows that two situations involve upward power distance in which the apologiser is someone with power; however, they differ in their social distance with the hearer, and the severity of the offence. Situation 1 (Boss parking a car) involves a boss apologising to his employee outside the work environment: the interactants in this situation have high social distance, and the offence is severe. However, situation 3 (Wrong letters) involves a colleague with low social distance apologising to his
colleague for a mistake he made, the interactants in this situation have a power relation in which the apologiser has power\(^1\). The severity of the offence in this case is low. However, it is unclear how participants interpret this scenario, where the task of typing letters suggests one kind of power relation but the use of the word 'colleague' undermines that. Perhaps this is why the acknowledgement of responsibility combination was significantly accepted by the participants compared to the explanation combination. This suggests that the participants did not perceive the expected power relation, as otherwise, they might opt to accept all apology instances like in the boss situation (situation 1). Situation 1 (Boss parking a car) revealed no significant differences between groups and when I investigated how the participants treated it, I found out that they were leaning towards accepting the apology regardless of the apology strategy used, which suggests an awareness of the imbalance in power between the interactants.

Table 3 also exhibits that four situations (5 (A student forgetting to return a book), 8 (Late student), 10 (Late employee), and 11(Postponing paperwork)) involve downward power distance between the interlocutors i.e., the speaker has less power than the hearer. All the situations involve high social distance between the S and the H. But two situations involve low severity of the offence (e.g., situations 5 and 10), and two situations involve high severity of the offence (e.g., situations 8 and 12).

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\(^1\) This situation was classified by Reiter (2000) as having a power distance between the S and the H, perhaps under the assumption that it implies the power distance given the S asked his colleague to do some paperwork which indicates a hierarchy here. An example that might illustrate the point would be an interaction between a head of a department at a university with his fellow colleague. Although they have no social distance, the head of the department has a higher position.
As has been mentioned before, the aim of my research is to examine the perception of combining Cohen and Olshtain’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies (namely, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance, and an explanation) with an IFID (e.g., I am sorry). Thus, to examine them, there is a need to establish some responses to the above situations which encompass the apology combinations. To do that, while establishing my situations, I considered that there are some strategies that are considered context-independent such as explanations and responsibility expressions, and some that are context-specific such as an offer of repair and a promise of forbearance (Cohen and Olshtain, 1983). Therefore, I divided my overall DCT design into two parts consisting of 12 situations in total, one part (consisting of 6 situations) to examine the context-independent apology strategies, and one part (consisting of 6 situations) to examine the context-specific strategies. Given that I’m using a Latin square design to construct the questionnaire, I had to deal with the fact that equal number of columns and rows are needed. Thus, I decided to construct two Latin-squares for each part (i.e., for the context-dependent and for the context-independent strategies). Each Latin square consists of three situations, and three responses for each situation. In the case of the context-independent strategies, these responses encompass an explanation combination, a responsibility combination, and an IFID alone. In the case of the context-dependent strategies, the responses encompass an offer of repair combination, a promise of forbearance combination, and an IFID alone. I decided to add IFID alone (i.e., I’m sorry) as a potential response to each situation above to balance the Latin square requirement (i.e., to have equal number of columns and rows) as it was hard to ensure that each group is exposed to one combination while
the design required equal number of columns and rows. If I did not add an IFID as a potential response, I would have ended up using two similar combinations for the same situation which will obstruct my aim of ensuring that the participants are exposed to only one combination or strategy for each situation. Thus, there was a need to include the IFID alone to ensure that each group is exposed to an apology response that differs from that shown to the other groups.

Having done that, I had to deal with the apology items that I want to examine in each situation. In doing that, I decided to use the direct strategy for each apology strategy and avoid the indirect ones. Accordingly, as can be seen in table 4 below, I used the direct acknowledgement of responsibility “it is entirely my fault”. I added the adverb “entirely” to ensure that that the speaker is conveying his/her full responsibility, hence avoiding other interpretations (if there are any).

One issue that I encountered while constructing my questionnaire was finding situations that fit both the promise of forbearance and the offer of repair. Therefore, I opted to construct six situations, three which would fit the promise of forbearance, and three which would fit the offer of repair. Then I attempted to formulate suitable offers of repair for the situations designed for promises of forbearance (situations 8, 10 and 11) and vice versa (situations 7, 9 and 12). Specifically, for the latter three situations, I formulated promises of forbearance using the words "I promise to pay more attention next time". By doing that, I thought I might fix the issue of having apology with situations that might not fit them.
In formulating the apology items, I noted that the offer of repair could be couched in a situation-specific form or in a general form. While I was establishing the situations and the responses, I was leaning towards the notion that an offer of repair in its general form can be used in any situation, including situations that do not require materialistic compensation. For example, saying “I'll do anything to make it up for you” could be used in a situation that requires materialistic compensation such as situation 9 (breaking the screen) when the apologiser does not know how to compensate or can be used in a situation that does not require such compensation e.g., a student coming late might say “I'm sorry for being late; I will do anything to make it up”.

Therefore, while I was constructing the offer of repair responses, I used either general or specific forms of compensation depending on what I felt would be appropriate to the situation. For example, in situations 7 (Car accident), 9 (Beaking screen), 10 (Late employee), and 12 (Damaging a rare book), I used offer of repairs that are specific to the situation. However, in situations 8 (Late student) and 11 (Postponing paperwork), I used offer of repairs that are non-specific. For example, in situation 8, I used “I'm sorry for being late. I'll do anything to make it up” to placate the hearer while in situation 9, I used “I'm sorry I damaged your computer's screen: I'll buy you a new one”.

In formulating the promise of forbearance, I used the reported form in the literature “this won't happen again” (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984). However, I had to deal with the possibility that some situations - especially the ones that involve damages -
do not fit the use of the promise of forbearance. Therefore, I decided to change the form to be “I promise that I will pay more attention next time”. This aimed to capture the idea that the offended party might want to ensure that the offending party knows his/her mistake and would pay more attention in the future under the assumption that these damages were not on purpose. As per the other three situations that do not involve physical damages, I used the same forms reported by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) “I promise that won’t happen again”.

Another issue that I encountered while constructing the questionnaire was formulating the explanation combination. This is because the nature of explanation does not involve fixed formulations as they are constrained by the context under which they are used. Therefore, I decided to put myself in the shoes of the apologiser in these situations and ask myself what I would do as a native speaker in these situations. Then, I wrote down what I thought to be acceptable in these situations in Arabic, and then translated them into English. I did not consider the external or internal orientations of the explanations when I constructed my responses to the situations as this was something I did after I analysed my data and found out that the results of the explanation combination were equivocal (see chapter 4 and 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Apology Items/ Group 1</th>
<th>Apology Items/ Group 2</th>
<th>Apology Items/ Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I’m sorry, it was an urgent matter, and I could not find a parking space, so I had to park behind someone’s car.</td>
<td>I’m sorry.</td>
<td>I’m sorry; it is entirely my fault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I’m sorry.</td>
<td>I’m sorry: it’s entirely my fault.</td>
<td>I’m sorry, I thought that you are holding me back, but it turns out that you are holding me together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I’m sorry: it is entirely my fault.</td>
<td>I’m sorry but I might have given you the wrong letters.</td>
<td>I’m sorry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I’m sorry, but I don’t know how that happened; I might have accidentally pressed a button</td>
<td>I’m sorry.</td>
<td>I’m sorry; it is entirely my fault.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and deleted these files.</td>
<td>I'm sorry I did not bring the book today.</td>
<td>I'm sorry, it is totally my fault not to bring it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I'm sorry I did not bring the book today.</td>
<td>I'm sorry, it is totally my fault not to bring it.</td>
<td>I'm sorry, I forgot to bring the book today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I'm sorry for being late; it is entirely my fault.</td>
<td>I'm sorry, but I did not see your email until earlier today.</td>
<td>I'm sorry for being late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I'm sorry about that; let me pay for the damages.</td>
<td>I'm sorry.</td>
<td>I'm sorry, I promise to pay more attention next time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I'm sorry for being late.</td>
<td>I'm sorry I did not come on time: I promise that won't happen again.</td>
<td>I'm sorry for being late. I'll do anything to make it up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I'm sorry about that: I promise I'll pay more attention next time.</td>
<td>I'm sorry I damaged your computer’s screen: I'll buy you a new one.</td>
<td>I'm sorry.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After conducting and analysing the experiment, the quantitative results raised some questions about the effects of the explanation and the promise of forbearance combinations. This led me to conduct a follow-up qualitative study using focus group discussion. The results revealed that although the contextual factors influence people’s uptake of an apology, there are some other contextual factors that are rooted in the scenarios used in the experiment that might affect this. For example, one major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry for being late, I’ll stay longer hours today.</td>
<td>I’m sorry I did not come back on time.</td>
<td>I’m sorry about that I promise it won’t happen again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry I did not do it.</td>
<td>I’m sorry about that: I promise that won’t happen again.</td>
<td>I’m sorry: I did not do it, and I’m willing to accept any consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m sorry that some coffee was spilt on your book: I promise I’ll pay more attention next time.</td>
<td>I’m sorry I ruined your book: I know that this is a rare book but I’m willing to compensate you with some money.</td>
<td>I’m sorry that I spilt some coffee on your book.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4 Apology items*
theme that emerged from the qualitative data (see chapter 5) was the effects of the act itself (i.e., the act that is being apologised for). That is, a hearer might consider aspects related to the act itself in deciding whether to accept or reject an apology. For instance, in situation 11 (*Postponing paperwork*), the H might consider whether the meeting was important or not. The answer to that question would drive his/her decision to either accept or reject an apology.

Relatedly, the severity of the offence itself bears upon the acceptability of the apology, and the perception of this severity might differ between the speaker and the hearer. While the S here might classify the situation as severe from his/her perspective as the one who committed the offence and perhaps because the offence was towards someone with power, the H might need more information to ascertain whether the situation is severe or not. Although many of us might provide elaborate apologies when dealing with someone in power, the hearer might not see the offence as being as severe as we think. In situation 11, for example, the boss’s decision to accept or reject an apology might be influenced by whether the meeting was important or not. Similarly, in situation 4 (*Deleting files*), where the files were deleted, the H might be influenced by whether the files were important or not.

The observation that participants ask for more information about the severity of the offence raises questions about the ecological validity of the DCT method. In real life, of course, interactants are aware of this information when they apologise and respond to apologies. However, even so, the judgments rendered in the DCT give us novel
data on how people interact and what might affect them when they deal with apology in different situations. This clearly shows that there are more than the contextual factors reported by Brown and Levinson (1987) which might affect their decision to either accept or reject an apology.

Another factor that might influence the H in their uptake of an apology is the interpersonal context of knowledge that both interactants hold about each other. For example, in situation 8 (*Late student*), the hearer might consider whether a student is known as punctual or habitually late to decide whether to accept or reject his/her apology. Similarly, in situation 11 (*Postponing paperwork*), the hearer (the boss) might consider whether an employee is being known as negligent or not to decide to either accept or reject his/her apology. These two examples also support the idea that the H is not solely affected by Brown and Levinson’s (1987) contextual factors.

The results also revealed some limitations associated with the design that I implemented such as the use of some apology items with situations that do not fit them. I shall discuss that in more detail in section (6.4) in which I will highlight the limitations and what I would do if I had the chance to do the work again.

### 3.4.5.1.2 Instrument

Data were collected using three rating scale questionnaires. All the survey questions utilised a 5-point Likert scale. As discussed in section 3.4.2.3, since the aim of this experiment is to assess people’s judgements on how they might perceive certain
apology combinations based on certain scenarios, rating scale questionnaires seemed the appropriate instrument to be implemented in the study.

3.4.5.1.3 Population
As discussed in section 3.4.4, the current study uses a convenience sampling technique as it was deemed more accessible in terms of time and cost. Moreover, the current study aimed to recruit at least 20 participants for each of the three test groups. In fact, 99 students at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia were recruited for this study, and this cohort was divided into three groups, although these varied in size due to participants’ availability (n = 41 participants for the first group, 36 participants for the second group, and 22 participants for the third group). Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to recruit female participants due to the fact that in Saudi Arabia females and males attend university in different locations. Although the researchers attempted to recruit them, the turnout was very low (only 7 females have participated and in only one questionnaire while the other two questionnaires, we had no participants). Therefore, due to recruitment difficulties, the researcher decided to move on with only male participants.

3.4.5.1.4 Materials
Questionnaires were fielded online using Bristol Online Survey. Each questionnaire has the same scenarios with different apology strategy being exposed to each group. See the example below which includes the original Arabic version of the questionnaires and an English translation (see Appendix for the full version of all three questionnaires in both Arabic and English).
Table 5 Examples from the questionnaires

The target stimuli comprise 12 distinct scenarios, each of which involves different apologies. The apologies were presented in three different ways, depending on the experimental condition. For the first six situations, these involved an IFID (only), an IFID combined with an explanation, or an IFID combined with an acknowledgement of responsibility. For the remaining six situations, these involved an IFID (only), an IFID combined with an offer of repair, or combined with a promise of forbearance. Some of the 12 scenarios were adopted from Reiter’s (2000) with some changes (specifically, the agent and the patient) to fit the context (since Reiter’s (2000) situations were designed to elicit apologies), and some were developed by the researcher.
Table 6 List of the used Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Scenarios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You went to a bank to do some transactions. After you finished, you found a car parked behind yours. While you were waiting, you found out that the owner of that car is your boss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>You have three best friends whom you meet every day. One day one of them decided to leave you as he/she thought that you might be holding him/her back from doing something in his/her life. After a while, he/she discovered that he/she could not live without you. So, he/she decided to return to your group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You come to your colleague’s office with a few typed letters he/she asked you to type. When you give them to him/her, he/she realises he/she has given you the wrong letters. (Reiter, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Your friend took your computer to play online games. While he/she was playing, he/she pressed a button, and all of a sudden he/she deleted some important files.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Your student borrowed a book from you. Today is the day to return it, and while he/she was walking at the school, he/she ran into you and remembered that he/she did not bring it with him/her. (Reiter, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You are a librarian at a university. You sent an email to a student recalling a borrowed item. The item must be returned within 2 days. However, the student returned it five days later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Your colleague borrowed your car to do some errands downtown. On his/her way to give the car back, he/she had an accident. (Reiter, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>You are a professor at a university. One of your students arrived 30 minutes late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>You bought a new computer. Your new colleague at the office asked you to use it for a while. While he/she was surfing the internet, he/she accidentally dropped it and damaged the screen (Reiter, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>You agreed to cover for one of your employees at work while he/she is out to run a few errands downtown which he/she expected may take him/her an hour. After attending to an urgent matter, he/she returned and realised that he/she had been away for more than an hour and a half. (Reiter, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>You asked your secretary to finish work on some documents before he/she goes home. He/she thought that you did not want them soon, so he/she decided to do them early the following morning. The next day, you immediately asked him/her about them as you need them for a meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>You have a home library that contains some rare books which one of your friends is really interested in reading. So, he/she started borrowing some of these books and one day, while he/she was reading one of them, he/she accidentally spilt some coffee on it and ruined some pages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4.5.1.5 Procedure
Prior to commencing the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the PPLS ethics committee at the University of Edinburgh. When inviting the participants, the purpose of the research was clearly explained. The participants then were asked to rate the
acceptability of apology responses. In building the questionnaires, the researcher implemented some questions (see appendix 3) to ensure that participants are reading the situations. The questions were related to the nature of the scenarios and they were distributed throughout the questionnaires, in order to check whether the participants read the scenarios or just arbitrarily chose responses.

3.4.5.1.6 Data Analysis Procedure
The data were analysed using SPSS version 24. The statistical procedure followed the following steps:

- The data were entered in SPSS 24 version
- Descriptive data were generated for all variables.
- The data were analysed using a nonparametric Kruskal Wallis test, taking $p = 0.05$ as the threshold for significance, as this type of test is appropriate for comparing more than two groups in an omnibus analysis.
- Where significant differences were observed in the Kruskal-Wallis test, pairwise comparisons were performed to localise those differences, using the Games-Howell test, in order to allow for differences in sample size (Field, 2018, p. 716).

3.5 Phase Two: A Qualitative Approach

3.5.1 Introduction
In this phase, the aim is to scrutinise some emergent results from the quantitative study. As we will see in chapter four, the quantitative results raise some questions that suggest the need for a closer study of the situations examined in the experiment. For
example, the quantitative results suggested that combining an IFID (e.g., ‘I’m sorry’) with a promise of forbearance can be either an upgrading or downgrading device depending on the context. Specifically, it appears that when there is damage or the situation cannot be restored, the combination is more likely to be rejected; however, when the situation does not involve damages, the combination was more likely to be accepted. Moreover, with an IFID + an explanation combination, the results showed that such a combination was neither upgrading nor downgrading. However, analysis of each situation that uses the explanation combination suggested that this effect might depend upon whether the explanation was oriented towards an external or internal reason.

3.5.2 Research Questions

Research questions that could be asked in this phase, in the light of the findings from the quantitative study, include:

- How a combination of an IFID + an explanation is perceived by the hearer;
- How a combination of an IFID + a promise of forbearance is perceived by the hearer.

To address these questions, I used a qualitative approach, aiming to obtain explanations of the observations found in the first experiment, thus adopting an explanatory sequential design (in which the second study is designed to answer questions from the first study). The goal was to explore what contextual features contribute to the seemingly inconsistent upgrading/downgrading behaviour of certain
apology strategy combinations (namely, the explanation combination and the promise of forbearance combination). Specifically, based on the findings of the first study, I theorised that:

• An IFID + an external explanation is usually accepted;
• An IFID + an internal explanation is usually rejected;
• An IFID + a promise of forbearance is usually rejected in a situation which involves damages or severe offences that cannot be restored;
• An IFID + a promise of forbearance is usually accepted in a situation in which there is no damage.

3.5.3 Instrument

Having established the results we are trying to further illuminate, the next step was deciding how to conduct the study. One possibility was to employ a discourse analytic approach using naturally occurring corpus data: however, it is difficult to obtain a representative sample of apology instances, and it is also difficult to establish the mental states of the participants with confidence. Hence, after considering the available alternatives, I opted for focus group discussion. A major advantage of focus group discussion is that it allows us to interpret our quantitative results that was previously obtained. Furthermore, focus group discussion offers a friendly setting in which participants can be invited to discuss the matters freely in an interactive setting (Prior, 2018).
3.5.3.1 Focus Group Discussion

In the field of linguistics there might be a leaning towards the traditional positivistic mode of research, relying on quantitative analysis. For instance, Ho (2006) suggests that research in the field of language (in particular, in the language classroom) is mainly focused on quantitative approaches. However, some facets of linguistics need to be examined by means of qualitative data. AlGhazali (2014) suggests that using interviews (e.g. focus group discussion or interviews) in applied linguistics “helps to understand the beliefs and conceptions of language learners more clearly due to the many uncontrollable social variables that influence this process” (ibid., p. 6). Prior (2018) notes that focus group discussion was neglected in applied linguistics and it was only taken into consideration following Dörnyei’s (2007) suggestion that focus group discussion is “a specialised, group format, interviewing technique” (Prior, 2018, p. 235). In particular, Dörnyei (2007, p. 144) suggests that focus group discussion can provide “high-quality data as it can create a synergistic environment that results in a deep and insightful discussion”.

In the 1980s, focus group interviews were progressively used as a research methodology in different fields of social science (Prior, 2018; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In particular, social scientists borrowed and adopted some practices of focus group interviews from the marketing research and then modified them to fit their research purposes (Ho, 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Morgan (1996, p. 130) defines focus groups as “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher”. Brinkmann
and Kvale (2015) propose that, in a focus group, “the prime concern is to encourage a variety of viewpoints on the topic in focus for the group” (ibid., p. 175), rather than reaching an agreement among the group or providing a solution for a problem that is discussed. However, what is principally at stake is generating a discussion that would invite participants to present their different perspectives and experiences on a topic (Prior, 2018; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Furthermore, the focus group setting is more likely to be informal and non-directive (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The moderator in the focus group interview starts the discussion by introducing the topic and then invites participants to engage in the discussion (Prior, 2018; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Although the moderator is expected to be non-directive, he/she is active in facilitating the flow of the discussion by checking or clarifying some viewpoints and sometimes intervenes to keep the group discussion “focused” on the topic being discussed and to invite those who are shy to take part in the discussion (Prior, 2018, p. 235).

The focus group discussion is advantageous in terms of facilitating the researcher in obtaining an in-depth knowledge and understanding about a certain topic “over a short period from a large data sample” (Prior, 2018, p. 236). Bloor et al. (2001) suggests that focus group discussion is advantageous in terms of being inexpensive relative to the ethnographic approach. Furthermore, a focus group can be used as an additional and complementary method to other approaches: for instance, it can be used prior to piloting a study to help construct and design a survey, and it can correspondingly be
used as an interpretative tool to help in comprehending a survey’s findings, “to provide meaning to reports of attitudes or behaviour” (Bloor et al., 2001, p. 12).

Because they can elicit more detailed accounts of individuals' ideas and preferences, focus groups have been proposed as a way of obtaining explanations for quantitative data (Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). This enables us to fill in some of the gaps left by questionnaire-based research (Kitzinger, 1995; Bloor et al., 2001), as in the current study. Additionally, Liamputtong (2011) argues that a focus group may provide valuable information that might help researchers to determine why certain opinions are held by groups or individuals.

Kitzinger (1995) suggests that focus group discussion can draw attention to the interactions between participants which could be used to exhibit their attitudes, priorities, language, and their way of understanding. Furthermore, it helps them to pin down the group norms and cultural values, and helps participants to express their ideas and experiences which might not be possible in other approaches (ibid.). Kitzinger (1995) highlights that focus group discussion is more likely to be employed in studies that are concerned with attitudes and experiences.

Furthermore, focus group discussion can be used as a supporting method to communicate feedback of findings to research participants (Bloor et al., 2001). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) indicate that focus groups can also be advantageous in
exploratory studies “as the lively collective interaction may bring forth more spontaneous expressive and emotional views than in individual, often more cognitive, interviews” (ibid., p.176).

According to Prior (2018), another advantageous aspect of focus group discussion is that it can promote equality: it is less discriminatory to people with low literacy skills. It also promotes a group dynamic which encourages participants who are reluctant or unresponsive in one-on-one interview settings to engage in the discussion (ibid.).

Stewart et al. (2007) note that focus group discussion is regarded as the most common method for obtaining in-depth data about certain topics. It can be analysed using “a great deal of judgement and care” (ibid., p. 109). Although there are some uncertainties in employing this approach given its perceived subjectivity, it “can be as rigorous as…any other method” (ibid., p. 109). Focus group discussion can be either analysed in a simple descriptive narrative or in more detailed analyses, especially when researchers are interested in investigating the reasons behind participants’ opinions in depth (ibid., p. 110).

3.5.3.2 Changing the data collection approach due to COVID-19

Despite the advantages of conducting focus group discussion in person, sometimes problems may occur. In the course of this study, I had to deal with the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. During the beginning of the pandemic, many areas of academia
were influenced by the lockdown and social distancing measures, and in-person data collection was suspended in many universities. At that point, I was finalising my focus group discussion questions and preparing to apply for the ethics approval to proceed with my study. Hence, although I planned to conduct the focus group research in person, the Covid-19 pandemic made this impossible, and obliged me to consider alternatives. The obvious option was to pivot to an online focus group format, as this enabled me to make use of the knowledge I had already acquired and the materials I had developed. However, online focus groups have their own distinctive features, as discussed in the following subsection.

### 3.5.3.3 Online Focus Groups

In the past decades, focus group discussion took a new turn from face-to-face focus groups to a web-based approach to focus group discussion. Morgan and Lobe (2011) note that online focus groups can be conducted either in a synchronous or asynchronous ways. Morgan and Hoffman (2018, p. 257) distinguish these as follows: “Synchronous methods allow participants to join together at a pre-specified time for ‘real-time’ interaction using text-based chat rooms, instant messenger protocols, and videoconferencing. Asynchronous methods allow participants to log in and contribute at different times in text form”. Morgan and Lobe (2011) note that the in-person focus group is inherently synchronous. They demonstrate that online focus groups can be conducted in a synchronous format that allows participants to engage in a real time interaction via instant messenger and chat rooms.
Online focus groups have traditionally been considered more feasible for young participants who are keen to use the technology (Sullivan, 2012). Although online focus groups have been used in many studies, many of these studies were text-based focus groups (Kite & Phongsavan, 2017) which cannot replace the face-to-face focus groups given they lack the interactions between participants. Therefore, in order for technology to effectively substitute the in-person focus groups, there is a need for tools to recapture the atmosphere of the in-person group. Videoconferencing platforms might be considered ideal in this respect, but raise the question of whether they can provide data as rich as in-person focus groups.

Some studies have reported that videoconferencing focus groups have the potential to replace the in-person version for specific topics or populations. Sullivan (2012) suggested that one major advantage of the online videoconferencing focus group lies in its ability to connect researchers with potential participants from different geographical areas around the world. However, Sullivan (2012) suggested that the online version is not suitable for every purpose, for instance because it might pose accessibility issues with elderly populations.

Abraham et al. (2015) investigated the data richness between three types of focus group: two web-based focus groups, one text-only and one videoconferencing, and an offline face-to-face focus group. To examine the richness that each type would elicit, the researchers conducted two focus groups for each type. The results of a content analysis demonstrated that the videoconferencing focus groups produced data that
were similar in terms of richness to the face-to-face data, whereas the text-only focus group produced less data focused on the topic, as participants seemed to deviate from the discussion through small talk and socialising.

Moore et al. (2015) examined online focus groups in the field of social sciences. The researchers used a number of online and text-only focus groups from six different places in the UK in their research on the housing and financial welfare of young adults. The findings suggested that online focus groups can be beneficial in longitudinal studies that are conducted in different times and locations. Furthermore, their findings suggested that online focus groups can elicit rich data as their participants were able to discuss topics in a dynamic way in which they engaged in questioning, commenting, and providing different perceptions on each other’s comments or ideas.

Kite and Phongsavan (2017) noted that, although online focus groups had been used in health research, these had principally been text-based focus groups such as through emails or chatrooms, with their associated lack of interaction compared to face-to-face focus groups. They suggested that videoconferencing focus groups potentially might provide participants with a similar experience as that in the in-person focus groups. In their study, they recruited participants to take part in online focus groups using Blackboard Collaborate and in-person focus groups. Their findings suggested that online focus groups can substitute the in-person focus groups especially for those who are in remote or rural areas that are difficult to reach. Furthermore, they suggested that there were no differences between in-person and
online focus groups in terms of data quality and richness. However, they noted the possibility of technical issues in online focus groups which might require some precautionary steps to be taken by the researchers.

Likewise, Morgan and Hoffman (2018) indicate that online videoconferencing seems to be approximately similar to face-to-face focus groups in terms of the “look and feel”. Furthermore, the online focus groups have become more appropriate in terms of obtaining interactive data and the ability to obtain information due to the advances in technology which eroded the differences between them and the face-to-face focus groups (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2017). Flynn et al. (2018) suggested that the online focus group (i.e. videoconferencing) has no impact on the data quality and what participants have contributed. They argued that videoconferencing has provided them with rich qualitative data similar to that of face-to-face focus group with the online focus group outperforming the face-to-face ones in terms of being less time-consuming and less costly (ibid.). Furthermore, some researchers have described how online videoconferencing can facilitate obtaining data that reflects both verbal and non-verbal data which results in a rich data analysis (cf. Glassmeyer & Dibbs, 2012; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). Glassmeyer & Dibbs (2012, p. 296) highlighted that using an online videoconferencing tool (Elluminate Live) has allowed them to obtain rich data that contains “exchange of body language, facial expressions, and visual responses (e.g., nods, shrugs, and smiles)”, without the cost of travelling to obtain the data in an in-person focus group setting.
Although advocates for online focus groups do not deny the existence of some challenges associated with their utilisation, such as possible technical issues, Sullivan (2012) suggested that the advantages of using online tools such as Skype as a way to conduct an online focus group prevail over its drawbacks. He concluded that online focus groups can provide researchers with interactions that are similar to that in the in-person focus groups. Furthermore, Morgan and Hoffman (2018) suggested that, despite the drawbacks that could occur during the online videoconferencing focus group session such as loss of internet connection quality, the online environment can allow participants to see facial interactions, “add nuance and variability to their tone of voice, laugh ...[etc.]” in a way that was previously reserved for in-person interactions and not available in online text-only focus groups (ibid., p. 258).

Taken together, therefore, it seems that videoconferencing focus groups provide a promising resort for researchers who are interested in studying distributed or remote populations, reducing the time and the cost associated with conventional focus groups. Furthermore, in a time such as the outbreak of COVID-19, online platforms may significantly contribute to the sustainability of academic research: without them, researchers might be unable to conduct their studies due to the national lockdowns around the world and the suspension of in-person data collection in many academic establishments. The restrictions have led to the establishment of new norms for people to communicate in academia, business, and even in social life by relying on videoconferencing platforms e.g., Zoom, Teams, Google Meet, and many others.
Therefore, based on the above discussion, we can assume that online focus group has the potential to substitute for the traditional version, especially given the emergence of many suitable technological platforms for data collection in online focus groups. I believe we have entered a new era where online focus groups would be more appropriate, and more convenient both for researchers and for their participants.

3.5.4 Focus group size

Prior (2018) indicates that, for focus group discussion, the selection of participants adheres to predetermined criteria. Most focus groups comprise 6-12 participants (Dörnyei, 2007; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Prior 2018; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007). Stewart and Shamdasani (2007), and Morgan (1997) suggest that having fewer than 6 participants might generate a tedious discussion while a number exceeding 10-12 participants might pose challenges for moderators in terms of managing the discussion. Another issue associated with few participants is the risk of cancellation due to some participants not showing up (Bloor et al., 2001; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007) or recruiting shy participants who do not contribute to the discussion which might lead to the focus group resembling a question and answer session rather than a discussion (Bloor et al., 2001). Therefore, it is advisable to recruit slightly more participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007), and Morgan (1997) suggests that increasing the recruitment by 20% would be ideal to address cancellation risks.

In addition to the difficulty to managing the discussion, a large group might pose other challenges. Participants in a large group might have insufficient time to contribute
during the discussion (Bloor et al., 2001; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007). Furthermore, if some members of the group have a dominant personality, they might control the interaction, resulting in a small proportion of participants engaging in the discussion (Bloor et al., 2001). A large group size might additionally cause some issues when it comes to transcribing and analysing the data (Bloor et al., 2001).

On the other hand, Barbour (2007) argues that it is possible to run focus groups with as few as three or four participants, and that this might be better when dealing with some sensitive topics such as older people who suffer terminal illness. Bloor et al. (2001) report that small groups were effectively employed in research involving sensitive issues, and with elderly people and people with disabilities. In addition to that, Bloor et al. (2001, p. 35) suggest that a small group is a “more normal setting for discussion and allows sufficient time for considerable input from each group member” (ibid., p. 35). It is easier to recruit and host the participants and, more importantly, having a smaller group would give each participant an opportunity to engage in the discussion (Prior, 2018).

### 3.5.4.1 How many focus groups are enough?

There is no certain guidance on the sufficient number of focus groups for each study and it is dependent mainly on the nature of the research (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007; Barbour, 2007) such as making comparisons (Barbour, 2007). Furthermore, conducting a greater number of focus groups does not guarantee better results (Barbour, 2007). If addressing simple research questions in a homogeneous
population, one or two focus groups may be enough (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007; Barbour, 2007). In addition to that, fewer focus groups might be beneficial for researchers as it “may place the researcher on firmer ground in relation to making claims about the patterning of the data, since it would suggest that the differences observed are not just a feature of a one-off group, but are likely to be related to the different characteristics of participants reflected in selection” (Barbour, 2007, p. 60).

On the other hand, Guest et al. (2017) evaluated 62 textbooks that dealt with qualitative research and focus group discussion methodology. Their evaluation revealed that 42 books out of the 62 did not provide any instructions on the number of focus groups while most of them neglect discussing this topic. They found, however, that some authors suggested that the number of focus groups is subject to reaching the saturation point.

The question arises here is what does the notion of saturation mean? The concept of saturation was initially found on the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) on grounded theory (Saunders et al., 2018). They define it as follows:

Saturation means that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated. He goes out of his way to look for groups that stretch diversity of data as far as possible, just to make certain that saturation is based on the widest possible range of data on the category (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 61, as quoted in Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1894).
That is, achieving a sufficient sampling size is related to the process of developing “a theoretical category in the process of analysis” (Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1894).

Saunders et al. (2018) examined the concept of saturation in terms of how it was conceptualised in previous studies. Their investigation indicated that there are four types of saturation in the literature which have distinct core assumptions regarding the definition of saturation and what was being saturated. First, theoretical saturation, which refers to Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) usage in grounded theory research. It denotes developing theoretical categories related to the sampling phase (ibid.). Second, inductive thematic analysis, which refers to Urquhart’s (2013) and Given’s (2016) definitions of saturation in which they highlighted that saturation signifies the point where new data do not provide new codes and themes. Saunders et al. (2018) considered this definition as an attempt to set a new model of saturation point in which the focus is on the analysis phase rather than the data collection phase. They stated that “Whilst the focus remains at the level of analysis, the decision to be made appears to relate to the emergence of new codes or themes, rather than the degree of development of those already identified” (ibid., p. 1895). Third, a priori thematic analysis, which refers to Stark and Trinidad’s (2007) definition of saturation in which they suggested that theoretical saturation occurs “when the complete range of constructs that make up the theory is fully represented by the data” (Stark & Trinidad, 2007, p. 1375). Saunders et al. (2018) attributed this to an emergence of another model for saturation which orients its focus towards answering whether researchers have adequate data to illustrate a theory. Fourth, Saunders et al. (2018) demonstrated that there is another perspective of saturation which was found in qualitative approach
that does not involve grounded theory. This type of saturation is usually referred to as data saturation (e.g., Fusch & Ness 2015). This type of saturation is correspondent to the number of data (e.g. interviews) required for a study to have no new themes, ideas, and insights (Saunders et al., 2018). That is, it refers to the redundancy of the data (i.e. the new data are reflection of the previously obtained ones) (ibid.). Fusch and Ness (2015, p. 1409) suggest that “If one has reached the point of no new data, one has also most likely reached the point of no new themes; therefore, one has reached data saturation”.

Saunders et al. (2018) argued that saturation in qualitative research has different implications and different relevance to theory. For instance, in a deductive approach saturation denotes the extent in which the data sufficiently encompasses predetermined codes or themes (Saunders et al., 2018). In contrast, in an inductive approach, the notion of saturation refers to the point at which data do not generate new ideas, themes, or insights (Saunders et al., 2018).

O’Reilly and Parker (2013) observe that the concept of saturation is considered by many researchers in the literature as a determinant of research quality. In particular, O’Reilly and Parker (2013) suggest that many qualitative researchers refer to the notion of saturation to justify the adequacy of their sampling. However, different employments of the notion by researchers has led to some uncertainty about its meaning, its employment, and its applicability (ibid.). Furthermore, Caelli et al. (2003) suggest that the notion of saturation is rarely clarified by researchers since they
generally referred to it without an explication of its meaning “in the context of the study” (ibid., p. 6). Therefore, Caelli et al. (2003) advocate that saying ‘saturation was achieved’ is inadequate if researchers ignore clarifying what they mean by it. That is because “While saturation has a distinct theoretically embedded meaning in grounded theory, its ubiquitous and non-selective use risks rendering the term meaningless to the qualitative research community” (Caelli et al. 2003, p. 9).

Moreover, Francis et al. (2010) reviewed all published papers by a multidisciplinary journal for a 16-month period to evaluate what researchers meant by saturation. Their findings revealed that saturation was only found in 18 papers and only 15 of them clearly stated that data saturation was reached. Furthermore, their definitions of the notion of saturation were similar, in which they define it as “no new themes, findings, concepts or problems were evident in the data” (ibid., p. 1230). However, Francis et al. (2010) suggested that, despite the fact that saturation definitions were consistent across the papers, the papers did not clearly mention the decision process underlying reaching data saturation. Therefore, it is the researcher’s obligation to be transparent regarding saturation in terms of how they reach it, what issues they encounter, the reasons for their definition of the saturation point, and their purpose of using saturation given that saturation can be used to achieve different goals in various types of research (O’Reilly & Parker, 2013; Saunders et al., 2018; Aguinis and Solarino, 2019).

Similarly, Saunders et al. (2018) argue that qualitative researchers not only need to provide a clear account of how they reached saturation but also of how “saturation is
conceptualized and operationalized, including recognition of potential inconsistencies and contradictions in the use of the concept” (ibid., p. 1904). This could be achieved through the four saturation types they found and discussed earlier (ibid.). For them, a consistent use of saturation in terms of the relationship between “the theoretical position and the analytical framework adopted” (Saunders et al., 2018, p. 1905) would help ensure that saturation satisfies the objectives of the research (ibid.).

Returning to the specific question of how many focus group discussions (FGD) are sufficient for a study, Guest et al. (2017) reviewed the literature (textbooks and some articles) and discovered that the recommended number of FGDs ranged from 2 to 40. Moreover, their review exhibited that many articles suggested that for each ‘defining demographic characteristic’, two is the minimum number of FGDs needed. However, according to them, these recommendations have no empirical support.

To address this omission, Guest et al. (2017) conducted a study involving 40 FGDs (1 hour and 50 mins each), with six to eight participants in each FGD (a total of 310 participants). Their results suggested that the first three FGDs yielded almost 84% of the content codes, including the most common themes, and they reached the saturation point after 6 FGDs (defined here as 90% of content codes). Despite the interesting results that their study revealed, the authors suggested that their findings may not be true to “all contexts of FGD research” (Guest et al., 2017, p. 18), as there remain questions about the effects of the degree of the heterogeneity within focus
groups, the topics’ complexity, and the number of participants in each group on “the saturation rate and the nature of the data generated” (ibid., p. 18).

Taken into consideration what has been discussed above, the number of FGs cannot be determined arbitrarily; instead, it should be subject to reaching the saturation point. Reaching the saturation point is dependent on the nature of the study under investigation, e.g. whether it adopts a deductive or inductive approach. This is because, as discussed above, the role of theory has an influence on how saturation may be reached. In an inductive approach, saturation can be achieved when new codes or themes stop emerging. On the other hand, in a deductive approach, the saturation notion depends on the extent in which the collected data represent preidentified codes or themes. Therefore, researchers have an obligation to decide which saturation notion their research is employing and unequivocally articulate how the saturation was reached. It can even be argued that the number of FGs can only be determined after the processes of collecting and analysing the data are completed.

Drawing on the above discussion, therefore, this study aims to scrutinise some preconceptions that the researcher has previously observed, namely the contextual features that contribute to the seemingly inconsistent upgrading/downgrading behaviour of certain apology strategy combinations. Therefore, the saturation point is projected based on the extent in which the data obtained is echoing the preidentified codes. That does not indicate that the researchers will ignore any insights, or codes
that might emerge from the data which fall outside the preidentified notions. However, the researcher will include them where necessary.

3.5.5 Limitations

Like any other methods, focus group discussion raises some issues. Wells (1979 cited in Fern, 2001) summarised these as follows. First, the representativeness of focus group is questioned as a focus group usually consists of small number of participants and the selection is not by a probability method. Second, the questions are not asked in the same manner in each focus group. Third, there is a probability that one or more participants dominated the discussion while others might be left out. Fourth, the findings of the focus group research cannot be quantified. However, this is due to the qualitative research nature which does not involve quantifying the data (Fern, 2001). Fifth, there is a possibility of researcher bias as the analysis mainly relies on him/her. As Fern (2001, p. 122) put it, “Wells warns that considering the above problems, users of focus groups should weigh the risks of using focus groups for more rigorous investigation than hypothesis generation”.

Mann and Stewart (2000) claim that, although focus group has the advantage of its interactive nature, it may result in a discussion that is “disparate in focus and which produce only surface data” (ibid., p. 100). That is, not every focus group discussion necessarily yields deep discussion. However, the same argument could be applied to any research tool. Hence, researchers need to construct their questions, and manage their interventions, while moderating the focus group discussion in a way that would
pave the way to participants deeply discussing the matter under investigation. Another issue that must be addressed by researchers is conducting the focus group at a time and place that suits participants (Mann & Stewart, 2000). Liamputtong (2011) notes that a focus group may not be appropriate for some research purposes. For instance, if the research aims to establish an understanding of participants’ experience, a focus group does not get into the same depth as individual interviews (ibid.). Liamputtong (2011) adds that in some cases, focus groups lack data concerning personal information and experience: for instance, Hopkins (2007) reported that Muslims in his study discuss discrimination in individual interviews more than in focus groups.

Another challenge that focus groups may face is dealing with language and interculturality. Prior (2018, p. 240) suggests that these are critical problems “especially because they are constructive of and constructed by the interview interaction itself”. According to Prior (2018), having a match between interviewer and interviewees in terms of linguistic and cultural background may not necessarily result in participants feeling comfort and then providing full participation. Moreover, Prior (2018) suggests that there are personal characteristics that should be taken into consideration such as social class, sex, age, and ethnic background which may in certain ways “index (rightly or wrongly) various norms, beliefs, competences, and other assumptions that can influence how interactants relate to one another … even when they are from the same language background” (ibid., p. 240).
3.5.6 Constructing the focus group discussion questions

To conduct a focus group discussion, there is a need to construct an appropriate question set. One of the best examples on how to moderate the focus group is Krueger’s (1997) framework of developing questions. Krueger (1997) divides the FGD questions into five categories that begins with opening questions, and builds up the discussion through introductory and transitional questions, to reach the key questions, concluding with ending questions. Each type of question has a certain purpose, as shown in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>Participants get acquainted and feel connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory</td>
<td>Begins discussion of topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>Moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key</td>
<td>Obtains insight on areas of central concern in the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending</td>
<td>Helps researchers determine where to place emphasis and brings closure to the discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 7 Group Discussion Questions adopted from Krueger (1997, p. 22).*

By constructing the questions in that way, a researcher can avoid immediately jumping into the key questions, and instead push the participants’ discussion gradually towards those questions.
3.5.7 Data Analysis

3.5.7.1 Transcribing the data

The first step towards analysing the data obtained from the focus group discussion is transcribing the entire discussion. Then, the transcript can be used to further the analysis (Stewart et al., 2007). However, that transcript typically lacks the “nonverbal communication, gestures, behavioural responses”, the intonation, and the way the group members utter words which are all important aspects that can change the interpretation (Stewart et al., 2007, p.111). Therefore, having a transcript of the discussion together with observational data obtained during the discussion would be beneficial (Stewart et al., 2007).

Bloor et al. (2001) suggest that transcription is an important phase of analysis. Transcribing the data is a way in which analysts can familiarise themselves with the data even though the process is time-consuming and sometimes frustrating and boring (Braun & Clarke, 2006). By transcribing the data themselves, analysts have the opportunity to immerse themselves in their data before starting the process of coding, which may help them develop some ideas for their analysis (Bloor, et al., 2001). Similarly, Bird (2005, p. 227) argues that transcribing should be regard as “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology”. Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) suggest that the importance of transcribing the data does not lie in writing down verbatim what has been said, but the importance of transcribing is associated with the process of constructing the transcripts such as “listening and re-listening, viewing and re-viewing” (p. 82). Thus, Lapadat and Lindsay (1999, p. 82)
argue that “transcription facilitates the close attention and the interpretive thinking that is needed to make sense of the data”.

### 3.5.7.2 Analysis Approach

Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) suggest that, although focus group discussion has been widely used in social sciences, there is little discussion of how to analyse it. Bloor et al. (2001) suggest that various methods for qualitative analysis could be applied to the focus group data. For instance, the data could be analysed via a conversation analytical approach, via group dynamics, or via other approaches such as analytical induction or logical analysis (Bloor et al., 2001). In any event, it is important for the analysis to be systematic, thorough, and reflecting all cases in the data, and to avoid analysis which is inclusive only of the researchers’ agenda or the frequently mentioned topics (Bloor et al., 2001).

Another approach which is broadly employed to analyse qualitative data such as interview and focus group discussion is thematic analysis. A thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 6) as follows:

A method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

It is considered as a comprehensible, flexible way to analyse qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is relatedly regarded by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a foundational
method for qualitative analysis, and the first method that should be learned as it allows researchers to obtain core skills that would help them in carrying out other types of qualitative analysis. For these reasons, Braun and Clarke and other researchers (e.g., Nowell et al., 2017) advocate that thematic analysis can be used as a method on its own right rather than as a complementary tool used within an analytical approach such as grounded theory (the methods for which, according to Charmaz (2014, p. 1), “consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves” and which “begins with inductive data, invokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods, and keeps you interacting and involved with your data and emerging analysis” (ibid., p. 1).

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 10) further attempted to define what counts as a theme, noting that it “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set”. In thematic analysis, analysts are deemed to have a vital role in identifying themes/patterns which can be present in a larger or smaller amount of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To count as a theme, the pattern must exemplify important ideas that are related to the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Although the analytical induction (presented by Znaniecki, 1968) and logical analysis (presented by Williams, 1981a; 1981b; 1990) approaches are considered systematic approaches that can be adopted to the analysis of focus groups, the interactive nature
of the focus group data causes some issues for the systematic approach to analysis, because of the contradiction and incomplete speech that may emerge in the data (Bloor et al., 2001). The issues concern “how to interpret the uncertainty within the data that sometimes occurs in focus groups” (ibid., p. 71). Bloor et al. (2001) suggest that the answer for the issues lies in researchers’ efforts to avoid uncertainty in the data by piloting and conducting an initial analysis as well as removing any contradiction, unfinished speech, or analysis that contain unsolved fuzziness. By doing that, the impact of the issues arising within these approaches may reduce (ibid.).

However, employing these approaches is time-consuming and would be more beneficial for inductive studies in which researchers are conducting the focus groups to generate hypotheses. In contrast, in a study that aims to examine a pre-existing theory or hypotheses, using thematic analysis would be more appropriate due to its accessibility and flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This does not mean thematic analysis can only be used in a deductive analytical approach, but stresses the flexibility of thematic analysis for different purposes such as an inductive analytical approach or a theoretical analytical approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) demonstrate that there are some decisions analysts need to make which are fundamental to their thematic analysis approach. One of these decision is the types of themes: semantic, latent or a combination of them. Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 13) define a semantic theme as referring to “the themes [that] are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data and the analyst is not
looking for anything beyond what a participant has said or what has been written”. In contrast, the latent level involves dealing with the data beyond the surface level and is more concerned with “the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies - that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that there are two ways that analysts can use thematic analysis. The first is a rich thematic description of the whole data set which will help the readers to comprehend the important themes in the whole data. This means the themes, coding, and analysis should be a precise indication of the whole data set. This approach would be beneficial when participants’ opinions about a topic are vague or unknown and when examining an “under-researched area” (ibid., p. 11). The second is a detailed and nuanced description for a certain theme or a set of themes within the data. This involves analysing a certain question or an interesting area within the data.

Another distinction highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2006) is whether the process of identifying themes and patterns within the data is inductive or “bottom up” (e.g., Frith & Gleeson, 2004), or through a deductive or “top down” process (e.g., Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). Braun and Clarke (2006) define inductive analysis as “a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions” (ibid., p. 12), which implies that the analysis in this approach is data-driven. Conversely, a theoretical (deductive) thematic analysis
is more likely to be an analyst-driven approach motivated by the researchers’ theoretical or analytical interest in a particular area or a topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that, when using thematic analysis, the analysis can begin when researchers start noticing and looking for some patterns of meaning that are of interest to them in the data. The process might start in the data collection phase while the analysis ends in reporting the themes in the data where “themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs the investigators identify [sic] before, during, and after analysis” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 780 as quoted in Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that writing is an essential part of thematic analysis and, unlike in the quantitative approach, it begins at the first phase rather than at the end.

3.5.7.3 Different approaches towards thematic analysis

As has been mentioned above, thematic analysis is considered one of the approaches that a researcher could use to analyse his/her focus group data. However, thematic analysis itself comprises different approaches which differ in their theoretical and philosophical assumptions. Clarke et al. (2015) have presented a typology in which they claim that there are three types of thematic analysis (TA) in TA studies: coding reliability (e.g., Boyatzis 1998; Guest et al. 2012), reflexive TA (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013), and codebook TA (e.g. King & Brooks, 2018; Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). According to Braun and Clarke (2020), these approaches are distinguished as follows:

- ‘Coding reliability’ approach to TA: this approach orients towards the neopositivist paradigm which takes into consideration having an ‘objective’ and
‘unbiased’ coding. In order to achieve that, the research should utilise multiple coders and a predetermined codebook in an attempt to validate the accuracy and reliability of the coding, and hence the analysis process. Because this approach orients towards having predetermined themes that are either identified at an early stage or prior to the analysis, the nature of such an approach is usually deductive.

- ‘Codebook’ approach to TA: this approach shares the values of the constructivist paradigm; however, it has a coding frame which is not used to ensure reliability, but for facilitating the analysis process. Thus, the codebook is flexible and may be refined and improved inductively.

- ‘Reflexive’ approach to TA: this approach orients towards the values of the constructivist research paradigm and the importance of the researcher’s subjectivity as source for knowledge. Quality is not a requirement that researchers need to consider. Furthermore, the analysis process can be conducted deductively or inductively through interpretative reflexive process. Unlike the coding reliability approach, reflexive TA has no coding frame and the coding is “open and organic” (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 7). Ultimately, themes are generated from clustering codes that share the same meanings which represent the dataset.

It seems that the reflexive and Codebook TAs are not contradictory except for the latter being oriented towards a more pragmatic compromise. However, what seems to be different is the coding reliability approach. Braun and Clarke (2019) claim that coding reliability approach stems from the positivist paradigm which questions the subjectivity of the researchers and consider it as a threat to reliability, and hence
having a codebook that is agreed on by multiple coders would ensure the quality and reliability of the coding process. For them, unlike Boyatzis (1998), ‘bridging the divide’ between the qualitative and quantitative paradigms cannot be achieved without compromising the integrity of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

In their chapter, Clarke et al. (2015), discuss reflexive TA relative to the coding reliability approach. They differentiate between reflexive TA and other approaches using Kidder and Fine’s (1987a) concept of ‘big Q’ and ‘small q’ approaches. They suggest that their approach can be labelled as a ‘big Q’ approach to TA, which involves conducting qualitative research using the philosophical and theoretical assumptions underpinning the constructivist (qualitative) paradigm. Another feature of ‘big Q’ lies in the idea that it is impossible to obtain universal meaning because meanings are always related to the context in which they were produced. Furthermore, in the ‘big Q’ approach, the researcher’s role in the research process is not passive and his/her subjectivity poses no threat to the reliability, and hence needs no managing or control. Clarke et al. (2015, p. 223) note that they use the ‘Big Q’ approach to TA because they “advocate the use of an organic approach to coding and theme development, one that is informed by the unique standpoint of the researcher, and that is fluid, flexible and responsive to the researcher’s evolving engagement with their data”.

Clarke et al. (2015) contrast this view with the ‘small q’ approach, which refers to qualitative research that uses the philosophical and theoretical assumptions that are related to the (post)positivist paradigm. For Clarke et al. (2015), there are two main
reasons for the use of a ‘small q’ approach to TA, namely: 1) to transform the qualitative methods to the degree that would make them acceptable to quantitative researchers, 2) as Boyatzis (1998) puts it to ‘bridge the gap’ between the approaches used in qualitative and quantitative research. Clarke et al. (2015) suggest that the quantitative concept of reliability dominates the ‘small q’ approach to TA which involves creating a fixed predetermined ‘code book’ or a coding frame that can be applied to the data. Coding can be conducted via multiple independent coders who each code the data and then compare their coding for accuracy by calculating inter-rater reliability scores. Sufficiently high inter-rater reliability indicates that the data are reliably coded, hence the analysis is reliable (Clarke et al., 2015).

The advocates of the ‘big Q’ approach to TA assume that being concerned about coding accuracy is inherently problematic (Clarke et al., 2015). The issue lies in the assumption that the analysis can be found in the data and what is just needed for the analysis to became better is to have multiple researchers agreeing on the coding (ibid.). However, Clarke et al. (2015) suggest that having an agreement between multiple researchers on coding does not mean reliable and accurate coding, but it means those researchers share the same ability to code in a certain way.

Braun and Clarke (2020) further highlight that academic journals tend to treat TA as one approach, and particularly assume that Boyatzis’s (1998) concept of using TA to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative methods is applicable to all TA. For Braun and Clarke (2020), approaches such as reflexive TA must be examined and
evaluated on their own terms. Therefore, for them, the concept of coding reliability and avoiding bias is “illogical, incoherent, and ultimately meaningless in a qualitative paradigm and in reflexive TA, because meaning and knowledge are understood as situated and contextual, and researcher subjectivity is conceptualised as a resource for knowledge production, which inevitably sculpts the knowledge produced, rather than a must-be-contained threat to credibility” (Braun & Clarke, 2020, pp. 7-8).

Moreover, for Braun and Clarke (2020), the coding reliability quality markers cannot be applied to reflexive TA unless the researcher misunderstood the core concept of reflexive TA and the qualitative values underpinning the framework.

Braun and Clarke’s (2020) main concern lies with people claiming that they are using their approach without differentiating between these three approaches to TA. They highlight that studies employing ‘reliability coding’ go against their philosophical and theoretical assumptions, as highlighted above. Thus, they argue that researchers should clarify why they opted to use a codebook while claiming they are following Braun and Clarke’s approach.

Although Braun and Clarke’s argument is worth considering, there is room here for adjusting their thematic framework and including a codebook without violating the values of qualitative research. This can be done by establishing a codebook following openly coding the data, which would not violate the qualitative values or question the subjectivity or credibility of the researchers, but would rather ensure that fewer errors
have occurred during the coding process, and hence would result in enhancing the outcome of the coding process from a procedural perspective.

Taken as a whole, therefore, the discussion above suggests that TA is not a single homogeneous approach and there are various forms of TA which differ in whether and how they 'bridge the gap' between qualitative and quantitative methods. Additionally, there are profound theoretical disagreements among TA practitioners about whether 'bridging the gap' is a desirable thing to do. Braun and Clarke distinguish their approach from others which take TA to be a homogeneous concept.

### 3.5.7.4 Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework

This study will be analysed based on Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis framework. This is because their procedures are straightforward and clear to follow. Their procedures involve six stages, each of which represents a salient component of the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) presented guidance on how to do thematic analysis (step-by-step). However, they acknowledged that there are overlaps with some of the phases in other qualitative research methods. Their six-phase framework is highlighted in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Familiarising yourself with your data and identifying items of potential interest.</strong></td>
<td>Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generating initial codes.</strong></td>
<td>Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

| Generating initial themes. | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. |
| Generating initial themes. | Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. |

Reviewing potential themes.
Checking in the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic “map” of the analysis.

Defining and naming the themes.
Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

Producing a report.
The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Table 8 Thematic analysis phases (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 35).

3.5.8 Coding

One stage of the analysis of focus group data is the coding process. After collecting data and transcribing them, researchers are expected to analyse them based on the analytical approach that best satisfies the research purposes (e.g. content or thematic analysis). Codes can be defined as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language- based or visual data” (Saldana, 2016, p. 4). Coding involves interpreting the data based on the researchers’ vision of the world, i.e. the angle from which they view the phenomenon under scrutiny (ibid., p. 7). Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 190) consider the coding process as one “central to qualitative research” which “involves
making sense of the text collected from interviews, observations, and documents. Coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in a study, and then assigning a label to the code.”

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that, regardless of the amount of data, the preferable number of codes is 25-30 categories that can be shrunk to 5-6 themes. These themes can then be used to write the report. Elliott (2018) suggests that although some scholars seem to have a firm stance on the number of codes, the differences between them illustrate that their numbers may not be systematically selected. Elliott (2018) further explains her stance by comparing the number of codes reported by different scholars. Some suggest a range from 80-100 codes that can be reduced to 15-20 categories and then to 5-7 themes (Lichtman, 2013), some from 50-300 codes (Saldana, 2016), and some from 30-40 codes (MacQueen et al., 2009).

Another vital aspect of coding is the question of whether researchers can sketch a map of codes prior to data collection. Elliott (2018) suggests that the answer to such question depends on the research questions and the research design (i.e. epistemology). She adds there is a continuum from researchers generating preidentified codes to them analysing their data and allowing it to form the initial codes (ibid.). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that preidentified codes can cause an issue in the coding process. It may limit the coding process to these preidentified ideas and
ignore principal concepts that might emerge from the data. Therefore, researchers are advised to consider adding new emergent codes while analysing the data (ibid).

Drawing on Creswell and Poth’s (2018) suggestion, this study will use initial preidentified codes that I assumed the data from the focus group might reflect, based on the first study and the literature. The following diagram maps these initial codes.
3.5.9 Data validation and reliability

Qualitative researchers distinguish validation in their research from that in quantitative research. Golafshani (2003) suggests that qualitative researchers perceived the notions of validity and reliability in a different way than quantitative researchers. For example, qualitative researchers are more concerned with the notions of “credibility” and “transferability” which can support them in evaluating their data (Golafshani,
Credibility, according to Korstjens and Morse (2018), is a notion similar to internal validity and related to the truth of the findings. Transferability refers to the extent in which the findings can be transferred to other settings (ibid.).

Creswell (2016) indicates that validity in qualitative research refers to the accuracy or plausibility of the findings. Creswell and Miller (2000, cited in Creswell, 2016) suggest that the validity can be achieved through some validity lenses such as researchers, informants, and the audience, i.e. readers and reviewers. Creswell (2016) illustrates that these lenses have differences based on the philosophical assumptions the researchers hold. He suggests that validity is a mean of “establishing the accuracy of the account” (ibid., p. 410). For example, a postpositivist researcher is expected to employ a more systematic and rigorous approach such as “triangulation, member checking, and auditing” (ibid., p. 410). However, those who view the world from a constructivist angle are expected to employ an approach that is more likely to involve “disconfirming evidence, prolonged engagement, and thick, rich description” (Creswell, 2016, p. 410). Therefore, researchers’ view of validity may be the reason why validity is perceived differently by qualitative researchers (ibid.). This triggers Golafshani (2003) to suggest that the way in which researchers have perceived validity differently has led many of them to develop “their own concepts of validity and have often generated or adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as, quality, rigor and trustworthiness” (ibid., p. 602).
According to Creswell and Poth (2018), there are some strategies which researchers can employ to validate their data. Creswell and Poth (2018) divide these into three groups which represent the lenses through which the data are used: researchers’ lenses, participants’ lenses, and reviewers’ lenses (Creswell, 2016). Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend that, in order to ensure validation of the data, qualitative researchers are expected to employ a minimum of two strategies in any study. For example, from researchers’ perspectives, the validation of the qualitative account can be reached through triangulation in which researchers collect data from different sources to obtain corroborated findings (ibid.). From participants’ perspectives, researchers can employ what is called member checking to ensure the validity of their research account (ibid.). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), this can be achieved through communicating the findings with participants and asking them for their feedback to ensure the credibility of the research results and inferences. Finally, from readers’ standpoints, researchers can ask an external reviewer to review their data and research process, which is similar to the concept of “interrater reliability in qualitative research” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 263).

Reliability is a term correspondingly known in quantitative research. Shenton (2004) highlights that positivists have doubts in the concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research. This is due to the fact that validity and reliability are perceived differently in each paradigm (ibid.). Golafshani (2003) suggests that the notion of reliability is used not only in quantitative research, but also in all other types of research. However, although reliability is concerned with the quality of the research, the purpose of this concept in qualitative and quantitative research is different (ibid.). The quantitative side
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aims to use reliability to assess the quality of the research by means of providing an explanation while the qualitative side represents its quality by providing an understanding of a situation (Stenbacka, 2001, as cited in Golafshani, 2003). Moreover, Golafshani (2003) suggests that the different views of quality in both forms of research signify that reliability is a concept which relates exclusively to quantitative research and cannot apply to qualitative research. Stenbacka (2001) comments that “the concept of reliability is even misleading in qualitative research. If a qualitative study is discussed with reliability as a criterion, the consequence is rather that the study is no good” (ibid., p. 552 as quoted in Golafshani, 2003).

However, Silverman (2020) suggests that reliability can be addressed in qualitative research. Silverman (2020) further explains that his notion of high reliability is consistent with Seal’s (1999) notion of “low-inference descriptors”. This notion involves “recording observations in terms that are as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what people say, for example, rather than researchers’ reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow researchers’ personal perspectives to influence the reporting”. (ibid., p. 148, as quoted in Silverman, 2020).

Silverman (2020, p. 95) suggests that reliability can be achieved “by using standardised methods to write field notes and prepare transcripts”. In terms of interviews (including focus groups) and textual studies, reliability would be enhanced if the same data were analysed by different researchers (Silverman, 2020). Furthermore, according to Silverman (2020), low-inference descriptors can be obtained in the following way:
- Recording all interactions.
- Carefully transcribing these recordings according to the needs of reliable analysis (not handing the problem over to an audio-typist!).
- Presenting long extracts of data in the research report – including, at the very least, the question that provoked any answer (ibid., p. 93).

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that reliability can be reached through “intercoder agreement” which can be achieved by asking different researchers (or coders) to analyse the same set of transcript data. They suggested that the concept of reliability in qualitative research involves to what extent the same data sets are coded similarly across different coders. However, intercoder agreement lacks a comprehensive discussion in the literature which raises some questions regarding its procedures (ibid.). Thus, Creswell and Poth (2018) highlight that establishing what intercoder agreement entails is one of the key problems. Coders accordingly need to understand what they are attempting to do; are they seeking “agreement on code names, the coded passages, or the same passages coded the same way…on codes, themes, or both codes and themes” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 264).

Drawing on the previous discussion, the current study employs some strategies to enhance the validity and the trustworthiness of the study. First, the researcher was committed to write detailed information about each stage of the research, starting from generating the focus group questions to writing the report, including any issues encountered, in a research log. Second, I decided to create a codebook that includes semantic and latent codes, in which I defined latent codes that need to be clarified and
presented examples for each code. Then, I sent the codebook to my supervisors for their comments. Third, following Silverman’s (2020) suggestion for establishing low-inference descriptors, I recorded my entire focus group interviews, transcribed them verbatim, and presented long extracts in my report.2

3.5.10 The Second Study Methodology and Procedure

3.5.10.1 Instrument

The second phase of this thesis utilises online focus group discussion. The rationale for this is to allow participants to discuss the topic under investigation in a more informal setting. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, I had to opt to use the online setting to substitute the conventional FGD because of the lockdowns and suspensions of any forms of in-person data collection that were in place. Hence, data were collected using online focus group discussions via the Google Meet platform.

3.5.10.2 Procedure

Following the recommendations in the literature that advocate for the researcher to transparently show his/her procedures that he/she undertakes during the process of a qualitative study, I aim in this section to highlight the procedures that I undertook in my focus group study. I shall discuss each stage, namely: developing the focus group

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2 In the analysis, the researcher aimed to use a second coder, specifically a native speaker of Saudi Arabic who has expertise in conducting qualitative research. However, one major issue that I encountered was finding someone with expertise in conducting qualitative research. Unfortunately, I could not find a suitably qualified second coder. Therefore, I decided to widen my search to include any native speaker of Arabic who could follow the required procedures. Sadly, I was only able to locate one suitable candidate and he ultimately declined to take the work on. Consequently, I had to move on with my research without having a second coder.
questions, pilot-testing the questions, recruiting and data collection, transcribing the data, and finally analysing them.

3.5.10.2.1  **FGD Questions**
The focus group discussions were conducted using Krueger’s (1997) approach to developing questions. This involves categorising the questions under five categories: opening, introductory, transition, key, and ending questions. By employing such an approach to questioning during the focus group, I aimed to build up the conversation to the key questions, allowing participants to build their confidence and join in the conversation before discussing the questions under scrutiny. This also helped me get to know the participants in terms of their willingness to present their views, which helped in facilitating the discussion of the key questions.

Following Krueger’s (1997) approach, I developed and wrote the focus group questions in Arabic, which is the language used in the focus groups. Then, I translated them into English. I presented both versions to a native speaker of Saudi Arabic who has a good knowledge of English language to verify the accuracy of the translation. The English version was sent to my supervisors for feedback.

3.5.10.2.2  **Pilot-testing the Questions**
After discussing the questions with my supervisors, and in order to ensure the rigour of the current study, I aimed to validate the focus group questions in terms of their comprehensibility. Therefore, two interviews with native speakers of Saudi Arabic
were conducted. The decision to pilot-test the questions by means of interviews rather than focus groups was based on the lack of time and the anticipated difficulties in recruiting participants for focus groups due to their time-intensive nature.

Two interviews were conducted, approximately 30 minutes each. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo 12. NVivo provided limited functionality for dealing with Arabic, but I was able to work around this by initially coding the whole data under one code, and then highlighting the relevant parts from the coded data page.³

After collecting the data, the interviewees were asked to evaluate the questions in terms of clarity and comprehensiveness. Both agreed on the clarity of all questions except the first two introductory questions (related to describing a healthy relationship) which are introductory questions. The first interviewee suggested a refinement to the questions which was adopted for the second interview. However, the second participant noted that the questions are still vague. The vagueness of these introductory questions should not influence the quality of participants’ responses to the main questions as they do not address relevant topics for the current research. Nevertheless, they could be amended to transform them into less general questions to facilitate participants’ perceptions.

³ I considered MaxQda as an alternative option which is regarded by many authors as providing better support for Arabic. However, this was not available under a University licence.
Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) guidance on how to conduct a thematic analysis, I analysed the data on the basis of six main stages: familiarising myself with the data, generating codes, generating initial themes, reviewing them and generating final themes, naming and defining the final themes that represent the data set, and producing the report.

The dataset revealed that the focus group questions were comprehensible. Overall, the transcripts of the two interviews yielded a substantial amount of data that provided answers to our research questions and provided some insights about the act of apologising. The results of the pilot test prompted me to change several factors: firstly, to pay more attention to my involvement in the discussion; secondly, to locate the point where I needed to intervene to push participants to elaborate on their opinions; thirdly, to add some follow-up questions that would yield richer data.

3.5.10.2.3 Recruiting and Data Collection
After pilot-testing the focus group questions, I began to recruit potential participants. I circulated an announcement asking for volunteers to take part in my study. However, only two out of 590 members of the Telegram group I contacted, for Saudi students in the UK, were willing to participate, perhaps given the time-consuming nature of the study. I then contacted professors at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia to circulate my announcement among their students via WhatsApp groups, in which I highlighted that there would be gift cards as incentives. This resulted in better recruitment: ultimately 10 participants who are native speakers of Saudi Arabic were recruited. They were all college students.
The participants were divided into three groups, two of three and one of four participants. The members of each group were invited to a WhatsApp group to negotiate the time that best suited them. To avoid cancelling any scheduled focus group, I had backup participants to cover for absentees. The decision to have back up participants was made because I initially had to cancel one focus group as I only had two participants.

Prior to conducting the focus groups, I explained to the participants how the focus group would be held, their rights to withdraw at any time, and asked them to read and sign the consent form. Furthermore, participants were invited to ask any questions they might wish to ask before proceeding to the focus group.

Across the three focus groups, a total of approximately five hours of discussions were recorded, as shown in table 6 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Focus group</td>
<td>3 participants</td>
<td>1:23:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Focus group</td>
<td>3 participants</td>
<td>1:31:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Focus group</td>
<td>4 participants</td>
<td>2:06:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 9 Time spent for each focus group*
3.5.10.2.4  Transcribing the Data  
After conducting the focus groups and recording them, the next step was transcribing the results. I used Nvivo 12 to transcribe the data. I first listened to the recordings more than once, then I transcribed each focus group verbatim. The transcription yielded a total of approximately 80 pages of data.

After transcribing the data, I reviewed the recordings for each focus group to verify the accuracy of my transcriptions, amending the transcriptions where necessary. I then reviewed the transcriptions again in order to proceed to the analysis stage with confidence.

3.5.10.2.5  Analysis  
The data were analysed following Braun and Clark’s (2006) thematic analysis framework. Their framework encompasses six stages: familiarising yourself with the data, generating codes, generating initial themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report. I proceeded by creating a codebook that contains all the semantic and latent codes (defining the latent codes) with quotations from the data for each code. I then discussed this with my supervisors in order to identify any issues that might occur during the coding process.

This method of thematic analysis allows researchers to conduct their analysis with more confidence, due to the iterative process by which a researcher arrives at the final themes, e.g., listening and re-listening to the recordings before and after transcribing them, reading and re-reading the data before coding them, and coding them in
different stages from initial codes to final codes and from initial themes to final themes. By doing this, the researchers can reduce any potential procedural errors that might occur while coding and analysing the data.

### 3.6 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology and procedures followed in this thesis. I also discussed the research design, and the qualitative and quantitative tools used in the research. I highlighted the strengths and limitations of the research instruments, and I concluded by presenting the procedures for each study (i.e. quantitative and qualitative). In the following chapter (chapter 4), we will look at the first study of this thesis which involves examining our hypotheses using a quantitative approach.
4 Chapter Four: Experiment: Acceptability of Apology Strategy Combinations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the quantitative part of this thesis as discussed in chapter 3. Particularly, the chapter will examine the hypotheses that combining Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies with an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) may function as upgrading or downgrading the apologetic force. In section 4.2, we discuss the research hypotheses. In section 4.3, the research methodology and procedures will be highlighted. In section 4.4, the results will be presented, followed by a discussion in section 4.5.

4.2 Hypotheses

The speech act of apologising is a topic that has been widely examined by many researchers in the field (e.g., Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, 1989; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Trosborg, 1987, 2011; Garcia 1989; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989; Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989; Cordella, 1990; Mir, 1992; Sugimoto, 1997; Reiter, 2000; Okumura & Wei, 2000; Hou, 2006; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006, 2008; Nureddeen, 2008; Al-Zumor, 2011; Banikalef et al., 2015; Qari, 2019; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021). There have been many studies that have dealt with apology from different perspectives in the literature, but what is not yet clear is the impact of combining apology strategies on hearers’ perception of an apology. Therefore, in this experiment, we are attempting to
evaluate the effectiveness of combining apology strategies from the hearers’ viewpoint.

Specifically, the current experiment examines the effectiveness of combining one of the apology strategies presented by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) with an IFID. In the cases of offer of repair, promise of forbearance, and acknowledgement of responsibility, we conjecture that these tend to upgrade the apology on the basis that these strategies enhance the apologetic force, as discussed in chapter 2. In the case of explanation, we conjecture that this tends to downgrade the apology, on the basis that explanation intrinsically runs counter to apology, as discussed in chapter 2.

Thus, we test the following hypotheses, which are based on the literature reviewed in chapter 2:

5. A speaker is usually perceived to be downgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an explanation.

6. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an expression of acknowledgement of responsibility.

7. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an offer of repair.
8. A speaker is usually perceived to be upgrading an apology by combining an IFID with an expression of a promise of forbearance.

By addressing these hypotheses, we aim to understand whether the combination has an impact upon people’s acceptance of an apology. In the current study, we evaluate the effectiveness of apology combinations by asking participants whether they would accept the apologies in specific contexts. Therefore, by conducting the current study, we aim to bridge a gap that exists in the literature in which the study would shed some light on understanding the concept of apology from the hearer’s perspective.

4.3 Methodology and Procedure

In this experiment, as discussed in chapter 3, a Latin square design was employed to construct the experiment questionnaires. Data were collected using three rating scale questionnaires that were built using closed-ended DCTs. All the survey questions utilised a 5-point Likert scale. 99 students at Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia were recruited for this study. The cohort was divided into three groups according to the aim of the study. Questionnaires were completed online using Bristol Online Survey. Due to participant availability, the groups differed in size (n=41, n=36 and n=22 respectively). Each questionnaire had the same scenarios with different apology strategies being exposed to each group.
The target stimuli comprise 12 distinct scenarios, each of which involves different apologies. For the first six scenarios, apologies were presented in three different ways, depending on the experimental condition: an IFID (only), an IFID combined with an explanation, or an IFID combined with an acknowledgement of responsibility. For the remaining situations, apologies were presented again in three ways: an IFID (only), an IFID combined with an offer of repair, or an IFID combined with a promise of forbearance. Some of the 12 scenarios were adapted from Reiter (2000) with changes (specifically, the agent and the patient) to fit the context, since Reiter’s (2000) situations were set up to elicit apologies, and some were developed by the researcher.

Before conducting the study, ethical approval was obtained for the PPLS ethics committee at the University of Edinburgh. Before taking part in the study, participants were informed about the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the researcher implemented some questions in the questionnaires to ensure that participants had read the scenarios (see appendix 3). The questions were related to the nature of the scenarios, and they were distributed throughout the questionnaires.

The data were statistically analysed using SPSS version 24. \( p = 0.05 \) was taken as the threshold for statistical significance. The data were initially analysed using a nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test as this is appropriate for comparing three groups or more, with follow-up pairwise comparisons to locate these differences within each scenario. For the pairwise comparisons, I followed Field’s (2018) guidance to use the
Games-Howell test, noting that “Games-Howell is also accurate when sample sizes are unequal” (ibid., p. 718).

4.4 Results

The experiment was carried out to examine the effectiveness of combining apology strategies on hearer’s perceptions of them, which were assessed by their rating of the potential acceptability of certain apologies in the tested scenarios. A nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out for each situation to test whether there are any significant differences between different apology strategies. The results revealed that there were significant differences in most situations, specifically the following: situation 3 (Wrong letters), \(F(2,96 = 5.286, p = 0.011)\), situation 5 (A student forgetting to return a book), \(F(2,96) = 7.058, p < 0.001\), situation 6 (Returning a book to a library), \(F(2,96) = 3.524, p = .038\), situation 7 (Car accident), \(F(2,96) = 12.536, p < .001\), situation 8 (Late Student), \(F(2,96) = 12.536, p < .001\), situation 9 (Breaking screen), \(F(2,96) = 12.536, p < .001\), situation 10 (Late employee), \(F(2,96) = 12.536, p < .004\), and situation 12 (Damaging a rare book), \(F(2,96) = 12.536, p < .042\). No significant differences were observed in situations 1 (Boss parking a car), 2 (A friend leaving his friends), 4 (Deleting files) and 11 (Postponing paperwork).

In order to localise the significant differences, pairwise follow-up comparisons were performed using the Games-Howell test.
In situation 3 (Wrong letters), Games-Howell analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between group 1 (an IFID + an acknowledgment of responsibility: \textit{I am sorry: it is entirely my fault.}) and group 2 (an IFID + an explanation: \textit{I am sorry, but I might have given you the wrong letters.}), $p = 0.015$. However, no significant difference was found between group 1 and group 3 (an IFID alone: \textit{I am sorry.}) ($p = 0.061$), or between group 2 and group 3 ($p = .996$). Overall, the results suggested that there is a general preference among participants for the IFID + an acknowledgement of responsibility combination over an IFID + an explanation combination.

Likewise, in situation 5 (A student forgetting to return a book), Games-Howell analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between group 1 (an IFID: \textit{I am sorry I did not bring the book today.}) and group 2 (an IFID + an acknowledgment of responsibility: \textit{I am sorry, it is totally my fault not to bring it.}) $p = .001$. That is, an IFID + an acknowledgement of responsibility was strongly preferred by participants to an IFID on its own. No significant difference was observed between group 2 and group 3 (an IFID + an explanation: \textit{I am sorry, I forgot to bring the book today.}); $p = .259$, or between group 1 and group 3 ($p = .305$).

In situation 6 (Returning a book to a library), Games-Howell analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between group 1 (an IFID + an acknowledgment of responsibility: \textit{I am sorry for being late; it is entirely my fault.}) and group 2 (an IFID + an explanation: \textit{I am sorry, but I did not see your email until earlier today.}); $p = .021$. That is, an IFID + an acknowledgement of responsibility was preferred by participants
to an IFID + an explanation. However, no significant difference was observed between

group 1 and group 3 (an IFID: *I am sorry for being late.*); \( p = .268 \), or group 2 and
group 3; \( p = .915 \).

In the 7th situation (*Car accident*), Games-Howell analysis revealed that there is a

significant difference between group 1 (an IFID + an offer of repair: *I am sorry about
that; let me pay for the damages.*) and group 2 (an IFID alone: *I am sorry.*) \( p = .000 \).

Furthermore, there is a significant difference between group 1 and group 3 (an IFID +
a promise of forbearance: *I am sorry, I promise to pay more attention next time.*) \( p =
.001 \). That is, an IFID + an offer of repair combination was strongly preferred to both
an IFID alone or an IFID + a promise of forbearance combination. Conversely, no
significant differences were found between group 2 and group 3; \( p = .943 \).

In the 8th situation (*Late student*), Games-Howell analysis disclosed that there is a

significant difference between group 1 (an IFID: *I am sorry for being late.*) and group
2 (an IFID + a promise of forbearance: *I am sorry I did not come on time: I promise
that won't happen again.*); \( p=.001 \). That is, participants preferred an IFID + a promise
of forbearance combination to an IFID alone. Additionally, there is a significant
difference between group 1 and group 3 (an IFID + an offer of repair: *I am sorry for
being late. I'll do anything to make it up.*); \( p = .000 \) in which an IFID + an offer of repair
combination was preferred by participants to an IFID alone. Furthermore, a significant
difference between group 2 and group 3 was found; \( p = .042 \) which indicates that an
IFID + an offer of repair was also preferred by participants to an IFID + a promise of forbearance.

In the ninth situation (Breaking screen), Games-Howell analysis showed that there is a significant difference between group 1 (an IFID + a promise of forbearance: I am sorry about that: I promise I’ll pay more attention next time.) and group 2 (an IFID + an offer of repair: I am sorry I damaged your computer’s screen: I’ll buy you a new one.); p = .000. Additionally, a significant difference between group 2 and group 3 (an IFID alone: I am sorry.) was reported; p = .000. This indicates the supremacy of an IFID + an offer of repair over both an IFID alone or an IFID + a promise of forbearance combination. Conversely, no significant difference was reported between group 1 and group 3; p = .214.

In the tenth situation (Late employee), Games-Howell analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between group 1 (an IFID + an offer of repair: I am sorry for being late, I’ll stay longer hours today.) and group 2 (an IFID alone: I am sorry I did not come back on time.); p = .001, which signifies that an IFID + an offer of repair was significantly preferred by participants to an IFID alone. On the other hand, no significant differences were found between group 1 and group 3 (an IFID + a promise of forbearance: I am sorry about that I promise it won’t happen again.); p = .357, or between group 2 and group 3; p = .569.
In the 12th situation (Damaging a rare book), Games-Howell analysis revealed that there is a significant difference between group 1 (an IFID + a promise of forbearance: I am sorry that some coffee was spilt on your book: I promise I'll pay more attention next time.) and group 2 (an IFID + an offer of repair: I am sorry I ruined your book: I know that this is a rare book but I'm willing to compensate you with some money.); p = .023. which indicates that an IFID + an offer of repair combination was favoured by participants over an IFID + a promise of forbearance combination. In contrast, no significant differences were found between group 1 and group 3 (an IFID alone: I am sorry that I spilt some coffee on your book.); p = .521, or between group 2 and group 3; p = .470.

4.5 Discussion

In this section, I will discuss the results of this experiment. The discussion will be divided into three subsections. The first will discuss the results of the first six scenarios together with a general discussion about the results of the IFID, the second section will discuss the other six scenarios, and the last subsection will be devoted to some emerging questions that need to be further explored.

4.5.1 IFID, the responsibility combination, and the explanation combination

The experiment examined the perception of combining apology strategies from hearers' standpoints. Specifically, we examined the hypotheses that an offer of repair
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combination (IFID + an offer of repair), an acknowledgement of responsibility combination (IFID + acknowledgement of responsibility), or a promise of forbearance combination (IFID + a promise of forbearance) may function as upgrading devices. That is, whenever a speaker uses them to placate the offended party, they may result in enhancing the apology’s acceptability level, and hence enhance the perlocutionary effect. Furthermore, we hypothesised that an explanation combination (IFID + an explanation) may function as a downgrading device. This means using it may mitigate the apology’s acceptability level, and hence would reduce the perlocutionary effect.

The results of the first six scenarios (1-6) showed that there was a general preference for the acknowledgement of responsibility combination over both an explanation combination or an IFID. That is, the participants were inclined to accept this combination more than the other combination or strategy, to a statistically significant extent. In almost all situations the responsibility combination was considered by participants as more acceptable. The only situation where the responsibility combination was deemed unacceptable by participants was the fourth situation (Deleting files). However, there was no significant differences between the groups in this situation since this apology was highly rejected regardless of the combinations or strategy used. This is perhaps due to the participants’ perception of the situation as severe, and hence they might opt to reject the apology as they might judge the situation as inexcusable. Given the situation involves deleting important files, the restoration of the situation before the error might be difficult if not impossible.
A more surprising finding concerns the results of the IFIDs. They were rated as an acceptable move to placate the offended party in most situations when compared with an explanation combination. However, the explanation combination noticeably outperformed the IFID in only one situation (situation 5: *A student forgetting to return a book*). In this situation, a student borrowed a book from his teacher and forgot to return it, which means an explanation might be expected in this situation. Hence this might explicate why the explanation combination was regarded more appropriate than an IFID. Furthermore, the fact that IFIDs were rated as an acceptable move in most situations, relative to the explanation combination, may simply indicate that the use of an explanation was not regarded by participants as something that increases the acceptability of an apology.

Furthermore, the explanation combination showed no clear directions towards either upgrading or downgrading the apology function. Therefore, although the results here did not support our hypothesis, it did give us a glimpse that an explanation combination need further investigation to establish whether it should be regarded primarily as a downgrading or an upgrading device, or neither.

In order to more fully understand whether the explanation combination orients towards upgrading or downgrading the apology, we attempted to assess each situation that involves using such a combination (i.e. IFID + explanation). One possible account that would elucidate the difference in the effectiveness of explanation combinations is whether the explanation is internal or external. It seems that such orientations might
play a role in people’s perception of an explanation combination. For instance, whenever the explanation was leaning towards an external factor, i.e. the offence is out of the speaker’s control (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) or is by accident, an explanation combination may be regarded as acceptable. By contrast, when the explanation leans towards an internal factor, i.e. the offence is due to negligence on the part of the speaker or was on purpose, the explanation is more likely to be rejected. The perception of these orientations might also be influenced by the social and power distance between the interlocutors and by the severity of the offence. Table 10 below indicated how the explanation combination was perceived in light of these orientations (i.e. external and internal orientations):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situations</th>
<th>Apology Combinations/Strategy</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Acceptance Score</th>
<th>Neutral Score</th>
<th>Rejection Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>IFID+ Explanation</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>I’m sorry, it was an urgent matter, and I could not find a parking space, so I had to park behind someone’s car.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>IFID+ Explanation</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>I’m sorry, I thought that you are holding me back, but it turns out that you are holding me together.</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>IFID+ Explanation</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>I’m sorry but I might have given you the wrong letters.</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10 Explanation orientations

Table 10 showed the percentage of participants rating the explanation combination as acceptable, unacceptable, and neutral. From table 10, we can clearly see that the external-oriented explanation was perceived by participants as acceptable in one of the two situations involving such an explanation. However, as noted above, the one situation for which the apology was rated unacceptable (situation 4: Deleting files) involved a relatively severe offence. This was evident since the participants have rejected the apology irrespective of its combinations or strategy, which indicated how they found the apology unacceptable since the situation involves deleting important files that cannot be restored. Another possible explanation for the variability would be that external explanations can be judged to be adequate or inadequate, and producing an inadequate external explanation is unacceptable, because it looks like a refusal to take responsibility, and hence would motivate its rejection.
On the other hand, table 8 also showed that an internal-oriented explanation was rejected in two of four situations. However, the two situations that were rated as acceptable might be affected by the degree of the imposition of the act (in situation 5: *A student forgetting to return a book*), or by the influence of the interpersonal relationship (in situation 1: *Boss parking a car*). In situation 5, the interaction took place between a student who borrowed his teacher’s book (the teacher is the participant’s role in this interaction) and forgot to return it. One possible explanation for the teacher’s acceptance of such an internal-oriented explanation is the low degree of the severity of the offence, or perhaps that forgetting to return something is expected in a school setting, both of which factors would motivate accepting the apology.

In situation 1, participants were inclined to accept all three apology strategies tested. This might indicate an impact of context. In this case, the power distance between the apologisee and the apologiser (a boss) is a potential factor: participants might have been generous in their reactions to their boss’s apology given the higher status that he/she has above them. Furthermore, there is a likelihood that their acceptance was motivated by their familiarity with the boss as opposed to a stranger.

In short, the acceptance of apologies in situations 5 (*A student forgetting to return a book*) and 1 (*Boss parking a car*) might be driven by other factors such as the interpersonal relationship and the nature of the offence. These factors might bear upon the perception of internal-oriented and external-oriented (as reported above)
explanations such as social distance and a power distance between the interlocutors, and the degree of the severity of the offence.

Similarly, it appears plausible that sometimes the high severity of the offence plays a role in people’s perception of an apology. For example, in two situations (e.g., 2 (A friend leaving his friends) and 4 (Deleting Files)), the results revealed no significant differences between groups in which the participants were inclined to reject the apology regardless of the apology strategies or combinations used. Their rejection was possibly stemming from their perception of the situations as severe. In situation 2, a friend accuses his friends of being a burden that holds him back from progressing in his life and then discovers that he was wrong and apologises for that. Perhaps it is with the severity of the offence in mind that the participants were inclined to reject the apology regardless of the apology strategy (or combination) used. In the 4th situation, the situation involves deleting important files from a computer which perhaps was deemed by participants as severe and difficult if not impossible to repair. Therefore, in both situations, we could conjecture that the participants were influenced by the severity of the offence which led them to reject the apology regardless of the apology strategy or combinations.

4.5.2 The offer of repair combination and the promise of forbearance combination

For the scenarios tested (7-12), the statistical analysis revealed a general preference for an offer of repair combination over both a promise of forbearance combination and
an IFID on its own. One of the most striking findings that emerged from this study was that the offer of repair was accepted irrespective of the context in which it was used: that is, whether or not the situations required material compensation. This might indicate that an offer of repair at least in its general form is not context-specific as was reported by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). Furthermore, the fact that participants tended to accept the offer of repair combination regardless of the context in which it was used may signify a general preference among participants for this combination over others and indicate that hearers perceived it as the most convincing strategy. This is perhaps because by offering reparation, an apologiser can show the apologisee that he/she is aware of his/her mistake, admit his/her wrongdoing (Holmes, 1990), and convey sincerity by indicating that he/she is willing to repair the damage. This finding is consistent with Scher and Darley’s (1997) results that showed the use of an offer of repair as making the apology more appropriate and more apologetic.

A further striking and unexpected finding in this analysis was that a promise of forbearance combination did not behave as theorised (i.e. as an upgrading device when combined with an IFID). In fact, the results revealed that the promise of forbearance combination can function as both an upgrading and a downgrading device depending on the context in which it occurred. The combination was only favoured by participants in situations that involved someone being late, but was widely rejected in situations that involve damages or severe offences that cannot be repaired. A possible explanation for such a rejection might be attributed to the apologisees’ perception of a damage situation as requiring more than a mere promise of forbearance. By promising to forbear, the apologiser is apologising, but not repairing the damage.
which might motivate participants to perceive such a combination as insufficient. Their responses may reflect a need for more efforts on the part of the apologiser to placate them. Similarly, in the case of severe offences that do not involve damages, an apologisee might need a clarification from the apologiser rather than a promise to forbear, in order to satisfy their need to assess whether the apologiser is blameworthy i.e. whether the incident was due to negligence on the part of the apologiser or it was due to external factors.

The results of the promise of forbearance combination varied appreciably based on the context (the nature of offence) that they occurred in. Therefore, our hypothesis was not fully supported given that in some situation this combination was accepted while in others it was not. Furthermore, the fact that the promise of forbearance combination was rejected in situations that involve damages indicated that using a promise of forbearance combination is not always deemed as more apologetic or more appropriate. This appears to run counter to Scher and Darley’s (1997) finding that an utterance was considered as least apologetic and least appropriate when it does not include a promise of forbearance. Instead, a promise of forbearance combination might be appropriate or inappropriate based on the context under which it is used.
4.5.3 The overall results

Taken together, therefore, the overall results suggest that there are two combinations that seem to function as upgrading devices that would motivate the hearer’s acceptance of an apology: an acknowledgment of responsibility combination and an offer of repair combination. It appears that employing these devices enhances the perlocutionary effect of the act of apologising. That is to say, the results revealed that two of our hypotheses were confirmed given that they were generally statistically significant: in most situations the acknowledgement of responsibility combination and the offer of repair combination were significantly different than both the explanation combination and the promise of forbearance combination.

Furthermore, the results suggested that the perception of an apology might also be influenced by variables such as social distance, power distance, and the severity of the offence. Recall that Brown and Levinson (1987) suggest that a speaker in a face-threatening act may choose different strategies based on the social distance between him/her and the other party, the power distance between him/her and the other party, and the rank of the imposition of an act (high or low). Similarly, the results of our study suggested that these factors also influence hearers’ perception of an apology. This was evident in the first, the second, the fourth, and the eleventh situations which are all suggestive of such influence.

For instance, in the first situation (Boss parking a car), the statistical results showed no significant differences between all three groups which indicate that the three groups
treat the explanation combination, the responsibility combination, and the IFID alone as having similar effects. When examining their preference i.e. whether to accept or reject the apology, the participants were leaning towards accepting the apology in all three groups regardless of the apology strategy used. This might be an indication that the participants in this situation were overshadowed by the fact that the apologiser is their boss, and hence pay less attention to the apology strategy and focus more on the interpersonal relationship between them and the apologiser. Therefore, they opt to accept the apology given that it was performed by someone whom they work for. This result is consistent with previous results of the effect of power distance in Arabs apologies (cf. Banikalef et al., 2015; Qari, 2019; Alhojailan, 2019; Alasqah, 2021), and consistent with Alasqah’s (2021) results on the effect of the power distance on Saudis’ uptake of an apology in which her participants were inclined to use acceptance or absolution strategies such as “that is okay” when the apologiser is someone with higher social status.

On the other hand, the results failed to support our hypotheses with respect to two combinations: an explanation combination and a promise of forbearance combination. The latter unexpectedly seems to have the potential to function as either an upgrading or a downgrading device based on the nature of the offence. This suggested that the nature of the offence is crucial in determining the hearers’ perception of an apology. For instance, when there was damage, this combination was widely rejected. Thus, it could be perceived as worsening the situation considering the damage has not been repaired yet. However, in situations that involve someone being late, a promise of forbearance was widely accepted.
For the explanation combination, the results reported here suggested that it was neither an upgrading nor a downgrading device as the results showed no clear tendency in either direction. The results here led the researcher to consider what might motivate participants to rate this combination as neutral, unacceptable, or acceptable. Consequently, the research suggested that a note of caution is due here since there is a need to identify the orientation of the explanation (i.e. whether it leans towards internal or external factors). It could plausibly be conjectured that the nature of that orientation may be a key factor in determining the degree of the acceptability of an apology that involves an explanation combination. By examining the perception of these orientations, we might be able to gain some understanding of why participants in this experiment have rated the explanation combination the way they did. However, we need additional data in order to evaluate this conjecture.

Therefore, there is a need for further investigation into such possibilities as it may help us to better characterise the impact on hearers’ acceptance of an apology. In particular, there is a need to conduct another study focusing on the perception of the explanation combination and the promise of forbearance combination. The study can examine the hypothesis that the acceptance of an explanation combination might be determined based on its orientation towards either internal or external reasonings. The more external the explanation is, the more likely for the apology to be accepted; the more internal the explanation is, the more likely for the apology to be rejected. The study also can examine the hypothesis that a promise of forbearance combination can function as both an upgrading or a downgrading device based on the context under
which it occurred. In particular, it would investigate the idea that the promise of forbearance combination is more likely to be rejected in a situation that is deemed severe and cannot be repaired, or a situation that involved damages, but can be accepted in another context such as someone being late.

By examining these hypotheses, the new study would help provide evidence to why the participants from the first study have considered a promise of forbearance as upgrading in some contexts and downgrading in others. Along the same line, it would help provide explanations as to why an explanation combination is ambiguously either an upgrading or a downgrading device and to provide explanations for the role of its orientation (i.e. towards external or internal) in its perception.

4.6 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, we examined the hypotheses that certain apology strategies, when combined with an IFID, may function as either an upgrading or a downgrading device that would either intensify or reduce the apologetic force. The chapter presented the results of these hypotheses which indicated a general preference for certain combinations and raised some potential questions for other combinations that need further exploration. In the next chapter (chapter 5), the focus will be directed to explore the questions raised in this chapter about the perception of the explanation combination and the promise of forbearance combination.
5 Chapter Five: A Qualitative Approach Towards

The Effectiveness of Integrating Apology Strategies: The case of explanation and promise of forbearance combinations

5.1 Introduction

This thesis aims to examine the effects of combining apology strategies on the hearer’s perception of their acceptability. In investigating these effects, whereas the literature suggests that adding more strategies to the illocutionary force indicating device (IFID, e.g. ‘I’m sorry’) can automatically intensify the apology (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989), I hypothesised that the effects depend on the types of apology strategies that are used in conjunction with an IFID. The focus of the experiment presented in chapter 4 was principally on the combination of an IFID with one of the other four apology strategies presented by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), namely an offer of repair, an explanation, an acknowledgment of responsibility, and a promise of forbearance. I hypothesised that these apology strategies achieve upgrading or downgrading effects that can be seen when added to an IFID. In particular, I tested the hypothesis that the combination of an IFID with an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance, or an acknowledgement of responsibility will result in elevating the apology's function, and hence enhance the perlocutionary effect of the act of apologising and thus make the apology more likely to be accepted. Furthermore, I tested the hypothesis that combining an IFID with an
explanation may lead to downgrading the apology’s function and make it more likely to be rejected by the hearers.

The results of the questionnaire-based study presented in chapter 4 showed that offer of repair and acknowledgement of responsibility combinations do indeed motivate the participants’ acceptance of the apologies, since they were rated as more acceptable combinations across different contexts and circumstances. This supports the hypothesis that these two strategies, when combined with an IFID, upgrade the apology’s function and motivate its acceptance from the hearers. The results also showed that our hypothesis that a promise of forbearance combination may upgrade the apology’s function was partially supported: such a combination was rejected in some situations and accepted in others. When each situation was examined to further elucidate what might inspire its acceptance or rejection, it turned out that a promise of forbearance was deemed by participants as an unacceptable combination in a situation that involves damages or severe offences that cannot be repaired or restored. However, in other contexts participants found it acceptable. Therefore, I conjectured that a promise of forbearance combination can function as both upgrading or downgrading device based on the context under which it is occurred.

By contrast, the explanation combination showed inconclusive results, but raised interesting questions about hearer’s perceptions. For example, in examining the perception of an explanation combination, we found some potential explanations related to the type of explanation offered, for instance whether the speaker appeals to
an external (e.g., the bus was late) or an internal (e.g., I missed the bus) factor. That is to say, whether the speaker appeals to factors that are out of his control (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984) or that are occurred by accident or the speaker appeals to internal factors that cause the offence e.g. the offence was due to negligence on the part of the apologiser or was on purpose. Such differences may shape the hearer’s perception of this combination’s acceptability.

Therefore, to fully comprehend what cause these differences in hearer’s uptake of the apologies with these two combinations, explanation and promise of forbearance, this chapter reports a follow-up study which aims to more fully understand what motivates the hearer’s rejection and acceptance of these combinations. Given that the research questions are qualitative in nature, a qualitative approach was sought. After consulting the literature, I opted to use a focus group discussion as it would allow participants to discuss the situations in more friendly settings. To do that, we recruited 10 participants who are native speakers of Saudi Arabic to take part across three focus groups. After collecting the data and analysing them following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis, three broad themes emerged from the analysis that recurred throughout the dataset. The analysis revealed that hearer’s perception of an apology is influenced by three main factors: the interpersonal relationship, the act that is being apologised for, and the apology strategies. Participants paid considerable attention to these factors in their discussion of the situations under scrutiny.
In the following pages, building on the introductory discussion in chapter 3, I will describe the procedures that I followed in conducting the qualitative study. I will then present the results, focusing on the factors that influence the perception of the IFID + explanation and the IFID + promise of forbearance combinations. The discussion will focus on five situations from the first study that explored these combinations, namely situations 1 (Boss parking a car), 4 (Deleting files), 8 (Late student), 9 (Breaking screen), and 11 (Postponing paperwork). For three of these situations, I focus on the IFID + promise of forbearance combination and for two of them I focus on the IFID + explanation combination. I shall first discuss the combinations under investigation. Then, I will discuss each factor that affected their perception, drawing closely upon the qualitative data from this investigation.

5.2 Procedures

5.2.1 Introduction

Following the recommendations in the literature that recommend the researcher to transparently show the procedures that undertaken during a qualitative study, I aim in this section to highlight the procedures that I undertook in my focus group study. Building on the discussion in chapter 3, I shall discuss each stage of my analysis procedure which includes Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis framework.
5.2.2 Analysis Stages

The data were analysed following Braun and Clarke’s (2006, 2012) thematic analysis framework. Their framework encompasses six stages: familiarising yourself with the data, generating codes, generating initial themes, reviewing potential themes, defining and naming the themes, and producing the report. Below, I shall discuss each stage separately as applied to this study.

5.2.2.1 Familiarising yourself with the data

After transcribing each focus group verbatim and then listening again to the recordings for accuracy, I began the first stage of my analysis following Braun and Clarke’s TA framework, familiarising myself with the data. To do that, I first listened to the recordings again while reading the data. I then immersed myself in the data by reading and re-reading the data and taking notes where necessary. During this process, I was thinking of the data in relation to my research questions and the assumptions underlying them. I took notes regarding points of interest and made annotations concerning my views of some of the participants’ perspectives regarding the apology. I ended up writing more than 120 comments on the transcriptions of the three focus groups.

5.2.2.2 Generating Codes

After transcribing and reviewing the data, I began coding the data as I read them. Each focus group was read and coded separately. Initially, I started coding the first and
second focus groups. I then began coding the third focus group. After finishing the initial codes for each focus group, I began the process of merging similar codes under one node which reduced the number of codes by almost half. I then reviewed the codes and the data assigned to them to ensure that the codes represented the data and nothing fell outside of them.

My initial coding yielded a total of more than 320 codes. After reviewing the codes, the number of codes was reduced to approximately 200. This occurred principally due to aggregating some codes under one node as they reflected duplications or involved representing the same concept with different wordings. This is an expected part of the analysis and makes the task of reviewing the codes an important one.

I then began establishing a codebook that would contain my final codes. The codebook consisted of three columns; a code name column, a description column, and an example or quotation column (see appendix 8). In the description column, I defined my latent codes, while in the quotation column, I presented an example that would represent the code. I initially attempted to define all my codes; however, it turned out that most of my codes directly represent what the participants have articulated. For instance, if someone says "I'll accept the apology because he is my friend", there was no need for further definition as the meaning is unequivocal. This observation led me to rethink my approach and restrict my definitions to latent codes which require clarifications as to what they include.
The logic of creating a codebook is to make my data coding more systematic. By taking this approach, I can reduce any potential errors that might occur during the coding process. This would then allow me to move to generating my themes with confidence. Furthermore, using a codebook does not necessarily mean that the researcher is trying to be objective or sees subjectivity is seen as a drawback, as speculated by Braun and Clarke (2019). Rather, in this case, it means the researcher is trying to document precisely the procedure by which the themes are obtained.

5.2.2.3 Generating themes

In this stage, I first established a set of categories. From these categories, I generated my initial themes. Then I reviewed my themes more than once to arrive at my final themes (for more details on how I arrived at my final themes please see appendix 8). Having arrived at my final themes, I then defined them as can be seen subsequently.

5.2.2.3.1 Finalising my themes

In my attempt to finalise my themes, I reviewed my themes again and scrutinised them in relation to my research questions. Given that the aim of formulating themes that represent the data set is to answer the research questions, I immersed myself again in the data for each theme and tried to find their orientation towards my research questions.
This further iteration of my themes helped me to notice that there are some factors that affect the apologisee’s acceptance of an apology, which are related to my research questions concerning the acceptance of apology strategy combinations, and how this is influenced by the social relationship and the degree of the offence. My data suggested that there are three themes which can encompass all the codes and data, namely the interpersonal effect, the effect of the act itself (the act that is being apologised for), and the effect of apology strategies, as shown in figure 8 below.

5.2.2.4 Naming and defining my themes

As mentioned above, a further review of my themes in relation to my research questions disclosed three factors that may shape the offended party’s acceptance of
an apology, namely the interpersonal effect, the effects of the act itself, and the effects of apology strategies. Below I shall discuss each factor in more detail.

5.2.2.4.1 *The interpersonal effect*

The theme refers to the concept of social relations and how it might affect the hearer’s decision to either accept or reject an apology. Some circumstances related to the relationships between the apologisers and the apologisees shape the outcomes of the apologies performed by the offending parties. For instance, their relationship might have a boss-employee nature, they might be strangers, or they might be close friends, and each of these relationships might be associated with different reactions towards an apology. This theme also includes the context of the interpersonal knowledge between the interactants which might motivate the offended party’s decision to accept or reject an apology: for instance, a teacher might react differently to a student turning up late who is habitually punctual than they do to one who is known as habitually late.

5.2.2.4.2 *The effects of the act itself*

The theme involves any aspects related to the act that is being apologised for. That could be in relation to the degree or severity of the offence for the offended party. It can also be associated with some aspects of the scenario: for instance, whether a meeting that was disrupted by the offender was important or not. In this case, if the meeting was important, the apology is more likely to be rejected; otherwise, the apology might be accepted.
5.2.2.4.3 The effects of the apology strategies

The theme involves any aspects related to the apology strategies used. It is usually associated with the appropriateness of the apology strategy or combination used by the offender. In a given situation, the offended party assesses the apology presented by the offender and decide whether the apology is appropriate. For instance, in a situation that involves damages, the offended party might consider whether or not the offending party would compensate them. If the offender’s apology involves an explanation, the offended party might consider whether the offending party uses an external or an internal explanation which might then help them decide whether or not the act was due to negligence on the part of the offending party. Based on these assessments, the offended party might decide to accept or reject an apology.

5.3 Results

After finalised my themes, my next step is to produce the report. In this stage, my aim is to discuss each theme drawing upon quotations and examples from the data. Below, I discuss the results of the focus groups in relation to their perception of the explanation and the promise of forbearance combinations.
5.3.1 Apology combinations: an IFID + an explanation & an IFID + a promise of forbearance

An explanation and a promise of forbearance are two of the five major apology strategies that were presented by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). The analysis of my quantitative study revealed that an explanation combination is neither an upgrading nor a downgrading device. However, what seemed to be crucial in analysing this combination is whether it is oriented towards an external or an internal factor. Based on the results from the first experiment, I conjectured that when an explanation is oriented toward an external factor, the addressee is more likely to accept an apology, but when an explanation is oriented toward an internal factor, the addressee is more likely to find it unacceptable. This runs counter to the original hypothesis that an explanation combination is generally a downgrading device when combined with an IFID. The results of the second study supported our hypothesis for the external-oriented explanation and partially supported our hypothesis for the internal-oriented explanation. However, the perception of these orientations might also be subject to influence from the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors, or the act that is being apologised for.

In a promise of forbearance, an offender usually says “I promise I won’t do that (the act) again” or “I won’t do that again” without using the performative verb “promise” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The results of this combination in my first study was unexpected: I had hypothesised that a promise of forbearance combination would upgrade the apology function, but the results revealed that this combination can function as either an upgrading or a downgrading device based on the context under
which it occurred. In particular, a promise of forbearance was rejected in a situation that involves severe damages or an irreparable situation. However, the promise of forbearance was accepted in situations that involve someone being late.

The qualitative analysis of the promise of forbearance combination suggested that it would be accepted in some contexts and rejected in others. The results supported our previous observation that people’s perceptions of the promise of forbearance combination vary based on the type of the offence, such as whether there is damage involved and whether the offence is reparable. Similar to the explanation combination, the promise of forbearance combination might also be influenced by the three major factors identified in our data, namely the effects of the interpersonal relationship, the effects of the apology strategy, and the effects of the act that is being apologised for.

Taken together therefore, the results below argue that an apology’s perception is influenced by the apology strategy or combination, the nature of the act being apologised for, and in particular the interpersonal relationship. Below I shall discuss examples from the data for each factor to indicate how participants were influenced by them in their perception of the apologies. The data are presented in Arabic with translations into English.
5.3.2 The effect of apology strategy

The data suggested that, in some situations, apology strategies may influence the offended party’s perception of an apology. Such influence can be seen in the offended party’s judgement of whether the apology strategies used are appropriate or not. The suitability of the apology strategies might motivate the offended party’s decision to either accept or reject an apology. The explanation orientations (towards an internal or external factor) may also affect the offended party’s acceptance of an apology.

The first situation (deleting files) involves a friend borrowing his/her friend’s computer to play an online game and then, while playing, pressing a button and deleting some important files. When the first situation was discussed by participants in the focus groups, the participants were asked whether they would accept the following apology: I’m sorry, but I don’t know how that happened; I might have accidentally pressed a button and deleted these files. In analysing the focus group recordings for each group, it seemed that most participants in the three groups were inclined to accept the apology proposed. Their acceptance was motivated by the fact that the files were deleted by accident. This was evident in the extracts below:

(1)
Interviewer: How would you find his apology?

Yousef: If the offender says that apology while he was nervous, I would find it appropriate.

Hadi: I agree with Yousef, if I see him nervous I would accept.

Abdullah: I would accept this apology because it was by mistake and it is impossible that he intended to do that.

Interviewer: Why did you all accept his apology?

Abdullah: Because it was by mistake.

Yousef: Because it is expected i.e. technical mistakes.

(2)

Researcher: How do you find the apologize?

Abdulrahman: I found it.

Researcher: Why did you find it?

Abdulrahman: Because I didn't find what he did wrong.

Researcher: And if this happened?

Abdulrahman: I would not accept it.
Interviewer: How would you find his apology?

Abdulrahman: I would accept it.

Interviewer: Why?

Abdulrahman: Because he apologised. I might not know about that and one day when I want my files and I don’t find them, it is good that he actually told me about them.

Muhammad: For me … I might need more details… However, if I was sure that he did that by mistake I would accept it.

Abdul Mohsen: For me this apology is enough and I would accept it. However, others might think that such an apology is a cold one as ...they might want the offender to say ‘sorry, I didn’t know’ and provide more justifications for the offence to help them accept the apology i.e. they want the offender to show that he is really sorry for his mistake.

In the above extracts, the participants indicated that what motivated their decision to accept the apology was the fact that the offence was by accident. That is, given that the apology contains an explanation that signals the accidental nature of the act, the participants seemed to be in favour of accepting such a combination. Presumably, this
is because they assume that technical mistakes are expected, and hence they would accept them on the basis that there was no negligence on the part of the apologiser. Their comments seem to provide evidence that an external explanation is more likely to be accepted by the apologisee. This tendency to accept external explanation was also evident in the discussion of other situations involving explanation.

It seems that participants are in favour of accepting an explanation combination that is oriented towards an external factor or, as they put it, a ‘persuasive’ explanation. For instance, in a situation that involves someone being late (Late student), an exculpatory excuse that is oriented towards an external factor, e.g. an emergency, is more likely to lead the offended party to accept the offender’s apology, as can be seen in the extract below:

(3)

Hadi: If the student has an emergency situation e.g., his father was sick and he had to take him to the hospital, I would accept his apology. However, if his excuse was an unconvincing one, I wouldn’t accept it.

Abdullah: For me, if the excuse was persuasive, I would accept it. However, if the excuse was implausible, I won’t.
In the above extract, the participants highlighted that they are likely to accept an IFID + an explanation if the explanation is oriented towards an external factor. For example, in the above extract, Hadi suggested that he would accept the apology if the student came late because he had to take his father to the hospital. This represents an external factor that is intrinsically deemed as a sufficient reason for someone to be late, and does not reflect negligence on the part of the student.

By contrast, Hadi considers that unpersuasive excuses motivate the rejection of apologies. Although Hadi did not mention what does he consider as unpersuasive excuses in the extract above, he subsequently mentioned some excuses that he considered unacceptable, such as:

(4) Hadi: Look, for me, straightforwardness is important. For example, if the student was straightforward even if he was late because he overslept, he can say to me 'I overslept because such and such' and I might accept that from him. But, if he said to me 'my car broke down', and it turned out that he was out having breakfast, I wouldn’t accept that from him.
Strikingly, the excuses that Hadi takes to be weak – that the student overslept, or was having breakfast – are oriented towards internal factors. This suggests that all things being equal, such excuses are more likely to be rejected by an apologisee. Furthermore, in the same extract, Hadi indirectly indicated that an external explanation (‘my car broke down’) is more likely to be accepted, perhaps due to the fact that it indicates that the apologiser is not doing the transgression out of negligence (albeit that Hadi will reject such an explanation if it turns out to be untruthful).

These extracts indicated the flexibility of the hearer’s perception of an apology and how some factors might affect the apologies’ outcomes. The hearer’s acceptance is associated with some decisions that he/she makes during the apology process. For instance, when the hearer receives an apology that contains an explanation, he/she examines the apology based on whether the apologiser has persuasive reasons for his/her action, and judges it accordingly. The orientations of an explanation might be regarded as an important aspect in shaping the hearer’s perception of an apology.

Along similar lines, in a situation that involves an employee not doing his work (Postponing paperwork), the persuasiveness of his/her explanation also surfaces as an important aspect in shaping the hearer’s perception of an apology. This was evident in the extract below:
Abdulrahman: The employee should have a fundamental reason such as an emergency situation that prevented them from doing their job as I have asked them to finish it by the end of the day.

Thayer: For me, as a boss, I need the employee to provide an excuse that would persuade me to accept their apologies. They need to provide a very persuasive excuse.

Eyas: For me, I would not accept his apology because it was clear that I wanted the employee to finish the work by the end of the day, but he decided to postpone it until the next day. Thus, it would be of utmost importance to reprimand him and deduct
from his salary and it might affect his performance assessment, unless he has a persuasive reason that would make me accept his apology. But if the reason was unpersuasive e.g., he just postponed it for no reason, I would consider it as a neglectful act.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean by a persuasive reason?

**Eyas:** We can say, he couldn’t finish the work as his mother called him in an emergency and he had to go to her. If he had a medical reason related to his family, for instance, I would accept his apology. However, if he has no reason to postpone the work, I would find him as a negligent employee and I would reprimand him as the work is related to the company and the meeting was important and because of him I would face some issues, and hence he should be reprimanded and his apology won’t be accepted.

**Abdulmalik:** If the employee has a persuasive excuse – it need not be related to his family – just a persuasive reason that prevented him from finishing the work and made him exceed the time window that I gave him and leave the office earlier, I would accept his apology.

The above extract displayed how external-oriented explanations might lead the offended party to accept the offender’s apology even in a situation that might adversely affect the offended party, in this case the boss. Even then, the boss was willing to accept the employee’s apology if the employee presented a persuasive excuse that prevented them from doing the work within the assigned time. When we look at the
excuses provided in the above extract, it can be clearly seen that the examples of persuasive excuses that were most salient to the focus group members were typically those involving external explanations (for instance, an emergency such as taking a parent to a hospital). Therefore, we can argue that the boss’s inclination to accept the apology that is associated with a persuasive reason indicated the influence of the external-oriented explanation in shaping the hearer’s acceptance of an apology. Among the different factors that might lead the offended party to make up their mind to either accept or reject an apology, the persuasiveness of the explanation presented by the offender might be a prominent factor.

The above extracts also indicated that there might be an overlap between the effect of the apology strategy and the act itself, perhaps because the above extracts were part of the discussions about two situations that involved using a promise of forbearance combination (a student being late and an employee not doing his work). The offended party may concentrate on contextual factors rather than just the apology strategy (or combination): in the above extracts, whether there is an excuse for the apologiser’s action, and whether the excuse is oriented towards an external or internal factor (and hence whether it is persuasive or not).

In short, if the employee has a persuasive reason to postpone the work, particularly one associated with an external factor, their apology is more likely to be accepted. The participants’ inclination to accept persuasive excuses that are external in nature suggests that whether explanation is upgrading or downgrading is dependent on its
orientation, not on its broad category. This pattern suggests that, by assessing the orientations of explanations, the offended party is seeking to gain more information to allocate responsibility for the transgression, and hence decide whether to accept or reject an apology. The above examples tend to support the claim that the more external the explanation is, the more likely it is for the apology to be accepted.

Another example that showed the apology strategy effect is in the third situation (Late student) which involves a student coming late to a lecture and then saying: *I’m sorry for being late, I promise that won’t happen again*. When the situation was discussed in the focus groups, it seemed that most participants were in favour of accepting the promise of forbearance combination in this situation. The focus group members felt that when someone comes late, promising to forbear from being late in the future is an appropriate strategy, and the use of the promise of forbearance seems to serve as an upgrading device. Note that this is a situation which does not involve damages or irreparable harm.

(6)
Interviewer: How did you find the student’s apology?

Abdulrahman: Very acceptable.

Interviewer: Why?

Abdulrahman: Because if he came late again I will remind him of his promise and I won’t accept his apology again. This shows his eagerness to repair the wrongdoing.

Interviewer: Why did you say: it is very acceptable?

Abdulrahman: Because it showed how this person is keen to repair his mistake. Another student might choose to say ‘I’m sorry for being late’ without promising to not do that again. However, the student’s promise of forbearance shows his eagerness and you can feel in his utterances to what extent he cares.

Abdul Mohsen: For me, I would accept his apology given he has promised to not do that again.

In the extract above, the participants highlighted how they are willing to accept an apology if the offender chooses to use the promise of forbearance combination in this context. For them, such a strategy shows how the speaker is eager to repair his/her wrongdoing, by promising to avoid committing the same offence in the future, and
hence motivates accepting such an apology. The use of this strategy depicted the offender as considerate and keen to avoid future offence.

This example confirms that a promise of forbearance combination can function in some contexts as an upgrading device. However, there are exceptions, and these may depend on the context of the interpersonal knowledge that the addressee holds about the apologiser, a point I will discuss further when we talk about the influence of interpersonal relationships.

We can contrast this with the fourth situation (Breaking screen) which involves a new colleague borrowing his co-worker's laptop and dropping it, breaking the screen. The colleague then returned the laptop and apologised by saying: I'm sorry for that, I promise I'll pay more attention next time. When the situation was discussed in the focus groups, it seemed that all participants were inclined to reject this promise of forbearance combination given the damages involved. They perceived such a combination as inappropriate and provocative given that the addresser assumed the addressee would exonerate him, and hence moved immediately to the next stage in which he promise he would pay more attention next time. However, for the addressee, the apologiser has not repaired the damage yet.

The potential for this kind of apology to be unsuccessful and provocative is illustrated by Yousef's reaction to this scenario in extract (7). Yousef's perception of such a
combination as inappropriate or sometimes provocative may stem in part from the effect of the act itself as one which causes damage and requires compensation to be offered. However, the provocation also appears to result from the effect of the strategy itself or the wording of the apology:

(7)

Yousef: I will say to the offender: your apology is not accepted and provocative. I'll say to him: don't apologise like that … I consider saying that as if they are making fun of me I don't consider it as an apology.

In the above extract, Yousef highlighted why would he reject the promise of forbearance combination. For him, using a promise of forbearance in a damage situation is provocative and indicates that the offender is not showing respect to him. He also does not consider it as apologising. This may reflect Yousef’s perception of the situation as one that requires an offer of repair. Furthermore, Yousef might have thought that the apologiser promising to pay attention in the future suggests that the offence is being attributed to an internal factor (the person’s carelessness), which we have already seen may lead to apologies being rejected.
All participants across all my focus groups reacted similarly to this situation, reacting sarcastically to it, and agreeing that the situation was provocative. Their reaction stemmed either from their expectations that the situation requires an offer of repair, or from their perception of the wording of the promise of forbearance (*I promise I will pay more attention next time*) as irritating, or both.

As mentioned above, utilising a promise of forbearance in a damage situation might be perceived by the offended party as jumping to the phase of reconciliation without having resolved the apology phase (Tavuchis, 1991; see Extracts 9 and 10). The offended party might be provoked by that because they thought that the offender did not even bother to wait for the offended party to exonerate him/her. Hence, the offended party might consider that as violating his/her rights to pardon or withhold that pardon, crucial to their recognition as a moral interlocutor (Smith, 2008), and this might promote their rejection of the apology. This can be seen in the discussion below:

(8)
Abdullah: (sarcastically) I promise that I will pay more attention next time!

Interviewer: Why did you say that in a sarcastic way?

Abdullah: Because his apology is strange.

Interviewer: How?

Abdullah: (sarcastically) I promise that I will pay more attention next time! I’m not going to give it to you next time.

Hadi: That means he did not care.

Abdullah: Yes

Yousef: Saying ‘I promise next time’! I would say to him, it is impossible for you to take my laptop again.

Hadi: It shows that the offender is not aware of his action and careless.
Interviewer: Why did you find his apology inappropriate?

Hadi: Because he is careless.

Abdullah: I agree.

Yousef: I agree.

In the above extract, the participants explain why the promise of forbearance is inappropriate here. They interpreted the offender’s apology as carelessly failing to grasp the consequences of his actions. Although the utterance is clearly understood as an apology, it fails in its goal to placate the hearer, partly because it does not address the damage caused to the laptop. That does not mean apology cannot be accepted without a reparation. However, the use of a promise of forbearance might motivate the offended party to reject an apology. Had the offender used another strategy, his apology might have been accepted, as can be seen in the extracts below:

(9)


dswn tns Kdws "lwsz kmll lwsz kkmz kmmz rzt rs sb azk lwsz ,stงg rs frj prz h h "tyal ra rmla hbnl "

thbls

fdsl abj

thbls

azml
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Yousef: I might say to the offender, do not say “I will pay more attention next time” because I find it annoying, do not say that just apologise and I might forgive you.

Interviewer: Would it be better if the offender says only ‘I’m sorry’?

Abdullah: Very much.

Interviewer: Why?

Abdullah: Because he moved to the next phase while we are still in the current phase (the apology). Let us first solve the problem that you caused and then we can move on to whether I would give you the laptop again or not.
Eyas: His apology is not acceptable at all.

Interviewer: Why?

Eyas: What does ‘pay attention next time’ mean? You will not take my laptop again. I promise I will pay attention next time! It is clear that he wanted to say: Okay it is your job to fix your laptop and there is a chance that I will take it again! Saying that shows that he did not find what he did as a huge mistake. It is like he wanted to say: you will fix it and I will take it again! The apology should be bigger and the offender should not mention ‘next time’ because he knew he has done something wrong which led to the screen being broken. Thus, the offender should understand that he has lost the offended party’s trust and he has no right to regain that trust except from the offended party himself. The offended party is the only one who has the right to re-establish the trust again with the offender.

Thayer: To be honest I don’t consider it as an apology and it is provoking. For me, I would never accept it.

Interviewer: Why did you find it provoking?

Thayer: Provoking because the offender moved to the next phase and showed how careless he is towards the wrongdoing. For me, I just bought a new laptop and he knew that and broke my screen and yet he chose to use such an apology. For me, it is insufficient apology which would prevent me from accepting it.
In the above extracts, the participants highlighted how using different strategies might drive them to consider accepting the offender’s apology in such a situation (*Breaking screen*). This was evident in Abdullah’s response to my question *Would it be better if the offender says only ‘I’m sorry’?*, in which he suggested that it would be extremely different. He suggested that the use of a promise of forbearance was provocative because the offender moved to the next phase without settling the issue that had arisen. This was regarded by the participants as a sign of carelessness on the part of the offender and showed lack of awareness of the offender’s wrongdoing. The same idea was mentioned by Thayer who suggested that the offensiveness of this apology combination stems from the fact that the apologiser has moved to the next phase without resolving the issue. For Thayer, this makes the promise of forbearance combination insufficient to motivate the hearer to accept it.

Furthermore, Eyas highlighted how the offended party might interpret using a promise of forbearance in a damage situation as the offender saying “*I broke your screen and it is your job to fix it and I will take it again*”. Furthermore, he suggested that the apology need to be “bigger” given that the situation requires more effort on the part of the offender. Eyas’s point chimes with the observation that the apology needs to balance the offence that it tries to conciliate, and hence the bigger the offence is, the bigger the apology needs to be (Goffman, 1971).

The participants’ perceptions of the use of such strategies as provocative is associated with their reading of such strategies as lacking respect and awareness of the offence
on the speaker’s part. This can be clearly seen in their assertion that the offending party has jumped from the phase of apologising and waiting for pardon to another phase, in which the pardon is assumed, even to the extent that the offender is talking about borrowing the laptop again. The offended party interpreted the offender’s usage of a promise of forbearance as violating their right to either pardon the offender or not, making it presumptuous on the part of the apologiser, who takes this as settled.

5.3.3 The effects of the act itself

The second factor that influenced hearers’ perceptions of the apology in our data is the effects of the act that is being apologised for. The apologisee might consider some aspects related to the act in deciding whether to accept or reject the apology. In their discussion of the first situation (Deleting files), although most participants in all focus groups expressed their inclination to accept the apology proposed, some concepts and ideas related to the act itself were discussed that might influence their perception of the apology proposed. For instance, some participants noted that the importance of the files might determine their acceptance of the apology proposed. In this case, the participants orient their attention towards the consequentiality of the offence rather than the properties of the apology combination. This can be seen in the extract below, in response to my question: Would you accept an apology if someone deleted your files and said: *I'm sorry, but I don't know how that happened I might have accidentally pressed a button and deleted these files?*
Muhammad: For me, it wouldn’t be easy to accept the apology as I might need more details, what did he press and what did he delete? It also depends on the importance of the deleted files as it might affect my decision.

In the above excerpt, Muhammad suggested that what might affect his decision to accept or reject an apology is not just the explanation that was presented by the offender, but also the importance of these files. If the files were important, it might be difficult for him to accept the apology. He also highlighted that he needs more information about the incident e.g., what buttons have the offender pressed and what files did he delete. This information might be vital for him not only to establish the severity of the offence but also to apportion blame for it, which clearly indicates the importance of an explanation that provides shared background knowledge of the offence as a potential aspect of an effective apology (Battistella, 2014).

Another concept that is related to the effect of the act itself emerged from the participants’ discussion of the fifth situation (Postponing paperwork), in which a meeting is disrupted because an employee failed to prepare the necessary paperwork. The participants discussed the importance of the meeting, again orienting their attention towards the consequentiality of the act itself. For them, knowing this information would help them to determine their perception of the employee’s apology, as shown in the following extract:
Abdullah: It depends if the meeting was important or not as some meetings are routine in nature which have no implications if the papers were not completed, hence I could just warn him (the employee) not to do that again.

Here, Abdullah attributes his decision to accept an apology to the nature of the act itself, specifically the importance of the meeting. If the meeting was not particularly important, accepting the apology and warning the employee would be the ideal solution. However, if the meeting had been important, the apology might not be acceptable. The discussion of this point reflects the importance of balancing the extent of the apology with the impact of the offence. The participants’ orientation to the act that is being apologised for presumably would help them to ensure that they do not overreact, and hence weight their reactions appropriately to the offence. Several other participants also indicated that, in this scenario, the consequences of the offence would influence their decision more strongly than the content of the apology.

When this situation was discussed by the participants in the focus groups, most participants seemed to be in favour of rejecting the apology plus a promise of forbearance, on the basis that the offence was potentially severe: the employee’s
conduct may not just adversely affect the boss, but the reputation of the whole company that they both represent. Thus, they assume promising to forbear is not sufficient unless the employee also has a persuasive reason that covers the present case. This was evident in the extracts below:

(Interviewer) How did you find his apology; would you accept it?

Abdul Mohsen: I wanted him to finish the paperwork.

Abdulrahman: I find the employee’s apology acceptable.

Interviewer: Why?

Muhammad: The idea that he will not do that again, this is guaranteed as he will not be an employee in the company anymore.
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Interviewer: Why?

Muhammad: Because this apology is not helpful. The employee might offer to do more work or extra time i.e. compensate by doing something rather than just saying he won’t do that again.
**Thamer:** Of course I will not accept his apology. It is not personal; it is not something between me as boss and him as an employee. The matter is related to the company. We have a meeting and not having the papers ready might harm the company. The employee must have finished the papers before the meeting otherwise he will be punished to ensure he will not do it again.

**Eyas:** For me, I would not accept his apology because it was clear that I wanted the employee to finish the work by the end of the day, but he decided to postpone it until the next day. Thus, it would be of utmost importance to reprimand him and deduct from his salary and it might affect his performance assessment, unless he has a persuasive reason that would make me accept his apology. But if the reason was unpersuasive and he just postponed it, I would consider it as a neglectful act.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean by a persuasive reason?

**Eyas:** We can say, he couldn’t finish the work as his mother called him for an emergency and he had to go to her. If he had a medical reason related to his family for instance, I would accept his apology. However, if he has no reason to postpone the work, I would find him a negligent employee and I would reprimand him as the work is related to the company and the meeting was important and because of him I would face some issues, and hence he should be reprimanded and his apology won’t be accepted.

**Thayer:** For me, I will not accept it as long as he has no persuasive reasons that would allow me to accept his apology because we have a meeting that is important for the company. Thus, if he has no excuse that would let me accept his apology, I will not accept it.
The above extracts clearly showed that although Abdulrahman was in favour of accepting the apology since the employee promises to forbear, most participants were in favour of rejecting the promise of forbearance combination in this situation. Their rejection stemmed from their expectations that the employee would finish the papers on time and the effects of the employee’s action on the reputation of the company. That was clearly evident in Thayer’s and Thamer’s assertions in which they highlighted that what motivated their rejection is the fact that the employee’s conduct had consequences for the whole company and not just the boss. Therefore, for them and other participants, an employee could only be exonerated if he/she has a persuasive excuse that prevent him/her from doing their work. Hence, their rejection stemmed from their perception of the situation as severe rather than the appropriateness of the apology combination.

Further examples on the effect of the act itself can be seen in extracts 7, 8, 9, and 10 above in which participants were in favour of rejecting the promise of forbearance combination due to the effect of the act that is being apologised for, i.e. because the damage was not addressed by the apologiser. In this sense, the inappropriateness of the apology combination stemmed from the effect of the act itself, since the act created damage that required repair, and hence an offer of repair was expected. Thus, rejecting the apology in such a situation (breaking screen) could be regarded as the hearer asserting their moral agency and protesting against the way in which the apologiser decided to approach this transgression in using a promise of forbearance combination rather than offering a reparation.
5.3.4 The effects of the interpersonal relationship

One factor that might influence a hearer’s perception of an apology is the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors. In the first situation (deleting files), the nature of the interactants’ relationship (whether they were friends or strangers) seemed to shape the offended party’s decision to either accept or reject an apology. Some of these differences lie in the fact that the offended party has insufficient knowledge about the stranger. In particular, in the following extract, Thayer clearly states that his lack of knowledge of the offender holds him back from treating a stranger similar to a close counterpart.

(15)

Thayer: Yes, the offender who is in a close relationship with me, I would know his intention, he wouldn’t harm me. However, with a stranger I don’t know him and he might have deleted the files on purpose.

Thayer’s response suggests that he would assume that the offence was unintentional when dealing with a friend, but would be uncertain on that point when dealing with a stranger. That does not mean that he would not accept the apology; however, it suggests that he might not be as tolerant as with a friend, and might ask for more
clarifications, or require more efforts on the part of the speaker in order to accept his/her apology. This represents a case in which the nature of the interpersonal relationship between the interactants appears to be a more powerful influence on the apology acceptance or rejection than factors such as the apology combination.

Another example of the interpersonal effect can be found in the second situation (A boss parking car) which involves a boss parking behind someone’s car at the bank. When the boss returned to his car, he found out that the one he parked behind was one of his employees. Then, he said: *I’m sorry, it was an urgent matter and I could not find a parking space, so I had to park behind someone’s car.* When the situation was discussed in the focus groups, I expected that people would reject the apology since the explanation was oriented towards an internal factor (since being in a hurry does not entail blocking people’s way). However, it turned out that most participants across the three focus groups expressed their inclination to accept the apology.

The data suggested that hearers’ willingness to accept the apology might be stemming from the influence of the interpersonal relationship and specifically the power distance, i.e. the boss’s higher status. However, the acceptance in such a case does not necessarily indicate that the apologisee was satisfied with the apology. For example, Yousef in the excerpt below, asked whether he would accept this apology, unequivocally stated that he would do so because it was performed by his boss.
Yousef: I would accept it because he apologised and because he is my boss; I cannot argue with him as he might hold grudges against me, hence I would accept it.

In the above extract, Yousef suggests that he might have opted to accept the apology not because he found the apology appropriate, but because the performer was his boss. That is, the apologisee in such a situation might overlook the apology combination and pay more attention to the power distance. In particular, they might do this to avoid any adverse impact of leaving the grievance unsettled: for instance, the possibility Yousef raises that his boss might hold a grudge against him. This suggests how power distance might be critical when it comes to accepting the apology. That is, the potential adverse impacts are far more complicated and severe than if the situation involves equal interlocutors. We can see Yousef’s decision to accept the apology as being driven by his intention to maintain his relationship with his boss which might not apply if the offender had been an equal colleague or a stranger.

To address this point directly, I decided to ask a follow-up question about whether their reactions would be the same if the offender was a stranger. I opted to ask about a stranger rather than someone who clearly does not have power over the hearer because I wanted to avoid the answer being impacted by the familiarity between the interactants. In answer to this follow-up question, Thayer indicated that there will be differences:
Interviewer: If you didn’t know the offender, would your reaction be the same?

Thayer: No.

Interviewer: Why?

Thayer: Because my boss has the authority and I’m under his supervision; you cannot argue with him compared to someone who is a stranger.

Thayer’s assertion that he would react differently if the offender was not his boss indicated the relevance of the interpersonal effect (specifically a power distance). As he put it in his clarification in extract (17), Thayer revealed that what motivated his decision to accept his boss’s apology without arguing was his boss’s “authority” and being his “supervisor”. Thus, in the absence of the power distance, we observe that Thayer might opt to argue with the transgressor and reject the apology.
In addition to the power distance, another aspect of the interpersonal relationship surfaced in the discussion, in that the nature of the relationship between the boss and his employee might shape the employee’s perception of the boss’s apology. This was evident in Abdul Mohsen’s extract below:

Abdul Mohsen: It depends on your boss’s personality and your relationship with them: sometimes your relationship with your boss is a work related in which your boss is treating you as a subordinate and apologises to you by saying ‘sorry I did not mean it and I parked my car as I thought I’ll be finishing quickly’, this apology might be acceptable if your relationship with the boss is a friendly one … Honestly it depends on the boss’s personality, he might apologise or maybe instead smile and apologise by saying ‘I did not know, I was trying to finish quickly’, he might take it as a friendly chat coupled with a smile. In this case, you are likely as an employee with him as your boss to accept his apology. Ultimately, he is my boss and it would be a friendly situation for the sake of the work; it wouldn’t be good for the work to have tension with my boss.
Here Abdul Mohsen seems to be in favour of accepting the apology from a friendly boss compared to a boss who treats him as subordinate. Even so, ultimately, he might accept the apology to avoid enacting a conflict with his boss. The acceptance of the apology under these conditions does not stem from his perception of the apology as appropriate, but from his need to have a healthy relationship with someone who works for. Despite having reservations about the nature of the apology, in the context of the boss-employee relationship he is ultimately inclined to accept it to avoid tension. His decision was motivated by his desire to avoid having an unhealthy relationship with someone whom he works for, which in return revealed the ultimate influence of the power relations on his decision to accept the apology.

An issue which surfaced in the discussion of this scenario was the question of the offender's intention. Would it make a difference if the boss had, in the first instance, parked his car deliberately to obstruct the employee? In answering this question, participants seemed to find that unacceptable and disrespectful.

الباحث: راج تفرق لو كان يعرف سيارتك ووقف وراها متعهد؟

عبدالرحمن: نعم

الباحث: كيف؟

عبدالرحمن: وش يخلبه يوقف وراء سيارتي، هل لانه يعتقد اني راح اسامحه والثانيين لا؟ ليه ما قالني انه بيوقف وراي؟ لو كنلي كنت قبلت اعتباره.
Interviewer: Would it make any difference if he knows it's your car and parked there on purpose?

Abdulrahman: Yes

Interviewer: How?

Abdulrahman: why would he park behind my car? Would it be because he thought I would forgive him while others won’t? Why has not he told me? If he had done that, I would have accepted.

Abdul Mohsen: I agree.
**Abdulrahman:** But all of a sudden, he recognises my car and takes the decision to park behind me!

**Interviewer:** Would that affect your acceptance of his apology?

**Abdulrahman:** if he knows my car and did not tell me, yes.

**Interviewer:** What would you feel? How would you find that?

**Abdulrahman:** I feel that despite knowing me, he doesn’t respect me … he knows that I’m busy and I have got some important things to do and yet he parked behind me without even telling me. What would he expect me to do? Go to him and thank him for blocking my way! Of course, that would annoy me and I would clarify to him that he has done something wrong.

**Abdul Mohsen:** If my boss parked behind me on purpose, it depends on my relationship with my boss. If our relationship is a boss-employee one, parking behind me in purpose may be translated as if he looks at me as inferior to him. However, if our relationship is friendly, I might accept it. But, if he parked behind me while we have no relationship except that he is my boss and he apologises without justifying his action, I would think that he does not respect me and is undermining me.

In extract (19), given that parking behind someone on purpose is considered as a potentially aggressive move, the participants seemed to be inclined to reject it unless there are mitigating interpersonal relationship effects e.g., a friendly boss. Here both Abdulrahman and Abdul Mohsen suggested that parking behind them on purpose is a sign of disrespect on the part of the boss: as Abdulrahman put it, “he doesn’t respect
me”, and as Abdul Mohsen put it, “he looks at me as inferior to him… he does not respect me and is undermining me”. Their rejection might be stemming from their perception of the boss’s intention as a deliberate demonstration of his authority, and therefore, presumably no apology combinations would completely mitigate the damage that the boss’s action has done.

Moreover, Abdul Mohsen moved the discussion onto differentiating between the nature of possible relationships with his boss. With a friendly boss, he would accept the apology; otherwise, he would not accept it. In the former case, Abdul Mohsen assumed that having a friendly relationship would necessitate some compromise on his part. It would also be reasonable to assume that the other party is unlikely to be acting out of malice towards you. However, if their relationship was just a work-related relationship, his boss has no right to exercise his authority outside the work environment, such as by invading Abdul Mohsen’s territory and expecting him to be fine with it.

The participants expressed their willingness to reject an apology here regardless of the existence of the power distance. This might be due to the fact that they felt they were treated unfairly, given they knew that the boss has parked behind them on purpose. For them, their boss’s action signalled that he doesn’t respect them and he treats them as inferior even outside the work environment. Perhaps their negative perception here was due to the fact that their boss did not recognise them as a moral interlocutor (Smith, 2008), and hence did not fulfil their need to restore their self-
respect and dignity (Lazare, 2004), which may motivate the rejection of an apology. Furthermore, it is possible that the apology addresses the act, whereas the offence here includes the personal nature of the affront. That is, the offended party in such a case may want the boss to acknowledge that he/she was wrong to think he/she could act in this way, just by appealing to the power relations that are in effect.

On the other hand, Abdul Mohsen’s willingness to accept an apology from a friendly boss suggests that he might assume that the nature of their relationship has licensed the boss’s action. That would mean the power factor was erased due to their friendship, and the situation was deemed as one taking place between acquaintances rather than a boss-employee situation. Therefore, his acceptance perhaps reflected an absence of a perception of disrespect underpinning the boss’s action.

Another example that showed how the interpersonal dimension might influence hearers’ perception of an apology can be found in the third situation (late student), in which a student arrives late. In this situation, some participants suggested that their decision to accept or reject the apology was informed by interpersonal knowledge about the student. For example, if the apology (I’m sorry, I promise that won’t happen again) was presented by a student who is known to be habitually punctual, the apology is more likely to be accepted than when given by a student who is known to be habitually late. This appeal to the student’s past conduct is evident in the following extract:
Abdul Mohsen: It depends on the student himself and usually professors have experience in such situations as they have been through many incidents like this and most of them can figure out whether the student’s excuse is persuasive or not. Thus, as a professor, you can accept the apology if you know that the student is always punctual and just happened that he came late once or twice and not in consecutive days as it would be a sign that he might come late on purpose.

Muhammad: I agree, if I have a student who comes late once a week, I won’t accept his excuse. However, if the student was always punctual and it happened that he came late once or twice and I thought that he was eager to attend, I would accept his apology. However, if he always comes late and every time he would provide a new excuse, I wouldn’t accept it from him as I would know that he is not a serious student.

From the above quotes, it seemed that the student’s previous conduct is considered by the offended party as the main driver that pushes their decision to either accept or reject an apology. For the participants, being late once or twice for someone who is
known to be punctual is excusable regardless of the student’s explanation: This is because they assume that even a punctual and eager student may occasionally be late. Furthermore, with a punctual student, being late does not necessarily need to be justified. However, students who are known to be habitually late are not granted such a privilege and hence their apology is more likely to be rejected. This indicated the effects of the interpersonal knowledge about the offender that the offended party may use to determine their perceptions of the apology.

The interpersonal relationship’s influence on hearers’ perception of an apology might also include more severe offences e.g., damages. For example, in the fourth situation (*Breaking screen*) in which an apologiser broke a laptop’s screen, the focus groups’ responses suggested that the promise of forbearance combination could be accepted from close people but not strangers. In the following extract, Muhammad answers my follow-up question of whether it would be different if the offender was someone close to him:

(21) محمد: تامّن، أنت القريب
الباحث: وهل راج تقبل هذا الاعتذار "أنا أسف، اعترف إنني انتهت المرة الجاية"؟
محمد: بعض الأحيان بعض الأشخاص يعتبرونك إنك تقبل الاعتذار لهم لأن ما عندك خيار ثاني مثلًا إذا كنت طرحت اللاب توب وكسرت الشاشة، لابد أن أقبل اعتذارها بدون ما أطلب تعويض
الباحث: لماذا عن صديق مقرب؟
Muhammad: Of course, it would differ!

Interviewer: Would you accept this apology ‘I’m sorry, I promise I will pay more attention next time’?

Muhammad: Sometimes, some people force you to accept their apology as you have no other options. For example, if my daughter dropped my laptop and broke the screen, I have to accept her apology without asking for a reparation.

Interviewer: What about a close friend?

Muhammad: He can compensate me in a different way. He might give me a present or something to just appease me. It needn’t be a real compensation such as a new laptop. It might be something small and it would be considered as an apology.

Abdulrahman: I agree.

Abdul Mohsen: I agree, it does differ if the offender is a close person.

Interviewer: How?
**Abdul Mohsen:** Because of the closeness between me and the other party, I would overlook asking for compensation. It won’t be an issue as things happen, hence we need to overlook the compensation given I might in the future commit a similar mistake. Therefore, it wouldn’t be an issue given the closeness between us.

In the above excerpts, the participants suggested that when there is no social distance between the interlocutors, apology is more likely to be accepted even in a severe offence that involves damages. Unlike their reactions to strangers, they assumed that in such circumstances they would overlook asking for compensation, or as Muhammad suggested “*It needn’t be a real compensation such as a new laptop. It might be something small*”. Their reactions seemed to provide evidence of the effect of having a close relationship with the offender which might lead the offended party to condone certain behaviours and be more tolerant compared to their reactions with strangers. This outcome clearly showed the influence of the interpersonal relationship on hearers’ perception of the apology.

Furthermore, Abdul Mohsen highlighted that, with a close person, breaking the laptop’s screen would not be an issue given that, as he put it “*I might in the future commit a similar mistake*”. This idea recurs throughout the data when the discussion concerns a close relationship: the participants understand a close relationship to involve compromise, because such a relationship is expected to endure even if offences take place within it which merit apology. Therefore, people might tend to be more tolerant with those who they bond with because they intrinsically comprehend
that the nature of their relationship may involve some issues that need to be fixed by means of apology. Thus, since they might subsequently be in a position that requires them to perform an apology, and given the importance of maintaining a close relationship, they tend to accept the apology – not necessarily because they find it appropriate, but because they are looking at the bigger picture.

Furthermore, unlike the situation with strangers, the participants seemed to find it plausible that they might unintentionally damage something for a close person in the future. People think it presumptuous of a relative stranger to suppose that, having broken a person's laptop, that person would ever lend them the laptop again. In the context of a close relationship, this is perhaps not such an unreasonable presumption: Abdul Mohsen is clearly envisaging a situation in which the offender later entrusts him with an item of property and he unintentionally damages it.

In the fifth situation (Postponing paperwork), in which an employee fails to do their work on time, the participants also discussed the effects of the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors, and in particular the past conduct of an employee, which might shape the boss's reaction to the employee's mistake. Some participants suggested directly that if the employee was known generally to be good at his/her job, they would accept his/her apology. However, if he/she was not, his/her apology is more likely to be rejected.
Abdullah: Honestly, it depends on the employee’s past conduct: how was he in his work? Was he a heedless employee? Thus, it depends on his past and how was he in his job. If he was a good employee, I would accept, otherwise, I would deduct from his salary.

Hadi: I agree, if it was his first time and I know that he was a good employee and what happened was not intended, I would accept his apology. However, if there was some negligence on the part of the employee, and if his way of talking seems to show his carelessness, I wouldn’t accept his apology especially if the meeting was important and that will affect his assessment and his salary will be deducted.

Yousef: I do agree with my colleagues. I would deduct from his salary and I might even consider firing him if he was a negligent employee.

In the above excerpts, the participants seemed to have a tendency to reject an apology from an already known negligent employee regardless of the apology strategy used. However, an employee who is known to be good at his/her job and happened to make
a mistake is more likely to have his/her apology accepted. This difference is evident in Abdul Mohsen's comments:

(23)

عبدالمحسن: لو الموظف ارتكب نفس الأخطاء في الماضي يعني انتاجيته ضعيفة أو كان مهل في عمله هذه ممكن تفودني لرفض اعتذاره لذلك تعرف ان هذا الشخص م suger في عمله ومو من نوعية الأشخاص التي تعمد عليهم لذلك ما تستطيع تقبل اعتذاره بسبب سلوكه السابق

Abdul Mohsen: if the employee has done similar mistakes in the past, for instance if his productivity was low or he was negligent in his job, these would drive you to reject his apology. You already know that this person is not good at his job or he is a type of person that you would not count on. Thus, you cannot accept his apology because of his previous misconduct.

Here Abdul Mohsen stated that the context of the interpersonal knowledge of the offender motivated his rejection of the employee’s apology. Furthermore, it seems that there is an association between repeating the offence or being accustomed to making mistakes and the apology’s sincerity. Participants seem to have a general preference to reject an apology if a student or an employee has made the same mistake before. This might be because they assume that repeating the same offence would raise doubts about the offender’s sincerity, and the meaningfulness of their apology. This represents another way in which the interpersonal relations might play a vital role in shaping how an apology is perceived.
5.4 Discussion

The study aims to examine some questions that emerged from the quantitative analysis in our first study. These questions are concerned with the perception of two combinations: an explanation combination and a promise of forbearance combination. The results concerning these combinations in the quantitative study were not clear and raise some questions that needed to be examined. Specifically, a promise for forbearance combination was theorised to make apologies more acceptable while an explanation combination was theorised to make apology less acceptable, but the results suggested that the effects were actually more equivocal. Hence I conducted the qualitative study in an attempt to comprehend what might cause the unclear results from the quantitative analysis. The findings suggested a role for three factors in promoting hearers’ decisions to either accept or reject an apology, namely the interpersonal effect, the effects of the act that is being apologised for, and the effect of the apology strategies, with the interpersonal effects seeming to be more influential than the other two factors according to the data from the focus groups. That is, hearers are more influenced by the nature of their relationship with the apologiser than the other factors: even when they mention the other factors, the hearers seemed to pay a considerable attention to the nature of their relationship with the apologiser.

In particular, the results of this study supported our hypothesis that when an explanation is oriented towards external rather than internal factors, the apologisee is more likely to accept the apology. This was evident in the participants’ inclination to
accept this combination in the first situation (*Deleting files*) where the offence was by accident. Nevertheless, their acceptance was not without exceptions. Some participants wished to consider other factors that might influence their perception of the proposed apology, including the act that is being apologised for (the importance of the files), and the interpersonal relationship (whether the apologiser was a stranger as opposed to someone whom they know).

The results of the first situation (*Deleting files*) provide a different and complementary perspective to those of the quantitative analysis in chapter 4. For instance, in the quantitative analysis, the results disclosed no significant differences between apology combinations, all of which were widely rejected. In the qualitative analysis, the results were different, with participants expressing greater keenness to accept the apology due to the accidental nature of the offence.

The results also revealed that, although an explanation that is oriented towards an internal factor is generally likely to be deemed unacceptable, most participants nevertheless expressed their intention to accept the apology in the second situation (*Boss parking a car*). The results here were strongly impacted by the interpersonal relationship (and particularly the power distance) between the employee and the boss. That was evident in the participants' discussion in which most of them expressed their will to accept the apology despite disliking it. Quotes on this point included the following: “*I would accept it because he apologised and because he is my boss; I cannot argue with him as he might hold grudges against me*”, and “*because my boss
has the authority and I’m under his supervision you cannot argue with him”. These comments seemed to provide evidence that the acceptance of the apology was influenced by the nature of the relationship between the offended party and the offender. The participants here paid more attention to the nature of this relationship than to the apology combination used. Therefore, their acceptance was not due to finding the (internal) explanation acceptable, but because they were impacted by the interpersonal relationship, specifically the power distance. This finding supports the findings of studies on apology response which indicate that people opt to accept apologies from someone with power (e.g., Saleem et al., 2018; Alasqah, 2021).

In the absence of power distance, there is support for our hypothesis that an internal-oriented explanation is more likely to be rejected. Throughout the focus groups, participants discussing explanation inclined to reject internal-oriented explanations such as a student saying “I overslept” or an employee postponing finishing work without an external excuse, showing different reactions to the same situation when the apologiser was a stranger (cf. extract 17).

The qualitative results from this second situation (Boss parking a car), with the boss apologising, are consistent with the results of the first study. That disclosed no significant differences between the groups (p < 0.05) which suggested that the participants may have been neglecting differences in apology strategy and focusing on the fact that the apologiser was their boss, hence opting to accept the apology regardless of its form. The qualitative approach showed how the power distance is a
critical aspect that affects the apologisee’s perception of the apology in this situation as shown above. The results suggested that the apologisee might have assessed the outcomes of retaining the grievance, weighed the consequences of such a decision, and hence opted to accept the apology to avoid any potential adverse impacts that would occur as a result. These considerations would be less relevant if the apologiser had equal status with the apologisee.

The data also supported our hypothesis that a promise of forbearance combination is more likely to upgrade the apology’s function in some situations, and hence motivate its acceptance. For instance, in the student situation (*Late student*), most participants were keen to accept the apology due to their perception of a promise of forbearance combination as an appropriate apology strategy which showed the apologiser’s eagerness to repair the situation. However, their acceptance was not without exceptions: participants might defer to other factors, such as interpersonal knowledge, in order to determine whether to accept the apology or not. For example, a student’s past conduct (punctual or habitually late) might determine the apologisee’s perception of his/her apology.

For this situation (*Late student*), once again the results of the qualitative analysis appear to be consistent with those of the quantitative analysis. The quantitative analysis suggested that there are significant differences between groups where both a promise of forbearance combination and an offer of repair combination were significantly different than an IFID on its own, with the promise of forbearance
combination judged by participants as an acceptable combination. Similarly, the qualitative results suggested that people are likely to accept the promise of forbearance combination in this context, albeit with some exceptions related to the effect of the interpersonal relationship.

Nevertheless, although a promise of forbearance was accepted in a situation that does not involves damages such as someone being late, it would not necessarily be accepted in just any such situation. If the situation was deemed so severe that it cannot be restored, it might motivate the apologisee to reject the combination or at least to opt to ask for more clarification, for instance what caused the offence, if the apologisee does not know the circumstances that led to the offence. In the employee’s situation (postponing paperwork), most participants were in favour of rejecting the apology, partly because they perceived the employee’s misconduct as causing harm not just to the boss but also to the reputation of the company. Consequently, a promise of forbearance combination was regarded by some participants as an inappropriate combination in such a case.

However, this rejection was not without exceptions. The apologisee is more likely to accept an apology from an employee who had a persuasive reason for their failure to work, for instance a family emergency, which is an external-oriented in nature. This tendency also supports the claim that an external explanation is more likely to be accepted by an apologisee. That is, when we examine the participants’ examples of what they call persuasive explanations, these examples are typically external in
character. Furthermore, the apologisee might be influenced by the interpersonal relationship, and their prior knowledge about the apologiser, e.g. whether or not the employee has a good reputation. Another factor affecting their decision would be the nature of the act itself, in this case the importance of the meeting, with a more important meeting being more likely to lead to the apology being rejected.

Once again, the results of the employee situation (Postponing paperwork) were consistent with the results of the same situation in the quantitative analysis. In the first study, all the apology combinations tested were strongly rejected by participants, including the promise of forbearance combination. However, by examining this situation again through a qualitative instrument, we were able to capture why the promise of forbearance strategy might be inappropriate. In discussing the conditions under which they might accept the apology in this situation, participants did not mention the promise of forbearance combination as an option. Instead, they stressed the importance of a persuasive reason or the context of the interpersonal knowledge that the apologisee knows about the apologiser as factors that might motivate their acceptance.

Therefore, we can argue that, in the case of a severe offence that cannot be restored, a promise of forbearance combination is more likely to be rejected. This would confirm our hypothesis that a promise of forbearance does not always upgrade the apology function. The data also support the claim that the promise of forbearance may downgrade the apology’s function in some contexts (e.g., in a situation that involves
damages), and hence motivate its rejection. In the situation involving a broken screen, the participants were inclined to reject the promise of forbearance combination. What seems to be striking in this situation was the participants’ perception of the promise of forbearance as provocative. They regarded the use of a promise of forbearance combination without repairing the damage as a case of the offender moving from the apologising phase to a phase where the pardoning is assumed to have been granted. This was evident in the participants’ suggestion that “there will be no next time”. They have arguably interpreted the apology as a signal of disrespect by the apologiser who effectively pardons himself before repairing the damage. Some participants affirmed a preference for the plain apology (IFID) over this combination, indicating that the promise of forbearance was serving to downgrade the apology function.

For this situation (Breaking screen), the findings again appear consistent with those from the first study. The participants in both studies were keen to reject the promise of forbearance combination in a situation that involves damages. The qualitative data here helped expand our understanding of the possible rationale behind the participants’ decision. One possible explanation for the inappropriateness of the combination here might be that the apologiser has not yet repaired the damage. Another possible explanation is that the apologisee was influenced by the act itself since the act requires compensation, and this renders the promise of forbearance inappropriate. However, that does not mean apology cannot be accepted without a compensation; rather, it suggests that the apologisees perceived the promise of forbearance combination as an attempt by the offender to jump prematurely from
apology to reconciliation, thus impinging on the offended party’s rights to decide whether or not to pardon the offence.

On the other hand, the data also revealed that the promise of forbearance combination can be accepted in damage situations under some circumstances. These are mainly related to the effect of the interpersonal relationship, in particular, to the closeness between the apologisee and the apologiser. The data revealed that people might be more tolerant with those who are close to them, and might overlook asking for compensation even in a situation that involves damages in order to maintain their relationship. It seemed that people have a tendency to accept a promise of forbearance combination in such situations as they are more influenced by the nature of their relationship with the apologiser than the apology itself. This provided evidence of the effect of the interpersonal relationship on the hearer’s perception of an apology, given that participants seemed to neglect the apology combination and focus instead on their relationship with the offending party. This may be because what is presumptuous with a stranger – assuming that one’s error will be pardoned – may be perfectly reasonable with a close friend or family member. This supports Fraser’s (1981, p. 269) remark that “as the degree of familiarity increases between interactants, the need (or at least the perceived need) to provide elaborate apologies decreases”.

Overall, the data exhibited that the interpersonal relationship, the act itself, and the apology strategies are considered the main drivers that motivate the hearer’s perception of an apology. The data also showed some results that are consistent with
prior literature and some that were inconsistent. For example, the data suggested that Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of the impact of the three variables of social distance, power distance, and the severity of the offence on how the speaker selects his/her strategy while considering them on face-threatening acts, can be extended to the hearer’s perception of an apology. Several studies have reported how these factors influence speaker’s selection of apology strategies (e.g., Holmes, 1995; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Nureddeen, 2008; Al-Sobh, 2013; Binasfour, 2014; Banikalef et al., 2015; Alsulayyi, 2016; Alhojailan, 2019; Qari, 2019; Alasqah, 2021). In this study, similar influence on the hearer’s perception of an apology was observed. This study also provides supports to some of Lazare’s (2004) ideas about the offended party’s psychological needs such as restoring of self-respect and dignity and the offended party’s need to ensure that both interlocutors share the same values. It also supports Smith’s (2005) concept that the offended party needs to ensure that they are looked at as a moral interlocutor, and hence given a superior position in which they have the power to pardon or withhold pardon from the offender. This was clearly evident in the participants’ irritation at the offender’s employment of a promise of forbearance combination in a damage situation, as discussed above. In this respect, the results here are inconsistent with Scher and Darley’s (1997) findings that an utterance is regarded by subjects as least appropriate and least apologetic when it lacks one of these strategies: an expression of responsibility, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance. In fact, a promise of forbearance is influenced by other aspects related to the context and is not always deemed more appropriate.
The findings were also inconsistent with other studies which claim that one can intensify an apology by combining one of the apology strategies with an IFID (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989). In fact, the results provided some counterexamples that clearly show that combining apology strategies are not always positively contributing to the force of apologising. The usage of apology combinations is constrained by other variables related to the context that may shape their perceptions such as the interpersonal relationship, the act itself (the act that is being apologised for), and the apology strategies.

To sum up, the data has supported some of our hypotheses and disconfirmed others. However, where the data have contradicted our expectations, this has been explicable in terms of the impact of either the offending act itself, the interpersonal relationship, the inappropriateness of the apology combination, or by a mixture of these factors. That is, there might be a general predisposition among people to feel that an apology combination needs to be tailored to fit their social, psychological, and emotional needs. Therefore, when a combination fails to achieve its goal and is consequently rejected, the failure could be attributed to the inappropriateness of the apology based on these needs. This analysis would run counter to the view that adding more apology strategies automatically makes an apology better.

### 5.5 Cultural perspective on Saudi Arabic

The results of the thesis might be subject to culturally specific reasoning that is associated with the Saudi culture and the cultures of the Arabic speaking countries.
Accordingly, in the following pages, I reflect on the relationship between apology and the culture. Specifically, in the following pages, I aim to discuss how power relations are understood in the context of Saudi Arabic and how difficult saying sorry may be. To answer these questions, I will reflect on my results and the results of recent studies on Saudi Arabic and other studies on other varieties of Arabic.

Speech acts realisations (e.g. apology) were examined across culture (cf. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Ogiermann, 2009) and the results reveal that although the realisation patterns of the speech act of apology might be similar in many cultures and language, how, when, and with what combination they occur may differ from culture to another. This clearly shows the importance of culture as an external factor that might influence people’s performance of certain speech acts. For instance, social factors such as gender, age, and social status are considered by Mills and Kadar (2011) as having a huge influence on people’s performance of speech acts (e.g. apology) in ways which vary considerably from one culture to another.

In the context of apology, Olshtain and Cohen presented their five apology strategies: the explicit apology, the explanation, the acknowledgement of responsibility, the offer of repair and the promise of forbearance. Later, they suggested that their apology strategy taxonomy might be universal (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989). However, they stress that the use of these strategies might vary from culture to another. Olshtain and Cohen’s (1989) view of the apology speech act as universal with some differences in realisation from language to another has been supported by several later studies (e.g.,

Hofstede (1980) develops a 6-model cultural framework which has been widely used in the literature. Although the model was criticised by some scholars (Schwartz, 1999; McSweeney, 2002), it can provide researchers with a tool that would help them gain valuable insights into the differences between cultures (Alasqah, 2021). The model includes 6 dimensions which are: ‘Power Distance’\(^4\), ‘Uncertainty Avoidance’\(^5\), ‘individualism’ versus ‘Collectivism’, ‘Masculinity’ versus ‘Femininity’\(^6\), ‘Long Term’ versus ‘Short Term Orientation’\(^7\), and ‘Indulgence’ versus ‘Restraint’\(^8\) (Hofstede, 2012).

Hofstede et al. (2010) suggest that there are differences between western societies (such as the UK and the US) and eastern societies such as Arabic speaking countries (e.g. Saudi) in which the former are considered individualist societies while the latter are regarded as collectivist societies. Hofstede and McCrae (2004) suggest that the

\(^{4}\) Power Distance is a concept that refers to “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede Insights, 2022), and thus differs from the sense in which ‘power distance’ has been referred to elsewhere in this thesis.

\(^{5}\) Uncertainty Avoidance refer to “the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen?” (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

\(^{6}\) Masculine society means “the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner/best in field” while a Feminine society refers to the society that is dominated by “caring for others and quality of life. A Feminine society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admirable” (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

\(^{7}\) It refers to “how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future” (Hofstede Insights, 2022).

\(^{8}\) It refers to “the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised” (Hofstede Insights, 2022).
concept of ‘individualism’ “refers to the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. In individualist societies, the ties between individuals are loose: Everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family.” (ibid., p. 63). Collectivism “refers to the group” in which in a collectivist society such as the Saudi society, “people are integrated from birth onward into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts, and grandparents), protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.” (ibid., p. 63).

According to Hofstede's (1980) framework, Saudi society has high scores on both the uncertainty avoidance (80) and power distance (95) dimensions (Hofstede Insights, 2022). According to Alsaqah (2021), these dimensions have implications for both social interaction and speech acts. For example, apology perception may mirror the apologisee’s cultural beliefs and backgrounds. Culturally, a Saudi Arabic speaker will not usually require an apology from his/her parents even if they were at fault. This is potentially a consequence of the Islamic belief of the sacredness of the parents’ roles in which a son/daughter is expected to categorically obey and honour them unless their parents ask them to disobey Allah⁹. Therefore, it seems difficult for a person to ask his/her parents to apologise to him/her. Perhaps this is not just because of their obedience to their parents, but may be due to a deep realisation of apology as a speech act that threaten the speaker’s face, and hence having your parents being in that position to appease you is uncomfortable to people from an Islamic and Arabic background. Alasqah (2021) cites one interviewee who suggests that “[it is] very rare

⁹ “And We have commanded people to ’honour’ their parents” (Holy Quran, Chapter, 31, Verse, 14)
that my parents would apologise to me. [It is] actually more polite for me to apologise to them even when they could be the one at fault." (ibid., p. 375).

The same concept was brought up in the focus groups that I conducted in the current study. One participant highlighted that “if the person is close to you such as a father or a mother … even though if they were at fault, you need to apologise to them due to the close relationship between you and them”. Another participant also added that if the parents choose to apologise, the son/daughter must forgive them: “if the father or the mother were at fault towards their son/daughter, their son/daughter is compelled to accept their apology even if there was no clear apology or clear regret on the part of the parents, the son/daughter is obliged to move on and accept the apology because they are the parents and whatever they do should be accepted and forgiven”.

Alsaqah (2021) also suggests that Saudis’ selection of words when apologising is influenced by cultural upbringing. For example, Saudis in their attempt to intensify their apology might use words such as “Inshallah” (by God willing), or “Wallah” (I swear by Allah). These devices reflect an Islamic belief that swearing by the name of Allah is a strong signal of sincerity. Tahir and Pandian (2016) as cited by Alasqah (2021) suggest that these words are attribution of explicit expression of apology. Alasqah results support the findings of other studies in the context of Arabic (or Islamic) cultures in which the use of words that praise Allah is common (cf. Soliman, 2003; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Nureddeen, 2008; Jepahi, 2010).
As an additional cultural feature, Qari (2017) suggests that Saudis find providing an excuse as an important feature of an effective apology given that by knowing the circumstances leading up to the offence, the hearer may forgive the offending party. Citing Farahat (2009), Qari suggests that providing an account for the offence leads to more understanding and cooperation on the part of the offended party. Like Alsqah (2021), Qari (2017) also highlighted how Saudis are influenced by the culture in their choice of some words. For instance, Qari (2017) suggests that most of the excuses provided by Saudis were intensified by “swearing to God”, thus showing sincerity, as discussed by Alasqah (2021).

Saudi society exhibits a high power distance, in Hofstede's (1980) terms: “people accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification” (Hofstede Insights, 2022). Qari (2017; 2019) uses Hofstede’s cultural model to differentiate between the Saudi and the British dealing with apology in a situation that involve a father asking his son/daughter to wake him up for an appointment in which the son/the daughter forgot to do so. The results reveal that Saudi males were inclined to opt out of apologising or to use less direct apology to escape punishment. Qari (2017) cites Ali (1992) and Ahmed’s (2008) studies which examine how children in the Arab world perceive the image of their fathers, suggests that males are usually perceiving their father as harsher on them by comparison to females. Qari (2017) argues that this is perhaps why Saudi males were inclined to use less direct apology strategy with their fathers. This was manifested in her participants’ emphasis that they “would opt out of apologising or even communicating with [their] father because [they] predicted that [their] father will scold [them] for a long time and that
[they] will keep silent and basically ‘take it’.” (ibid., p. 217). On the other hand, Qari (2017) suggested that her British respondents were inclined to blame their father by pointing out that “their fathers should have set an alarm themselves and/or should have not exclusively relied on them if they had an important appointment to make” (p. 219).

Qari (2017) concluded that the difference between Saudis and British in their dealing with their fathers can be explained by Hofstede’s cultural model, particularly in terms of collectivist vs individualist societies. The choices of apology strategy fit with this, given that in a collectivist society a father holds a superior position, and hence in dealing with him, one is dealing with one with power which is not the case in the individualist society.

However, although Saudi males were in favour of using more indirect strategies with their fathers, this contrasts with their general tendency to use more direct strategies with other people who have power. Qari (2017) suggests that this reflects the nature of the role of males in the Saudi society. Al-Luhaibi (2014, p. 169) as quoted by Qari (2017) suggested that “the eldest male in the household [is] given priority in terms of supervising finances and administering discipline in the household”. Hence, by opting to use more indirect apologies, opting out of apologising, or lying to their fathers, Saudi males are attempting to preserve their image due to their embarrassment of their involvement in the offence which as Qari (2017) suggested “makes them not only lose positive face but also appear irresponsible and less reliable sons” (p. 218).
Likewise, Alasqah (2021) highlighted the influence of power distance in Saudis’ performance and uptake of an apology. Her results revealed that Saudis were thoughtful in their selection of apology strategy when dealing with someone with power and they were cautious in their uptake of the apology provided by someone with power in which they tend to accept their apology.

Similar results were reported by the current study in which both the quantitative and the qualitative analysis revealed that Saudis take into account their relationship with the apologiser in their perception of the proposed apology. This is manifested in their uptake of the boss apology in the boss situation (Boss parking a car). In this situation, the results revealed that the participants were inclined to accept the apology regardless of the combination used. In the qualitative analysis, the participants unequivocally revealed that the reason for their acceptance was because the apologiser was their boss. This was also evident in their different uptake when they were asked whether they would accept the apology if it was provided by a stranger, which was not the same i.e. they were leaning towards arguing with the stranger as opposed to their boss.

Furthermore, in my qualitative study, some participants highlighted the importance of their boss apologising to them. For example, one participant said in his reply to my question why you would accept the apology from your boss; “because he apologises”. This clearly indicates that there might be a belief among Saudis that people with power
usually avoid apologising to their inferior. Hence, by merely apologising, the apologisee found that as a good gesture from the boss. Accordingly, in a society that was ranked high in power distance in Hofstede’s cultural model, when a person with power apologises, the hearer might find their apology valuable either because they (i.e. someone with power) rarely apologise or because of the opportunity to avoid conflict with someone they work for.

Overall, power distance has been reported to have a significant impact on people’s performance and uptake of apologies in Arabic as reported in section (2.5.1.1 & 2.5.1.2). That is, it seems that Saudis, like other Arabic speaking countries, pay a considerable attention to their relationship with the speaker. Hence, they seem to be thoughtful in their uptake of apologies provided by someone with power. This explains why an apology from a boss was accepted regardless of the apology strategies used which indicates how the role of the relationship overshadowed the appropriateness of the apology strategy used. Therefore, one way to comprehend the Saudis’ behaviour with their boss is by considering Hofstede’s (1980) power dimension and how power relations play a vital role in Saudis’ uptake of an apology from someone with power.

The current study also examined the case in which the power relations were reversed and the participants were asked whether they would accept an employee’s apology (Postponing paperwork). Here, the apology strategy does make a difference, and the boss assesses it and makes a decision according to how appropriate he finds it. Thus,
in this case, power relations alone are not sufficient to explain whether or not an apologisee will accept an apology.

5.5.1 The difficulties of apology in Saudi Arabic

The question also arose in the study of how difficult it is to apologise at all in Saudi culture. In answering this question, my participants in the second study (the qualitative) suggested that apology is an act that they would usually do. However, there are some circumstances that might render this more difficult. One condition is when the offender repeats his/her mistake. The participants suggested that it is difficult for them to apologise if they commit the same offence again, perhaps due to feeling ashamed either because of doing the offence again or (where applicable) having broken a promise of forbearance.

Furthermore, one participant highlights how difficult they find it to apologise to someone who is much younger than the offending party. He highlighted that “if the offended party is much younger than me … even though I know that I was at fault and I have to apologise, I would face some difficulties because of the age gap between us”. In answering my question why he would find such difficulties with younger people, his answer was hovering around his attempt to preserve his face. Particularly, he said “I don’t know why, but perhaps because he is younger than me, hence it would be as if I’m humiliating myself when I apologise to someone who is younger than me”. Another participant emphasises that the difficulties to apologise to someone who is younger might be related to the offending party’s image and by opting out of
apologising, he/she can preserve their pride. Particularly, he said “I agree with [my colleague] that there might be some difficulties in apologising to someone who is younger especially in front of his family or in front of people”. Here the participant emphasises that one reason that might render apologising to younger people as difficult is being in front of others which makes apologising even harder as there is more threat to the offending party’s face. Hence, some people might prefer to opt out of apologising to preserve their image and avoid being embarrassed. This leaning towards opting out of apologising with younger people has been reported by some studies of Arabic apology which indicate that old people in Arabic culture do not usually apologise to children (cf. Jepahi, 2010).

Furthermore, Arabic people may attempt to preserve their face by using some symbolic gesture instead of apologising. For instance, Qari (2019) noted that some of her male participants tend to kiss their fathers’ heads to placate them for failing to awake them for an important appointment. This gesture is common among people with Arabic and Islamic backgrounds and indicates respect to their parents. Qari attributed the Saudi males’ behaviour in this situation to their attempt to avoid verbally apologising, and hence be punished by their fathers. By opting to use a gesture instead, Saudis may want to avoid discussing the matter to evade punishment.

**5.5.2 Explanation in Saudi Arabic**

As highlighted in chapter two, some studies suggested that explanation is the most frequent apology strategy that is used by Saudis. This indicates that Saudis may prefer
to apologise indirectly to preserve their face. In my study and the studies of others, it seems that Saudis value apology to the extent that they sometimes call it a courageous act, which might mirror their intrinsic belief that apologising is a face-threatening act. Hence, it needs more courage on the part of the apologiser to apologise.

As I mentioned before, explanation is situation specific. Most studies about apology in Arabic discuss an explanation as a potential apology strategy among its participants either alone or in combination with an IFID. Explanation seems to be important in Saudi Arabic and other Arabic speaking countries perhaps due to the fact that these countries are positive face societies, hence they opt to apologise using indirect strategy or attempt to mitigate the offence to preserve their face.

The perception of the explanation combination seems also to be partially culture-specific. That is because Saudis assess the explanation orientations either towards external factors that causes the offence or internal factors. If the explanation is external in nature, Saudis seem to lean towards accepting the apology. However, if the explanation is internal in nature, they lean towards rejecting the apology except if there is another factor that would force them to overlook the inappropriateness of the apology strategy such as power distance or social closeness. Hence, the external oriented explanation can be generalised to other culture given that one would assume that in a well-developed society, people will tend to excuse each other. Thus, with explanation that is oriented towards external factors (out of the speaker’s control), one
expects the offended party to excuse him/her; otherwise, there will be obstacles in maintaining a social contract among a given society. On the other hand, the internal oriented explanation might be culture-specific given it might be constrained by whether the act is offensive or not in a given society.

Explanation also seems to be vital for Saudis especially in situations where they do not know the circumstances leading up to the offence. Their request for an explanation in such circumstances may lie in their need to allocate the responsibility of the offence. Hence, the explanation orientations (i.e. external or internal) are better looked at as indicators of whether the offence was the speaker’s fault or was due to an external factor that was out of their control. This behaviour perhaps lends support to Ogiermann’s (2009) argument that explanation strategies can be assessed in terms of its appropriateness through their responsibility tendency. Furthermore, the results run counter to the view that explanation cannot be part of an apology due to its internal motivations which negate the apology motivation (Tauvchis, 1991; Scher and Darely, 1997; Smith, 2008).

The perception of the explanation strategy in the context of Saudi Arabic might have a link to the old meaning of apology. For example, in Arabic dictionary, apology is associated with the act of presenting a justification that would excuse the offending party. Isfahani (n.d., p.555) defines apology as what a human being employed to dismiss his/her mistakes. Isfahani (n.d., p.555) argues that apology has three methods:
• to say I did not do A

• to say I did A because of X (say what makes you not guilty)

• To say I did A and I promise not to do it again. This one is called repentance.

To him, every repentance is considered as an apology, but not every apology is a repentance. That is, repentance is the highest degree of apologising. Similarly, in English, apology was borrowed “from the Greek roots apo- (“away from, off”) and logia (from logos, meaning “speech”)” (Merriam-Webster, 2023). According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.), one of the apology definitions is “something that is said or written to defend something that other people criticize”. This definition is derived from the old meaning apology in ancient Greek. For example, Plato’s Apology of Socrates in Ancient Greek, does not indicate an admission of wrongdoing on the part of Plato; however, it was a self-defence (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Therefore, the earliest meaning of apology was conjectured to be related to presenting a defence or justification (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

Therefore, given the ancient meaning of apology and how an explanation was the core concept of it, it is reasonable to assume that Arabic society (such as the Saudi), might find the use of explanation as an effective way to apologise in situations, where the offended party does not know the circumstances leading up to the offence. This is manifested in Isfahani’s three methods of apologising which are an indication that the offended party is either not sure the offending party has committed the offence (the
first and the third methods) or does not know how the offence took place (the second method). Thus, from a cultural perspective, people are expected to make mistakes, hence merit the apology. Accordingly, to maintain a good relationship with others, hearer’s duty implies that he/she carefully assesses the situation before deciding to either reject or accept the apology. I am not implying here that people always act in that manner; however, under normal circumstances, people would usually act in that way especially when there is a relationship with the offending party.

Taken together, therefore, it seems that Saudis are influenced by their culture in their dealing with apology. That is manifested in their selection of some phrases in their apology such as Wallah “I swear by Allah” to intensify the apology (Qari, 2017; Alasqah, 2021), and in their consideration of apologies from an offending party who has power as reported in the current study and the study of Alasqah (2021). That is, with apologies from someone with power, Saudis usually opt to accept the apology regardless of the apology strategy used and whether the apology placates them or not. This uptake is consistent with other studies in other varieties of Arabic (Hussein and Hammouri, 1998; Al-Sobh, 2013; Binasfour, 2014; Banikalef et al., 2015; Qari, 2017, 2019; Alasqah, 2021) which reported the influence of power distance in Arabs’ production and uptake of the apologies.

Moreover, in their perception of the explanation strategy, Saudis seem to find it important when they do not know the circumstances that led up to the offence. Additionally, the Saudis are usually inclined to assess the explanation to evaluate
whether the offence was due to an external factor (i.e. the explanation is external-oriented) or due to negligence on the part of the apologiser (i.e. the explanation is internal-oriented). For them, such orientations work as indicators of the responsibility of the offence: with internal explanation, the apologiser is to be blamed while with external explanation, the apologiser is not to be blamed and the offence was due to an external factor that was out of the apologiser’s control or occurred by accident. Perhaps this behaviour might render the explanation as an effective apology strategy in the context of Saudi Arabic especially in situations for which the apologisee does not know how the offence took place.

5.6 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter, we looked at how the explanation and the promise of forbearance combinations were perceived by the hearers. We discussed how the interpersonal effects, the effects of the act that is being apologised for, and the effects of the apology strategies play a role in people’s perception of an apology. In the next chapter (chapter six), I conclude this thesis by bringing together the overall results, its implications, its limitations, and potential directions for future research.
6 Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction
This chapter will conclude the thesis by providing an overall summary of the key findings from the quantitative and qualitative studies. It will also discuss the contribution of this thesis, highlight its limitations, and conclude by highlighting some potential future research directions.

6.2 Concluding Remarks
The aim of this research was to evaluate how effective combining one of Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies with an illocutionary force indicating device IFID (e.g., ‘I am sorry’) is on the hearer’s acceptance of an apology. This research aim arises due to the importance of the apology as a speech act that involves two interlocutors, a speaker and a hearer: for the apology to successfully achieve its goal, the hearer needs to accept an apology by “pardoning or excusing the offence” (Leech, 1983, p. 124-125). Therefore, apology cannot be regarded as successful based on merely what the apologiser utters; the hearer’s uptake is crucial in determining the success of that apology.

In the literature, many studies have examined apology focusing on different angles including its realisation strategies across languages and cultures, its politeness
orientations across languages and cultures, second language learners' competence in apologising in the target language, and gender differences, among others. Studies on the realisation of apology (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989) have argued that an apologiser may intensify his/her apology by combining apology strategies. However, as discussed in chapter 2, apology strategies carry inherent motivations that either reinforce the apologetic force (in the cases of an acknowledgement of responsibility, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance) or minimise it (in the case of an explanation). In the former cases, acknowledgement of responsibility is regarded as the foundation for the apology process to take place (Lazare, 2004), and is a fundamental element of the apology (Fraser, 1981; Tavuchis, 1991; Lazare, 2004; Smith, 2008; Battistella, 2014). The offer of repair was classified by Holmes (1990) as a sub-category of acknowledgement of responsibility in that it involves indirectly admitting responsibility. Similarly, a promise of forbearance indicates that one is indirectly admitting the responsibility (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). By contrast, explanation is considered to have a different story from apology (cf. Tavuchis, 1991; Scher & Darley, 1997; Lakoff, 2001; Smith, 2008; Battistella, 2014). Explanation in general has been analysed as minimising the responsibility by several scholars (Bergman & Kasper, 1991, 1993; Deutschmann, 2003), and justification has been argued not to constitute an apology by Owen (1983) and Trosborg (2011).

Against this backdrop, this research set out to examine the idea that, by combining these apology strategies with an IFID, a speaker is not necessarily intensifying the apologetic force, but in fact might be either upgrading or downgrading the function of
his/her apology. In particular, I theorised that an offer of repair, a promise of forbearance, or an acknowledgement of responsibility can function as upgrading device when combined with an IFID, and that an explanation can function as downgrading device when combined with an IFID. To assess these hypotheses, the research examined them in a mixed methods explanatory sequential design. The first study was designed to quantitatively test these hypotheses while the second study was designed to qualitatively answer some emerging questions from the first study.

The research did identify upgrading and downgrading capabilities in the apology strategies when they are added to the IFID. For example, the research showed that there is a general preference among participants to accept the offer of repair combination (an offer of repair + an IFID) and the acknowledgement of responsibility combination (an acknowledgement of responsibility + an IFID). This suggests that these two strategies tend to enhance the perlocutionary effect of the act of apologising. The results lend support to Scher and Darley’s (1997) findings that these two strategies are more apologetic and more appropriate which can be used by a speaker to successfully placate the hearer.

One of the more surprising findings that emerged from this study was the perception of the promise of forbearance combination (a promise of forbearance + an IFID). Contrary to my initial hypothesis and what the literature has indicated (cf. Scher & Darley, 1997), the results have showed that the promise of forbearance can serve as either upgrading and downgrading devices based on certain conditions. The promise
of forbearance seems to be rejected when used in a situation that involves damages: for instance, participants rejected this combination as a strategy to apologise for breaking a computer’s screen. By further qualitatively investigating this scenario, we find evidence that hearers may find such a combination provocative because they perceive it as an attempt by the apologiser to move from the phase of apologising to the phase of reconciliation (Tavuchis, 1991). This in turn suggests that the apologiser fails to recognise the hearer as a moral interlocutor (Smith, 2008) who deserves to be treated with respect and given the opportunity to maintain dignity and self-respect (Lazare, 2004), specifically in having the power to choose whether or not to grant pardon. As a result, the use of this apology combination in this scenario is taken to indicate that the apologiser is careless and lacks awareness of their wrongdoing.

Another explanation for the inappropriateness of the promise of forbearance in a damage situation is that it is read as an attempt to opt out of offering reparation. Again, this suggests that the apologiser is not properly aware of the consequences of his/her action. We can view this as an example of how people might weigh the apology in relation to the offence, and expect more efforts on the part of the apologiser when the offence is bigger. This point chimes with Goffman’s (1971) proportionality principle that advocates for a balance between the apology and the offence: “the greater the harm the greater the recompense” (Goffman, 1971, pp. 115-116). It also supports Heritage et al.’s (2019) observation that any imbalance between the offence and the apology proposed must be adequately accounted for in terms of other factors.
Surprisingly, the qualitative results exhibited that people might depart from the norm in this context and nevertheless accept the apology on the basis of interpersonal relationships. If the offence is committed by a close friend or family member, the offended party might overlook asking for compensation in order to realise the bigger goal of maintaining the relationship. In such a case, the acceptance of the promise of forbearance combination is not a reflection of its general appropriateness as an apology strategy. What was presumptuous with a stranger – assuming that his/her error will be pardoned – may be perfectly reasonable with a close friend or family member. This supports Fraser’s (1981, p. 269) point that, “as the degree of familiarity increases between interactants, the need (or at least the perceived need) to provide elaborate apologies decreases”.

Relatedly, the data revealed that people might generally be of the opinion that the maintenance of a close relationship entails compromise on the part of both parties. They expect such a relationship to endure even if offences take place within it which merit apology. This expectation might explain why people are more tolerant with people whom they are close with as opposed to strangers. The nature of a close relationship creates the expectation that both parties may sometimes be required to perform an apology, and therefore there is an additional interest in establishing a higher willingness to accept apologies to maintain that relationship, whether the form of the apology is truly appropriate or not. For example, people think it is disrespectful of a relative stranger who breaks someone’s laptop to suppose that that person would ever lend them the laptop again. In the context of a close relationship, this is perhaps not such an unreasonable presumption: at least one focus group participant clearly
envisages a future situation in which the offender later entrusts him with an item of property and he unintentionally damages it. He would thus accept the promise of forbearance combination because “[he] might in the future commit a similar mistake”.

The quantitative data showed that the promise of forbearance combination was also deemed acceptable in other situations. In the case of a student arriving late, the promise to forbear from being late again is a welcome addition to the apology. This clearly reflects a situation in which less damage has taken place as a result of the original offence. Furthermore, the qualitative data indicated that people may interpret the promise of forbearance as a move by the apologiser to convey to the other party that they are eager to repair the offence, and hence indirectly admit their wrongdoing. This view is consistent with Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) notion that, by promising to forbear, a speaker is implicitly admitting the wrongdoing.

Similarly, although the quantitative analysis does not disclose any systematic effects related to the explanation combination, the qualitative analysis has shown that this combination can function as either an upgrading or downgrading device based on its orientation towards either external or internal factors. External explanations are likely to lead to apologies being accepted; internal explanations are likely to lead to rejection.

Throughout the data, participants exhibited their tendency to accept external explanations on the basis that they are more persuasive. For example, in a situation
that involved an employee failing to finish work on some papers (*Postponing paperwork*), an exculpatory excuse that is external-oriented such as a family emergency was shown to motivate the apologisee to accept the apology. People’s inclination to accept the apology in such circumstances might show that they might perceive the employee’s action as reasonable given it was not due to negligence on the part of the employee, but rather due to something out of his/her control which is socially deemed a sufficient reason.

By contrast, other examples from the data have shown that internal explanation is more likely to be rejected. For example, the data revealed that when a student comes late and provides excuses such as “I overslept” or “I was out having a breakfast”, people are more likely to reject their apology. Participants may perceive these excuses as signalling that the error has occurred due to negligence on the part of the apologiser, and hence reject the apologies.

Thus, although in the literature there is a debate on the internal motivation of the explanation and how this motivation is inherently different than the concept of apology (cf. Tavuchis, 1991; Scher & Darley, 1997; Smith, 2008; Battistellas, 2014), my results suggested that explanation is a salient part of an effective apology especially in cases where the offended party does not know what happen. Perhaps explanation here plays an important part in fulfilling two needs: to fulfil the hearer’s right to know what happened (Ogiermann, 2009), and to help the offended party to allocate responsibility for the offence, i.e. to determine whether the offence was due to negligence on the
part of the offender or was due to an external factor. The first need is associated with our human needs to know what happened because one cannot forgive or pardon without knowing the circumstances leading up to the offence. Thus, by knowing what happened, one can then evaluate the situation and hence choose to either accept or reject the apology.

In fact, the results of the current study showed that explanation in some situations is considered not only effective but necessary. For example, in situation 8 (*Late student*), and situation 11 (*Postponing paperwork*), explanation was required by the hearer which indicates its importance in the hearer’s decision to either accept or reject the apology. If the speaker was responsible, hearers usually lean towards rejecting the apology (except under the effects of the interpersonal relationship); otherwise, they usually tend to accept it if the offence was due to an external factor.

In the context of a given society, people are expected to make mistakes, and offended parties may be expected to pardon them. As discussed above, asking for explanations is a factor in determining whether hearers are willing to do so. However, they may also be culturally constrained in their choice. For example, in situation 11 (*Postponing paperwork*), the hearer is expected to accept the apology if the apologiser has a culturally convincing reason to postpone the work e.g., family emergency. If the hearer decided to reject the apology despite the family emergency, people might resent him/her because he/she did something against the social expectation. Perhaps this is one reason why in the situations that the hearer does not know the circumstances
leading up to the offence, he/she asks for an explanation to assess the situation, and hence allocate who is responsible for the offence.

Correspondingly, in the context of the current study, Saudis seem to find explanation to be an appropriate apology strategy (usually in association with an IFID), when the offended party does not know the circumstances that led to the offence. For example, in a situation where an employee postponed some paperwork (*Postponing paperwork*), Saudis seem to want to find out the reason for this before deciding whether or not to excuse the offence. Knowing the reason itself does not automatically mean accepting the apology. If the reason was due to an external factor e.g., family emergency, Saudis would lean towards accepting the apology given that family ties are important in a collectivist society such as theirs, hence postponing some work due to family emergency is an accepted reason. On the other hand, if the reason was due to negligence on the part of the apologiser, Saudis are inclined to reject the apology.

The fact that the participants asked for explanations in the relevant situations (*Postponing paperwork & Late student*) shows that Saudis perceived using explanation as an effective strategy in those situations. This need for explanations runs counter to the notion that explanations are inherently negating the concept of apology (cf. Tavuchis, 1991; Scher and Darley, 1997; Smith, 2008; Battistellas, 2014) which indicates that explanation can sometimes be very effective because the speaker can use it to provide a socially acceptable account of their actions, for instance one which assigns responsibility convincingly to an external factor. That is, when Saudis...
ask for explanations, they are not probably asking because they care what the explanation is; rather, they simply wish to know whether the responsibility falls on the offender or elsewhere.

Taken together, therefore, Saudis seem to process the explanation combinations by assessing the orientation of the explanations, either external or internal, thereby indirectly assessing the apologiser’s responsibility for the offence, and based on that they decide whether to accept or reject the apology.

Overall, the qualitative findings supported our hypotheses that an explanation combination and a promise of forbearance combination can function as either upgrading or downgrading devices dependent on the internal or external orientations of the explanation, in the former case, and the context in which it was made, for the latter. The results also identified departures from these norms in some examples. However, these departures could be accounted for in terms of three broad factors: the interpersonal effects, the effects of the act that is being apologised for, and the effect of the apology strategies used. These findings suggest that the hearer might opt to assess these three factors when receiving an apology in order to decide whether to accept it, reject it, or postpone his/her decision and negotiate a better apology.

6.2.1 Identified themes
The findings of this thesis suggest that, although apology strategies have upgrading and downgrading effects when they are added to the IFID, the three factors discussed
above also play vital roles in determining the effectiveness of the apology. Arguably the most important is the interpersonal relationship. The results of this research have shown that the hearer’s perception of an apology is significantly influenced by his/her relationship with the apologiser, particularly with respect to whether they are socially equal (e.g., close to each other or strangers), they have a power relationship (e.g., boss-employee or employee-boss relationship), or they are influenced by the interpersonal contextual knowledge that interlocutors hold about each other (e.g., a student known as punctual or habitually late). As discussed in chapter 5, these findings indicated that each of these features might influence the acceptability of an apology.

Another vital factor in determining the effectiveness of an apology is the act that is being apologised for. It is clear that hearers may opt to consider the context of the offence to determine their perception of an apology, rather than the apology strategies or the interpersonal relationship. For example, the apologisee might consider the importance of the files (Deleted files situation) or the importance of the meeting (Postponing paperwork situation) before deciding to accept or reject an apology. In these cases, the hearer's decision was not primarily influenced by the apology combination or interpersonal relationship with the other party, but by the act being apologised for.

Overall, this research supports the idea that the apology effectiveness cannot be predicted solely based on its linguistic form. Ostensibly well-formed apologies can be rejected while some defective apologies are accepted. This chimes with the idea that
people require an apology combination to fulfil their social, psychological, and emotional needs, and the failure of an apology can generally be attributed to its failure to meet these needs. It runs counter to the view (e.g., Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Vollmer & Olshtain, 1989) that the addition of apology strategies automatically makes an apology better.

6.2.2 Comparing Quantitative and Qualitative Studies
The results of the qualitative study have generally indicated a consistency with the findings of the quantitative study. In situation 4 (Deleting files), the qualitative results provide a different and complementary perspective to the quantitative results. While quantitative results showed that the participants were inclined to reject any apology combinations regardless of its type, our qualitative results have shown that the participants were inclined to accept the apology in principle if they could assume that the deletion of the files was accidental. This represents a case in which an external explanation is more likely to be accepted by the apologisee.

In situation 1 (Boss parking a car), the quantitative study revealed no significant differences between groups in their perception of the apology. The qualitative results showed the effect of the power distance between the interlocutors, and how participants were inclined to accept the apology even if they do not find it appropriate, in order to avoid any adverse impacts. Hence, more attention was paid to the interpersonal relationship rather than the apology combination itself, which may have resulted in all the apology strategies being equally accepted regardless of their type in the quantitative study. This tendency might not emerge if the apologiser was
someone with equal social status to the apologisee. The effect of power distance between the interlocutors has been documented as an influential factor in several previous studies of apology (including Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Al-Sobh, 2013; Binasfour, 2014; Banikalef et al., 2015; Alsulayyi, 2016; Qari, 2017, 2019; Saleem et al., 2018; Alasqah, 2021).

In situation 10 (Late student), the qualitative results were consistent with the quantitative results. Both studies suggested a tendency among participants to accept the promise of forbearance in such contexts. In the qualitative study, we additionally captured participants’ views that promising to forbear is an appropriate combination in such a context, in part because it shows the speaker’s eagerness to repair the situation, and perhaps because it indirectly acknowledges responsibility (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) since one cannot promise to forbear without indirectly admitting responsibility for the offence.

In situation 9 (Breaking screen), the qualitative and the quantitative results were consistent: participants in both studies inclined to reject the promise of forbearance combination. One potential explanation for this, emerging from the qualitative data, is that people interpret the situation as requiring compensation, and by deflecting from offering this, the apologist might unintentionally convey to the wronged party that he/she considers the offence to be trivial. By promising to forbear, the apologist has provided an apology, but the damage has not yet been repaired. Again, this tendency might be explained by Goffman’s (1971) proportionality principle: participants might
have perceived the promise of forbearance combination as insufficient to balance the offence. Another possible explanation is that the apologisee perceives the promise of forbearance combination as an attempt by the apologiser to jump from the apologising phase to the reconciliation phase (Tavuchis, 1991), thus undermining the apologisee’s right to choose whether to accept or reject the apology, and failing to recognise them as a moral interlocutor (Smith, 2008). By promising to forbear from damaging the laptop in the future, a speaker might indirectly convey to the other party that they expect to borrow it in the future, which could be considered presumptuous.

In situation 11 (*Postponing paperwork*), the qualitative results were also consistent with the quantitative findings. In the quantitative analysis, participants rejected all the apology combinations tested in this context. The reason behind this tendency was unclear, but the qualitative study cast additional light on the participants’ likely motivations. In particular, it revealed that the promise of forbearance combination might be inappropriate in this situation, whereas an external explanation might have been acceptable. This stems in part from the severity of the offence, which participants took to influence the reputation of the company and not just the offended party.

6.3 Implications

Apology plays a key role in re-establishing the social harmony between disputing parties. Several linguistic studies have documented the production of apology strategies, typically with the aim either of comparing them cross-culturally in terms of their politeness orientation, in the light of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness
theory, or of examining their realisation patterns cross-linguistically or cross-culturally. Olshtain and Cohen’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies were conjectured to be universal (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). However, little attention was given to the perception of these strategies when combined with the illocutionary force indicating device IFID (e.g., ‘I am sorry’) from the hearer’s standpoint. Therefore, this thesis contributes in shedding some new light on how effective the things we say when we apologise are from the hearer’s perspective, particularly when one of the apology strategies is combined with an IFID. The results challenged the notion that, by integrating apology strategies, apology will automatically become better, by providing evidence that the combination of apology strategies might in fact make the rejection of an apology more likely.

Furthermore, the thesis provides evidence that the hearer’s perception of apology is not uniquely dependent on the linguistic content of the apology, but is also influenced by other factors related to the interpersonal relationship between the interactants, the act that is being apologised for, or by a combination of one or more of these factors. Therefore, to assess whether an apology is effective or not, we must consider how these factors interact in the particular context we are dealing with.

The research also draws attention to the importance of considering the internal motivation of the apology strategies in order to comprehend their perception. For instance, we saw that explanations may have been analysed by the participants in terms of the extent to which the apologiser is responsible for the offence. Internal
explanations were taken to indicate negligence on the part of the apologiser, and hence greater responsibility for the offence, whereas external explanations were taken to show that the incident was out of the apologiser’s control. Thus, an apology strategy involving explanation has a potential to be examined by its hearer for information about the apologiser’s responsibility for the offence. Similarly, a promise of forbearance might be evaluated in terms of how much responsibility its speaker admits (cf. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). However, this combination might also be assessed for what it tells the hearer about the apologiser’s perception of the severity of their own wrongdoing and the damage it has caused. The hearer may evaluate the refusal to acknowledge such damage negatively, and reject the apology on this basis.

Ultimately, this research aims to extend our understanding of how the hearer perceives combinations of apology strategies. The findings overall reveal that there are some similarities between the speaker and the hearer in their behaviour in the apology discourse. It seems that both of them pay considerable attention to their interpersonal relationship with the other party. Just as speakers are expected to weigh their apology strategy against the severity of the offence, the hearers also consider the severity of the offence in their uptake of the apology, and hence evaluate the balance of the offence against the apology strategy. However, the hearers are at the same time strongly influenced by their interpersonal relationship with the apologiser.

The quantitative and qualitative data of this study showed that Saudis are inclined to accept apology from people with power regardless of the appropriateness of the
apology combination or strategy used. This result is consistent with some studies in Saudi Arabic which have reported how the speaker is influenced by the higher status of the apologisee when they apologise. Alasqah (2021) presented some insights into some factors that might influence Saudis’ perception of apology. One is the social factor, i.e. the power distance between the speaker and the hearer. Alasqah’s findings showed that Saudis pay significant attention to their relationship with the offending party who has power. She suggested that Saudis are more likely to adopt a strategy of acceptance (e.g., ‘that’s okay’) in response to apologies from speakers with power or high social status. The findings are consistent with some studies that explored the effects of social power in determining the likely apology response strategy (cf. Holmes, 1995; Saleem et al., 2018).

The results are also consistent with the results of other Arabic studies in terms of the speaker’s production of apology. For instance, Al-Sobh (2013) suggested that contextual factors such as power distance have great influence on Jordanians’ apologies in which they tend to use more intensifiers and more formal ways of apologising when apologising to someone with power. On the other hand, Jordanians seem to be inclined to use more informal language when apologising to relatives or people with equal power. Binasfour (2014) reported a similar impact on her Saudi learners of English selection of apology strategies in which her participants seemed to be inclined to use more apology strategies whenever they apologise to someone with power. In a similar vein, Banikalef et al. (2015) reported that power distance influences their Jordanian Arabic participants when apologising. Their results suggested that Jordanians “varied their apology strategies according to their perspective about the
hearer’s social status, whether the hearer is of higher or of lower social status” (ibid., p. 94). If the offended party has a higher social status, Jordanians tend to use more formal language in their apology to preserve their face.

Taken together, therefore, it seems that Cohen and Olshtain’s (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain’s (1984) apology strategies, when combined with an IFID, are able to placate the hearer, and hence restore the harmony between the apologisee and the apologiser. However, although these strategies seem effective, their perception (in some cases) is subject to the effects of other factors, including the effects of the interpersonal relationship, and the effects of the act that is being apologised for. Furthermore, in their perception, the speaker may need more effort to successfully placate the hearer: they need to ensure that the strategy that they use is appropriate and fulfils the apologisee’s needs. For instance, in the context of the explanation strategy, the apologiser needs to ensure that the apologisee knows the circumstances that led to the offence in order to fulfil their needs to know what happened (Ogiermann, 2009), and to be recognised as a moral interlocutor (Smith, 2008). To achieve this, they must be provided with the opportunity to evaluate the situation for themselves and make their own decision about whether to accept or reject the apology.

Furthermore, the results of this thesis indicate that the effects of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) contextual factors - social and power distance between interlocutors, and the severity of the offence - extend to influence the hearer’s perception of the proposed apology. That is, hearers dealing with apology pay considerable attention to these
factors which sometimes motivate their decision to either accept or reject an apology. The results also suggest that there are other contextual factors that might influence the hearer’s perception of the apology strategy other than Brown and Levinson’s (1987) contextual factors such as referring to the context of the offence or the interpersonal contextual knowledge that both parties know about each other e.g., the importance of the files, the importance of the meeting, whether the student is known to be punctual or habitually late, and whether the employee is known to be good or negligent.

As mentioned above, although the apology combinations have upgrading and downgrading tendencies which influence their perception, these combinations are also subject to the effects of other factors: the interpersonal effects and the effects of the act that is being apologised for. These factors may explain deviations from the otherwise predicted behaviour. For example, in a damage situation (Breaking screen), the participants accepted the promise of forbearance combination from a close friend or family member, but not from a stranger. Their acceptance was not driven by their perception of the promise of forbearance combination as appropriate to the offence, but by their influence of the relationship between them and the apologiser. A similar effect was found in the situation that involved a boss apologising to his employee (Boss parking a car), in which the participants were inclined to accept the apology regardless of the combination used. The qualitative results clearly showed that this is because of the effect of the power distance between the hearer and the speaker. That is, the hearer was leaning towards accepting the apology to avoid conflict with someone they work for. This is evident in their different reaction (leaning towards
arguing with the offender) when they were asked whether they would react the same if the apologiser was a stranger.

Ultimately, the results of this thesis indicate that all apology strategies can be looked at as implying implicit admission of responsibility except the explanation strategy. For example, an offer of repair and a promise of forbearance are regarded as implicitly admitting the wrongdoing (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Holmes, 1990) under the assumption that one cannot use them without implicitly acknowledging the harm done by the speaker.

However, in the case of the explanation strategy, the responsibility tendency cannot be identified unless the hearer assesses the explanation itself (i.e. the items). That is, in order to locate the responsibility when an apologiser opts for an explanation, the hearer needs to evaluate the explanation and hence motivate his/her decision to either accept or reject an apology.

6.4 Limitations
As for any research, a number of limitations need to be noted regarding the present thesis. Firstly, the thesis focused on combinations of the five apology strategies that were suggested to be universal (e.g., Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984), and only examines pairwise combinations involving an IFID. It does not engage with combinations of more than two strategies, or two strategies without an IFID (e.g., an offer of repair combined with a promise of forbearance).
Secondly, as discussed in detail in chapter 3, the mixed methods approach on which the research is based has some practical and conceptual limitations, as do the specific methods employed (online scale rating questionnaires, and online focus group discussion).

Thirdly, the research was based on scenarios drawn from the literature (Reiter, 2000) or developed for this study, rather than naturally occurring data. As for many experimental studies, this raises questions about the ecological validity of the study, albeit a concern shared with much previous research.

Fourthly, the generalisability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, the thesis failed to recruit female participants due to difficulties in recruiting them in the context of Saudi Arabian universities. Although we have no specific reason to assume that Saudi males and females will show important differences in their uptake of the materials under investigation, many studies (e.g., Brown, 1980; Holmes, 1995) have documented gender differences in linguistic domains. Hence, I take a cautious view on the generalisability of the current study.

Moreover, the research has not been able to account for non-verbal behaviour due to the need to run focus group discussions online because of COVID-19. A closer examination of non-verbal behaviour in this domain might offer us a clearer
understanding of some of the relevant issues, particularly concerning the interpersonal relationships between the interactants, which I have argued is a relevant theme in apology perception across a lot of examples in this thesis. Moreover, as noted by Domaneschi et al. (2017), citing Searle (1975), non-verbal actions can be interpreted as IFIDs, for instance facial expressions (‘upper-face action units’), which makes it particularly important to take non-verbal communication into account.

The current study also suffers from several limitations that are associated with the design that I have implemented. For instance, in using the close-ended DCT, I run into some challenges such as ensuring that the apology items fit the situations that they were used with - for instance, whether the promise of forbearance evaluated in the damage situation is truly appropriate to that situation. The results of my follow-up study suggested that some of my usages of these combinations are not wholly appropriate to the situation. For example, in three situations that involve damages, participants found using the promise of forbearance to be inappropriate in these circumstances. However, this usage nevertheless proved effective in examining the effect of the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors. In this case, the results of the follow-up study suggests that the apologisee would accept this combination in a damage situation if the apologist was a close friend or family member, in order to maintain the relationship. Therefore, the decision to accept the apology was not driven by the appropriateness of the apology combination; however, it was driven by the fact that the hearer is aiming to maintain their relationship with the speaker. Having said that, the results of the perception of the promise of forbearance might suffer from the limitation that they were not used in situations that are wholly appropriate for them.
Another limitation that some might point out in this study is that the DCT scenarios were not manipulated systematically in the ways recommended in the literature (see Ogiermann, 2018). That is, although I ensure that I have situations that involve an upward and a downward power relationship between the hearer and the speaker, their distribution was not systematic. Similarly, the social distances between the interlocutors and the severity of the offence were not systematically distributed even though I did ensure that I included situations that involve both close and distant relationships and different degrees of severity. However, given that the nature of my study is to examine the hearers’ perception of certain apologies following certain scenarios, I opted to use a preponderance of severe offences, on the assumption that hearers might routinely accept even token apologies (‘sorry’) for mild offences. Therefore, it was not feasible also to manipulate the design to include systematic distribution of the severe and mild offences. However, distributing the contextual factors systematically would enhance the comparability of these results, for instance in cross-cultural comparison.

Having said that, to design a DCT, a researcher perhaps needs first to ensure that his/her construction of the questionnaire is based on the observation of real-life interactions (Ogiermann, 2018). Ogiermann (2018, p. 246) suggested that the researcher also needs to “[ensure] that [the situations] are likely to occur in all languages examined, and [perform] extensive pilot testing, ensuring that the incorporated variables have the desired impact.”.
Overall, the qualitative results suggested that using a promise of forbearance in damage situations might not be appropriate which signals a limitation to our results of the promise of forbearance combination. That is, the participants in the focus group categorically rejected the promise of forbearance combination under the assumption that it was provocative and inappropriate. This is due to two reasons: because the speaker did not address the offence, i.e., did not repair the damage, and because the speaker jumped from the phase of apologising to the phase of reconciliation without settling the issue. That is, by promising to forbear in a damage situation, the hearer interpreted the speaker’s apology as the speaker taking for granted that his/her offence will be pardoned and jumping to the situation where he/she promises to pay more attention next time, which was evaluated as presumptuous by the hearer.

Although in situation 11 (Postponing paperwork), I assumed that using the promise of forbearance combination would be acceptable, this was not mentioned as a potential option in the focus group discussion of this scenario. However, they were leaning towards a persuasive reason that would convince them to accept the employee postponing the work. This indicates the importance of the explanation in some situations, especially the one where the hearer is absent and therefore does not know what happened.

However, as discussed above, even though the use of the promise of forbearance may have been judged to be generally contextually inappropriate, the inclusion of
these items in the study proved useful in illuminating the effect of social distance. Therefore, perhaps researchers who are interested in examining the effects of social distance in people’s uptake of certain apology strategies or combination can use these apology strategies (or combinations) in situations that are not realistic to those situations. By doing so, we might shed light on the way in which social closeness makes apology strategies acceptable, or at least functional, which are generally evaluated as unsuitable for the contexts at hand.

Thus, given the qualitative results, we comprehended that one reason why the promise of forbearance was treated the way it was treated in damage situations, particularly involving severe damage that could not be restored, might be because the use of them in these situations was not realistic i.e., they are not appropriate candidates in these situations. This constitutes a limitation associated with our design. Thus, although people might not find the promise of forbearance combination acceptable in some situations, in these situations the unacceptability might be related to the fact that such situations require different forms of apology such as an offer of repair in damage situations, and explanations in severe offences that cannot be restored. Below I shall discuss how these issues might be rectified if I had the opportunity to redesign and rerun the study.

6.4.1 Fixing the design:
Given the limitations associated with the design I used in my study, if I could go back and redesign it, here is what I wish I had done. I would first systematically distribute my contextual variable as can be seen in table 11 below.
As can be seen from table 11 above, the design of my study would have been changed to ensure that the variables are systematically varied across situations. That is, I would have reconstructed my scenarios to include 4 situations that involve equal P, 4 situations that involve upward power distance (S>H), and 4 situations that involve downward power distance (S<H). For each 4 situations, I would vary the social distance to have two situations that involve social distance (+SD) and two situations that do not involve social distance (-SD). The severity of the offence would be constant (high) across situations because I presume that in low severe offences, people might tend to accept apologies regardless of their formulation.
In terms of the formulation of the apology items, I would ensure that each apology combination is widely accepted by the native speaker (of Saudi Arabic) in the situations that I am using in my experiment. This can be done by conducting a study before the experiment in which I use the proposed situations and ask the participants to propose apology strategies. Then, I would analyse them and see what strategy is frequently associated with each scenario. Then, I would use that strategy in combination with an IFID for the purpose of my study. By doing that, I would avoid using certain combinations in situations that might not be realistic to their usage such as using the promise of forbearance in situations that involve damages or severe offences.

Another option would be first to construct the situations and associate them with apology responses that I believe would be appropriate, and then conduct a qualitative study (perhaps focus group discussions) to ensure the validity and authenticity of the apology combinations following the situations under investigation. Then, if any combination turns to be inappropriate following a certain situation, I will ask the participants to provide what they think the potential apology strategy should be, and consider amending my study items accordingly.

When I verify the accuracy of the apology items following each scenario that I intended to use in my experiment, I would conduct my study and collect my data. Then, after analysing the data, I could potentially conduct a follow-up qualitative study (focus
group discussions or interviews) to see what might affect the hearers’ uptake of these apology combinations. The importance of the follow-up study lies in the fact that the qualitative study will enrich our understanding of the obtained quantitative results. By doing that, I will be able to locate the factors that affect the participants' judgement of the apology combinations’ appropriateness in the quantitative study.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research Work
Building upon the findings of this thesis, a clear aim for future work would be to examine Saudi females’ perception of the apology strategies and compare them with the findings from the male participants in this study. Furthermore, future research could focus on conducting similar studies using naturally occurring data, and also investigate potential cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences. As noted above, there would also be value in investigating the relative contribution of verbal and non-verbal IFIDs in apology combinations.

Another important direction would be to more closely investigate the apology process. The results of this study suggested that the hearer may take certain decisions in determining whether or not to accept an apology. These decisions allow us to navigate Tavuchis’s (1991) apology process which involves call for apology → apology → response. The data from this study suggest that there is a process which the hearer adheres to when assessing the apology, which could be schematised as in Figure 5.
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

**Figure 5 Apology Process**

- **Speaker apologises**
  - Hearer processes the apology
  - Interpersonal
    - Close
      - Mitigated and accepted
    - Power Distance
      - Mitigated and accepted
    - Stranger
- Hearer evaluates the act that is being apologised for
  - Less severe Offence
    - The apology is more likely to be accepted
  - Severe Offence
- Hearer evaluates the apology's appropriateness
  - If appropriate
    - The apology is more likely to be accepted
  - If inappropriate
    - The apology is more likely to be rejected or negotiated for a more suitable one
The process begins by a speaker apologising to a hearer. When the hearer receives the apology, he/she takes certain decisions. The hearer first assesses the interpersonal relationship between him/her and the apologiser. If the interactants have a close relationship, then he/she is likely to mitigate the situation and accept the apology regardless of the context under which the transgression occurred. Similarly, if the apologiser is someone who has power over the hearer (e.g., their boss), he/she is also more likely to mitigate the situation and defer to accept the apology regardless of the context under which the transgression is occurred.

On the other hand, if the interactants have no close relationships (e.g., strangers), then the hearer can proceed to consider the act that is being apologised for. Based on its degree of severity, the hearer would make his/her decision to either accept or reject the apology. If the act was less severe, they are more likely to be tolerant, and hence would accept the apology. However, if the act was severe, the hearer would attend to the appropriateness of the apology. If he/she finds the apology appropriate (which may involve establishing whether the apology solves the issue e.g., by offering compensation when there is damage), he/she may accept the apology. If not, he/she may reject the apology or negotiate a potential better apology.

This model of the process that the hearer undertakes while assessing the apology places the interpersonal relationship between the interactants as the most salient factor that motivates the hearers’ perception of the apology, followed by the nature of the act being apologised for, and then the apology strategy or combination. On the basis of the results presented in this thesis, the apology strategy seems to have effects
that are usually secondary to the effects of interpersonal relationship or the act that is being apologised for. Ultimately, although there might be some exceptions to this process, the above model appears to represent the process that hearers follow – or perceive that they follow – when evaluating an apology. The question of whether this process is robustly and consistently applied in real life – for instance, whether the question of the apology’s appropriateness is truly marginalised in cases of closeness or power distance – might be a fruitful topic for future research.
7 Bibliography


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An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic


## 8 Appendices

### 8.1 Appendix 1 Kruskal-Wallis Test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
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The distribution of S11 is the same across categories of Group. Independent-
Samples Kruskal-
Wallis Test .062 Retain the null hypothesis.

The distribution of S12 is the same across categories of Group. Independent-
Samples Kruskal-
Wallis Test .042 Reject the null hypothesis.

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

8.2 Appendix 2 Games-Howell Test results.

Multiple Comparisons
Games-Howell

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<th>Dependent Variable</th>
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<th>(J) Group</th>
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<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>95% Interval</th>
<th>Confidence</th>
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#### Games-Howell

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### Multiple Comparisons

**Games-Howell**

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### Multiple Comparisons

**Games-Howell**

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Games-Howell

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8.3 Appendix 3 Questionnaire implemented questions.
- Who blocked your car in the previous situation?
- What happened to your car in the previous situation?
- What happened to the book in the previous situation?

8.4 Appendix 4 Examples of the Scale-rating

Questionnaires (Arabic & English).

استبانة

الجنس ...........
العمر

المستوى التعليمي

التعليمات

السيناريوهات

رحت للبنك عشان تخلص بعض الأمور. بعد ما خلصت لقيت واحد موقف وراء سيارتك، وانت تنتظره جاهز

صاحب السيارة وجدت أنه مديرك بالشغل.

قال لك:

أنا آسف كان عندي أمر مستعجل وما لقيت موقف فوقعت وراء سيارتك.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

2) When you have three close friends, you say goodbye to them at the beginning of the day and they answer you: goodbye. You feel this way is a part of your life, and you consider that your discovery is not good because you feel you cannot find this answer with your relationship to someone.

Jawad said:

I am sorry.

2) To what extent do you accept this answer?

- Acceptable
- Acceptable
- Acceptable
- Unacceptable

3) It is written in the book that your body absorbs the work you do, he eated you and you have a lot of work, and you do it.

He遭受 the mistakes and said:

I am sorry. Please.

3) To what extent do you accept these mistakes?

- Acceptable
- Acceptable
- Acceptable
- Unacceptable

4) Ask your friend to organize your work and play with your colleagues, and you press the button on the keypad to clean the keyboard.
قال لك:

أنا أسف لكن ما أدرى كيف هذا الشيء صار شكلى ضاغط بالغط على زر في جهازك فسح هذه الملفات.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتدار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

5) أنت مدرس وأحد طلابك استعار منك كتاب وكان من المفترض إنه يرجعه لك اليوم وبينما هو ماتش في الكليه قابلت وكذا تذكر أنه نسي يجيب الكتاب عندما سأله عن الكتاب.

قال:

أسف أنني نسيت أجيب الكتاب اليوم.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتدار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

6) أنت أمين مكتبة في إحدى الجامعات، قمت بإرسال إيميل لأحد الطلاب تطالبه فيها بإرجاع كتاب قام باستعارته.

كان من المفترض على الطالب إنه يرجع الكتاب خلال يومين ولكن ما رجعه إلا بعد خمس أيام وبمهم قلت له إنه المفروض يرجعه خلال يومين من إرسال الإيميل.
قال:

أسف إنني جبت متأخر و حقك علي.

(7) استعار منك زميلك سيارتك عشان يخلص بعض الأمور، وهو راجع لك صار عليه حادث، ويوم رجع لك

قال:

أسف على اللي حصل للسيارة، حالتى أعوضك عن قيمة تصبحها.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا اعتذار مقبول؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

(8) أنت دكتر في إحدى الجامعات، بينما أنت تشرح للطلاب دخل عليك طالب متأخر 30 دقيقة

وقال لك:

آسف على التأخر.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا اعتذار مقبول؟
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

9) توك شاري كمبيوتر جديد قام زميلك الجديد في العمل طلب منك تعطيه الجهاز ببي يشتغل عليه شوي وبيما هو يتصرف النته طاح الكمبيوتر منه بدون قصد وانكسرت الشاشة

قال لك:

أسف أو عدك أنتبه المرة الجاية.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

10) وافقنا إنك تغطي على واحد من موظفيك في العمل بينما هو ببي يروح بخلص بعض الأمور المتوقع اتها تأخذ ساعة، ولكن رجع متأخر ساعة نصف.

قال لك:

أسف على التأخير، راح أعوض هالأمر بأن اجلس ساعات إضافية في العمل اليوم.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً
طلبت من سكرتيك يخلص بعض الأعمال قبل قليل يعطيه. لكن هو اعتنى أنك ما تحتاجها قريب فقرر يسويها في اليوم الثاني صبحاً. في اليوم الثاني صبحاً طلبت منه يجيب لك الأوراق التي طلبه يسويها لأنك تحتاجها في اجتماع فوراً

قال لك:

أسف ما سويتها للحين.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتزاز مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

12) عندك في البيت مكتبة مليئة كتب نادرة وقيمة وواحد من أصدقائك كان منتحس لقراءة الكتب فبدأ يستعير منك بعض الكتب، وفي يوم من الأيام وهو قاعد يقرأ واحد من كتبك أنك منه كوب القهوة بدون قصد على الكتاب وخراب جزء منه وبهوم رفعه لك

قال:

أسف إنني كتبت قهوة على كتابك، أعدك راح انتبه المرة الجاية.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتزاز مقبولًا؟
Questionnaire

Gender: ..........

Age .............

Educational Level .................

Instructions

In this questionnaire, you are kindly requested to read twelve different scenarios from daily life. In each scenario, a description of the context will be given with a potential response to it. Your task is to read the scenarios and its responses very carefully and then to rate how likely you would be to accept the apology. Please be aware that there is no right or wrong answer, and please rest assured that your participation in this study will be treated with total confidentiality and your data will be only used for academic purposes. Please note that the questionnaire will be based on Saudi Arabic.

Thank you for your cooperation

Scenarios
1. You went to a bank to do some transactions. After you finished, you found a car parked behind yours. While you were waiting, you found out that the owner of that car is your boss.

He/she said:

I’m sorry, it was an urgent matter and I could not find a parking space, so I had to park behind someone’s car.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

2. You have three best friends whom you meet every day. One day one of them decided to leave you as he/she thought that you might be holding him/her back from doing something in his/her life. After a while, he/she discovered that he/she could not live without you. So, he/she decided to return to your group.

He/she said:

I’m sorry.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

3. You come to your colleague’s office with a few typed letters he/she asked you to type. When you give them to him/her, he/she realises he/she has given you the wrong letters.

He/she said:
I’m sorry; it is entirely my fault.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

4. Your friend took your computer to play online games. While he/she was playing, he/she pressed a button, and all of a sudden, he/she deleted some important files.

He/she said:
I’m sorry, but I don't know how that happened; I might have accidentally pressed a button and deleted these files.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

5. Your student borrowed a book from you. Today is the day to return it, and while he/she was walking at the school, he/she ran into you and remembered that he/she did not bring it with him/her.

He/she said:
I'm sorry I did not bring the book today.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely
6. You are a librarian at a university. You sent an email to a student recalling a borrowed item. The item must be returned within 2 days. However, the student returned it five days later.

He/she said:

I'm sorry for being late; it is entirely my fault.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

7. Your colleague borrowed your car to do some errands downtown. On his/her way to give the car back, he/she had an accident.

He/she said:

I'm sorry about that; let me pay for the damages.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

8. You are a professor at a university. One of your students arrived 30 minutes late.

He/she said:

I'm sorry for being late.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely
9. You bought a new computer. Your new colleague at the office asked you to use it for a while. While he/she was surfing the internet, he/she accidentally dropped it and damaged the screen.

He/she said:

I'm sorry about that: I promise I'll pay more attention next time.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

10. You agreed to cover for one of your employees at work while he/she is out to run a few errands downtown which he/she expected may take him/her an hour. After attending to an urgent matter, he/she returned and realised that he/she had been away for more than an hour and a half.

He/she said:

I'm sorry for being late, I'll stay longer hours today.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

11. You asked your secretary to finish work on some documents before he/she goes home. He/she thought that you did not want them soon, so he/she decided to do them early morning the day after. The next day, you immediately asked him/her about them as you need them for a meeting.

He/she said:
I'm sorry: I did not do it.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

12. You have a home library that contains some rare books in which one of your friends is really interested in reading. So, he/she started borrowing some of these books and one day, while he/she was reading one of them, he/she accidentally spilt some coffee on it and ruined some pages.

He/she said:

I'm sorry that some coffee was spilt on your book: I promise I'll pay more attention next time.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

Thank you
التعليمات

الرجاء قراءة 12 سيناريو من موقف الحياة اليومية. سيتم تزوديك بسياق كل موقف (سيناريو) مقرونًا برد محتمل على هذا الموقف. المطلوب منك التكريم بقراءة المواقف والردود عليها ومن ثم تقييم إلى أي مدى تجد الاعتذار مقبولا؟ فضلاً

تأكد أنه لا يوجد جواب صحيح وجواب خاطئ، كما أود التأكيد أن بياناتك سيتم استخدامها فقط للأغراض الأكاديمية، ختاماً أمل منك التكريم بإكمال الاستبيان علمًا أنها ستكون باللهجة العارمة.

شكرًا ومقدر كريم تعاونك

السيناريوهات

1) رحبت للبنك عشان تخلص بعض الأمور. بعد ما خلصت لقيت واحد موقف وراء سيرتك، وانت تستظر جاه
صاحب السيارة وجدت أنه مديرك بالشغل.

قال لك:

أنا آسف.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً
2) عندك ثلاث أصدقاء عزيزين عليك وتفاولون كل يوم، يوم من الأيام واحده منهم قرر يقطع علاقته فيكم لأنه كان يحس إنكم عانق في تقدمه في الحياة، بعد مدة من الزمن اكتشف أنه لا غنى عنكم لذلك قرر الرجوع لصحبتكم. قال جاكم:

أنا أسف وحلفك علي.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

3) جبت لمكتب زميلك في العمل عاش تعطيه كخطاب طلب منك تطعيبها ويوم عطيته الخطابات اكتشف زميلك. إنه أعطاك الخطابات الخطأ وقال:

أسف اعتذت إني أعطيتك خطابات غير اللي المتفرض تطبيها.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

4) أخذ صديقك كمبيوترك عاش يلعب بعض الألعاب، وهو قاعد يلعب ضغط على أحد الأزرار في الجهاز ومسج ملفات مهمة لك. قال له:

392
أنا أسف.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

5) أنت مدرس وأحد طلابك استعار منك كتاب وكان من المفترض إنه يرجعه لك اليوم وبينما هو ماني في الكلية.

قابلك وذكر أنه نسي يجيب الكتاب وعندما سألته عن الكتاب.

قال:

أسف وأنا أتحمل الخطأ بشكل كامل كوني ما جبت اليوم.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

6) أنت أمين مكتبة في إحدى الجامعات، قمت بإرسال إيميل لأحد الطلاب تطالبه فيها بارجاع كتاب قام باستعارته.

كان من المفترض على الطالب إنه يرجع الكتاب خلال يومين ولكن ما رجعه إلا بعد خمس أيام ويوم قلت له إنه المفروض يرجعه خلال يومين من إرسال الإيميل.

قال:
آسف ولكن ما شفته البابيل الا اليوم.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

7) استجار منك زميلك سيارتك عشان يخلص بعض الأمور، وهو راجع لك صار عليه حادث. ويوم رجع لك

قال:

آسف.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

8) أنت دكتور في إحدى الجامعات، وبينما أنت تشرح للطلاب دخل عليك طالب متأخر 30 دقيقة

وقال لك:

آسف على التأخير وأوعدي ما عاد تصير مرة ثانية.
إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

9) توك شاري كمبيوتر جديد قام زميلك الجديد في العمل طلب منك تعطيه الجهاز بي يشتبه عليه شيء وبينما هو يتصفح النت طاح الكمبيوتر منه بدون قصد وانكسرت الشاشة.

قال لك:

أسف إنني كسرت شاشة كمبيوترك أبي أشتري لك واحد جديد.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

10) وافقت إنك تغذي علي واحد من موظفينك في العمل بينما هو يبي بروح يخلص بعض الأمور المتوقع انها تأخذ ساعة، ولكن رجع متأخر ساعة نصف.

قال لك:

أسف على التأخير.
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

طلبت من سكرتيرك يخلص بعض الأعمال قبل يمشي ليبيته. لكن، هو اعتقد أنك ما تحتاجها قريب فقرر يسويها في اليوم الثاني صباحاً. في اليوم الثاني صباحاً طلبت منه يجيب لك الأوراق التي طلبيه يسويها لأنك تحتاجها في جامع فارأ

قال لك:

آسف ما سيتيها للحين أو عدك ما عاد أعديها مرة ثانية.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولاً؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

(11) عندك في البيت مكتبة مليحة كتاب نادرة وقيمة وواحد من أصدقائك كان متحمس لقراءة الكتاب فبدأ يستعير منك بعض الكتب، وفي يوم من الأيام وهو قاعد يقرأ واحد من كتبك انكب منه كوب القهوة بدون قصد على الكتاب وخرب جزء منه ويوم رجعه لك

قال:

ملاحظات:
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

آسف إنني كبيب قهوة على كتابك عارف إنه كتاب نادر لكن أنا مستعد أعوضك بفلوس.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

شكرًا ومقدر كريم تعاونك

**Questionnaire**

Gender: ............

Age ............

Educational Level .................

**Instructions**

In this questionnaire, you are kindly requested to read twelve different scenarios from daily life. In each scenario, a description of the context will be given with a potential response to it. Your task is to read the scenarios and its responses very carefully and then to rate how likely you would be to accept the apology. Please be aware that there is no right or wrong answer, and please rest assured that your participation on this study will be treated with total confidentiality and your data will be only used for academic purposes. Please be as honest as you can.

Thank you for your cooperation
Scenarios

1. You went to a bank to do some transactions. After you finished, you found a car parked behind yours. While you were waiting, you found out that the owner of that car is your boss.

He/she said:

I’m sorry.

How likely would you accept this apology?

- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

2. You have three best friends whom you meet every day. One day, one of them decided to leave you as he/she thought that you might be holding him/her back from doing something in his/her life. After a while, he/she discovered that he/she cannot live without you. So, he/she decided to return to your group.

He/she said:

I’m sorry: it’s entirely my fault.

How likely would you accept this apology?

- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely
3. You come to your colleague’s office with a few typed letters he/she asked you to type. When you give them to him/her, he/she realises he/she has given you the wrong letters.

He/she said:

I’m sorry but I might have given you the wrong letters.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

4. Your friend took your computer to play online games. While he/she was playing, he/she pressed a button, and all of a sudden, he/she deleted some important files.

He/she said:

I’m sorry.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

5. Your student borrowed a book from you. Today is the day to return it, and while he/she was walking at the school, he/she ran into you and remembered that he/she did not bring it with him/her.

He/she said:

I’m sorry, it is totally my fault not to bring it.
How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

6. You are a librarian at a university. You sent an email to a student recalling a borrowed item. The item must be returned within 2 days. However, the student returned it five days later.

He/she said:
I'm sorry, but I did not see your email until earlier today.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

7. Your colleague borrowed your car to do some errands downtown. On his/her way to give the car back, he/she had an accident.

He/she said:
I'm sorry.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

8. You are a professor at a university. One of your students arrived 30 minutes late.

He/she said:
I'm sorry I did not come on time: I promise that won't happen again.
How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

9. You bought a new computer. Your new colleague at the office asked you to use it for a while. While he/she was surfing the internet, he/she accidentally dropped it and damaged the screen
He/she said:
I'm sorry I damaged your computer's screen: I'll buy you a new one.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

10. You agreed to cover for one of your employees at work while he/she is out to run a few errands downtown which he/she expected may take him/her an hour. After attending to an urgent matter, he/she returned and realised that he/she had been away for more than an hour and a half.
He/she said:
I'm sorry I did not come back on time.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely
11. You asked your secretary to finish work on some documents before he/she goes home. He/she thought that you did not want them soon, so, he/she decided to do them early morning the day after. The next day, you immediately asked him/her about them as you need them for a meeting.

He/she said:

I'm sorry about that: I promise that won't happen again.

How likely would you accept this apology?

- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

12. You have a home library that contains some rare books in which one of your friends is really interested in reading them. So, he/she started borrowing some of these books and one day, while he/she was reading one of them, he/she accidentally spilt some coffee on it and ruined some pages.

He/she said:

I'm sorry I ruined your book: I know that this is a rare book but I'm willing to compensate you with some money.

How likely would you accept this apology?

- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

Thank you
استبانة

الجنس ............

العمر ............

المستوى التعليمي ............

التعليميات

الرجاء قراءة 12 سيناريو من موقف الحياة اليومية. سيتم تزودك بسباق كل موقف (سيناريو) مقروناً برد محتمل على هذا الموقف. المطلوب منك التكرم بقراءة المواقف والردود عليها ومن ثم تقييم إلى أي مدى تجد الاعتذار مقبولًا؟ فضلاً، تأكد أنه لا يوجد جواب صحيح وجواب خاطئ، كما أود التأكيد أن بياناتك سيتم استخدامها فقط للأغراض الأكاديمية، خصاماً أمل منك التكرم بأكمال الاستبانة علماً أنها ستكون باللهجة العامية.

شكر ومقدر كريم تعاونك

السيناريوهات

1) رحت للبنك عشان تخلص بعض الأمور. بعد ما خلصت لقيت واحد موقف وراء سيرتك، وانت تنتظره جاء صاحب السيارة وجدت أنه مديرك بالشغل.

قال لك:

أنا آسف والخطأ تماماً خطأي.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولًا؟
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

2) When three friends insulted you and challenged you every day, a day you had not been lenient in the conflict it's because you were

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول جداً

جاك وقال:

أنا أسف كنت اتوقع إنكم سبب في عدم تقدمي في الحياة لكن اكتشفت بعدين إنكم سبب في تماسكي وتقدمي.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتدار مقبولاً؟

3) جبت لمكتب زميلك في العمل عيان تعطيك كم خطاب طلب منك تطبعها ويوم عطبتها الخطابات اكتشف زميلك

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول جداً

إنه أعطاك الخطابات الخطأ وقال:

أسف.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتدار مقبولاً؟
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

4) أخذ صديقك كمبيوترك عشان يلعب بعض الألعاب، وهو قاعد يلعب ضغط على أحد الأزرار في الجهاز ومسج

ملفات مهمة لك

قال لك:

أنا أسف وحذك علي.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

5) أنت مدرس وأحد طلابك استعار منك كتاب وكان من المفترض إنه يرجع لك اليوم وبينما هو مائي في الكلية

قال لك ويسجب إليه: نسي بجيب الكتاب وعندما سألته عن الكتاب

قال:

أسف لأنني نسيت أجيب الكتاب اليوم.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً
6) Aims of a similar study in one of the universities, conducted a survey in which students were asked to write a three-page paper on the topic of integrating an email apology. However, he argues that the process took place over five days, rather than just one day as he had planned.

The professor wrote a letter in response to one of his students:

"I am sorry that it was delayed."

To what extent do you think this concession is acceptable?

- Acceptable - Unacceptable - Acceptable

7) I suggest that you meet with your colleagues to discuss some of the issues, and I promise that you will not repeat the situation in the future.

To what extent do you think this concession is acceptable?

- Acceptable - Unacceptable - Acceptable
8) أنت دكتور في إحدى الجامعات، بينما أنت تشرح للطلاب دخل عليك طالب متاخر 30 دقيقة.

وقال لك:

أسف على التأخير ومستعد أسوأ أي شيء عشان أعوض تأخري.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتداء مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

9) توك شارع كمبيوتر جديد قام زميلك الجديد في العمل طلب مثلك تعطيه الجهاز بي يشتعل عليه شيء وبيتى هو

يتتصفح النت طاح الكمبيوتر منه بدون قصد وانكسرت الشاشة.

قال لك:

أسف.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتداء مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً
10) وافقتي أنك تغطي على واحد من موظفيك في العمل بينما هو يبي بروح يخلص بعض الأمور المتوقعة انها تأخذ
ساعة، ولكن رجع متأخر ساعة نصف.
قال لك:

أسف على التأخير أو عدك ما راح تصير مرة ثانية.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً

11) طلبت من سكرتيرك يخلص بعض الأعمال قبل يمشي ليبيته. لكن هو اعتقد أنك ما تحتاجها قريب فقرر يسويها
في اليوم الثاني صباحاً. في اليوم الثاني صباحاً طلبت منه يجيب لك الأوراق اللي طلبته يسويها لأنك تحتاجها في
اجتماع فوراً
قال لك:

أسف ما سويتها للحين ومستعد أنقل أي عقوبة تراها.

إلى أي مدى تجد هذا الاعتذار مقبولًا؟

- مقبول جداً - مقبول - طبيعي - غير مقبول - غير مقبول جداً
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

Questionnaire
Instructions

In this questionnaire, you are kindly requested to read twelve different scenarios from daily life. In each scenario, a description of the context will be given with a potential response to it. Your task is to read the scenarios and its responses very carefully and then to rate how likely you would be to accept the apology. Please be aware that there is no right or wrong answer, and please rest assured that your participation on this study will be treated with total confidentiality and your data will be only used for academic purposes. Please be as honest as you can.

Thank you for your cooperation

Scenarios

1. You went to a bank to do some transactions. After you finished, you found a car parked behind yours. While you were waiting, you found out that the owner of that car is your boss.

   He/she said:

   I’m sorry; it is entirely my fault.

   How likely would you accept this apology?

   - Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely
2. You have three best friends whom you meet every day. One day one of them decided to leave you as he/she thought that you might be holding him/her back from doing something in his/her life. After a while, he/she discovered that he/she could not live without you. So, he/she decided to return to your group. He/she said:

I’m sorry, I thought that you are holding me back, but it turns out that you are holding me together.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely

3. You come to your colleague’s office with a few typed letters he/she asked you to type. When you give them to him/her, he/she realises he/she has given you the wrong letters.

He/she said:

I’m sorry.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely  - likely  - neutral  - unlikely  - very unlikely
4. Your friend took your computer to play online games. While he/she was playing, he/she pressed a button, and all of a sudden, he/she deleted some important files.

He/she said:

I'm sorry; it is entirely my fault.

How likely would you accept this apology?

- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

5. Your student borrowed a book from you. Today is the day to return it, and while he/she was walking at the school, he/she ran into you and remembered that he/she did not bring it with him/her.

He/she said:

I'm sorry, I forgot to bring the book today

How likely would you accept this apology?

- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

6. You are a librarian at a university. You sent an email to a student recalling a borrowed item. The item must be returned within 2 days. However, the student returned it five days later.

He/she said:

I'm sorry for being late.
7. Your colleague borrowed your car to do some errands downtown. On his/her way to give the car back, he/she had an accident.

He/she said:

I’m sorry, I promise to pay more attention next time.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

8. You are a professor at a university. One of your students arrived 30 minutes late.

He/she said:

I’m sorry for being late. I’ll do anything to make it up.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

9. You bought a new computer. Your new colleague at the office asked you to use it for a while. While he/she was surfing the internet, he/she accidentally dropped it and damaged the screen.

He/she said:

I’m sorry.
How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

10. You agreed to cover for one of your employees at work while he/she is out to run a few errands downtown which he/she expected may take him/her an hour. After attending to an urgent matter, he/she returned and realised that he/she had been away for more than an hour and a half.

He/she said:
I'm sorry about that I promise it won't happen again

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

11. You asked your secretary to finish work on some documents before he/she goes home. He/she thought that you did not want them soon, so, he/she decided to do them early morning the day after. The next day, you immediately asked him/her about them as you need them for a meeting.

He/she said:
I'm sorry: I did not do it, and I'm willing to accept any consequences.

How likely would you accept this apology?
- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely
12. You have a home library that contains some rare books in which one of your friends is really interested in reading them. So, he/she started borrowing some of these books and one day, while he/she was reading one of them, he/she accidentally spilt some coffee on it and ruined some pages.

He/she said:

I'm sorry that I spilt some coffee on your book.

How likely would you accept this apology?

- Very likely - likely - neutral - unlikely - very unlikely

Thank you

8.5 Appendix 5 Ethics Approvals.
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

Ethics proposal 265-1920/13, entitled The Effect of Combining Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic and submitted by Ahmed Alsulami, Chris Cummins and Joseph Gafaranga has been approved by the PPLS Research Ethics Committee per the Department’s ethics regulations.

The following files were uploaded with the application:

- Filename: ppls_experiment_consent_template_2.pdf
  Date: 12 Apr 2020 09:23 PM
  Purpose: Consent Sheet

- Filename: ppls_experiment_consent_template_2.pdf
  Date: 12 Apr 2020 09:26 PM
  Purpose: Consent Sheet

- Filename: ppls_experiment_consent_template_2.pdf
  Date: 26 Apr 2020 07:53 PM
  Purpose: Consent Sheet

- Filename: webexperiment_consent_exp2.pdf
  Date: 17 Aug 2020 03:25 AM
  Purpose: Information Sheet
  Note: This is a web-experiment consent and information sheet.

  Date: 18 Aug 2020 08:43 PM
  Purpose: Reply to/PPLSREC Review
  Note: Comments from reviewer in response to your submission.

- Filename: webexperiment_consent_exp2.pdf
  Date: 19 Aug 2020 08:34 AM
  Purpose: Information Sheet

8.6 Appendix 6 Consent Forms.

Information sheet for participants

Hello!

I’m Mr. Ahmed Alsulami. I’m a research student at the university of Edinburgh and I’m conducting this study which I hope you will be part of it. Please read below for more information.

Nature of the study. You are about to participate in a study which involves a 2-hour group discussion. The session will take place online via Google meet platform and a moderator will ask some questions that will invite you to take part in a discussion related to the study. Your discussion will be audio recorded while you are engaging with other participants in answering the moderator’s questions. Once you finish, we may have some questions about your experience. Your session should last for up to 2 hours. You will be given full instructions shortly and will be able to ask any questions you may have.

Risks and benefits. There are no known risks to participation in this study. There no tangible benefits to you, however you will be contributing to our knowledge about language.

Confidentiality and use of data. All the information we collect during the course of the research will be processed in accordance with Data Protection Law. In order to safeguard your privacy, we will never share personal information (like names or data of birth) and we will not use your real name. All data collected on this experiment will be stored in a secure data store and will be kept for a limited period of time (not more than 5 years). All personal data (e.g., audio/video recordings, signed forms) using the University of Edinburgh’s secure encrypted storage service or in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Edinburgh. The information will be stored for 5 years. Any data that we use for research purposes will be anonymous. Any identifiable data such as recordings may also be used for research or teaching purposes, and may be shared with other researchers or with the general public (e.g., we may make it available through the world wide web, or use it in TV or radio broadcasts).

What are my data protection rights? The University of Edinburgh is a Data Controller for the information you provide. You have the right to access information held about you. Your right of access can be restricted in accordance Data Protection Law. You also have other rights including rights of correction, erasure and objection. For more details, including the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner’s Office, please visit www.ico.org.uk. Questions, comments and requests about your personal data can also be sent to the University’s Data Protection Officer at dpo@ed.ac.uk.

Voluntary participation and right to withdraw. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you withdraw from the study during or after data gathering, we will delete your data and there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions about what you’ve just read, please feel free to ask, or contact us later. You can contact us by email at al7729802@ed.ac.uk. This project has been approved by PPLS Ethics Committee. If you have questions or comments regarding your own or your child’s rights as a participant, they can be contacted at ppls.ethics@ed.ac.uk.
Information sheet for participants

Welcome to the study

What is the study about?

We are researching the appropriateness of apologies in different circumstances.

Who is involved?

The Principal Investigator is Dr. Chris Cummins & Dr. Joseph Gafaranga.

Which researcher is collecting data?

Ahmed Alsulami.

What are the risks and benefits?

There are no risks to participation in this study. There are no tangible benefits to you, however you will be contributing to our knowledge about language.

Confidentiality and use of data

All the information we collect during the course of the research will be processed in accordance with Data Protection Law. In order to safeguard your privacy, we will never share personal information (like names or dates of birth) with anyone outside the research team; if you agree and want to be contacted for future studies, we will add your contact details to our secure participant database. Your data may be referred to by a unique participant number rather than by name. We will store any personal data (e.g., signed forms) using the University of Edinburgh’s secure encrypted storage service or will be digitising and keeping them on a password-protected laptop.

Confidentiality of data will be maintained and no personal data will be used in publications. Any identifiable data will be replaced with personal participant information or an anonymous number so that no identifiable details are shared with anyone outside the research team.

What are my data protection rights?

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If you have any questions about what you’ve just read, please feel free to ask us now.

Thank you for your help! Now please complete the consent form on the next page.
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

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The University of Edinburgh
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### 8.7 Appendix 7 Focus Group Questions (Arabic & English).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Type</th>
<th>Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Opening       | Participants get acquainted and feel connected  
|               | *e.g. Tell us what is your name and where you live?*  
|               | *كل واحد يقول لنا اسمه وين يعيش الآن ووش يدرس الحين؟*  
|               | *What subject are you studying?*  
| Introductory  | Begins discussion of topic  
|               | *e.g. What describes a healthy relationship?*  
|               | *طيب خلودنا ننتقل للموضوع يطرح هذا السؤال، كيف تصف العلاقة بين كلاً، adversely Chapman’s*  
|               | *سَرُدُرَتُ عَنْهَا عَلَى صَحِيحَة أَوْ خَلَيْنَا نَسُمِيَّة*  
|               | *How can people maintain a healthy relationship?*  
|               | * جميل، كيف يمكن نحافظ على هذه العلاقات الجيدة؟*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>؟ةدﯾﺟﻟا تﺎﻗﻼﻌﻟا ﻰﻠﻋ رﺛؤﯾ نﻛﻣﻣ ﻲﻠﻟا شو</td>
<td>What if someone wronged the other: how can they resolve it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>جميل، طبيب لو واحد غلط على شخص كيف ممكن يحل الموضوع؟</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Moves smoothly and seamlessly into key questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. When you think of apology, what comes to mind?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>رائع، جميل، طبيب وش يجي بذهني إذا سمعت كلمة اعتذار ؟</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the benefits of apologising?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>جميل، طبيب وشوله تعتذر أو وش القايدة من الا عذار؟</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think back to the past. Has someone apologised to you or have you apologised to someone? Tell us about that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential follow up questions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What made you to apologise, on the one hand, and on the other hand, to decide whether to accept an apology or not?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>طلبه لو رجعنا بالذاكره للوراء وفقا لتجاربكم، حتما سيق وان اعتذرت لشخص او شخص اعتذر لك؟ يا ليت تخبرنا عن الأمر</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>هل كان الاعتراف صعب عليك؟ ليه؟</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes it difficult?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtains insight on areas of central concern in the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. What will get you to accept someone’s apology or reject it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Suppose your friend took your computer to play online games. While he/she was playing, he/she pressed a button, and all of a sudden, he/she deleted some important files.

He/she said:

I'm sorry, but I don't know how that happened; I might have accidentally pressed a button and deleted these files

How did you find his/her apology?

Would you accept it? Why?
Suppose you went to a bank to do some transactions. After you finished, you found a car parked behind yours. While you were waiting, you found out that the owner of that car is your boss.

He/she said:

I'm sorry, it was an urgent matter and I did not find a parking space, so I had to park behind someone's car.

How did you find his/her apology?

Would you accept it? Why?
Suppose you are a professor at a university. One of your students arrived 30 minutes late.

He/she said:

I'm sorry I did not come on time: I promise that won't happen again.

How did you find his/her apology?

Would you accept it? Why?

Suppose you bought a new computer. Your new colleague at the office asked to use it for a while. While he/she was
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>surfing the internet, he/she dropped it and damaged the screen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He/she said:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm sorry about that: I promise I'll pay more attention next time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How did you find his/her apology?

Would you accept it? Why?

Suppose you asked your secretary to finish work on some documents before he/she goes home. He/she decided to do them early morning the day after. Next day, you immediately asked him/her...
about them as you need them for a meeting.

He/she said:

I'm sorry about that: I promise that won't happen again.

How did you find his/her apology?

Would you accept it? Why?

Potential follow up questions:

What made the apologies unsuccessful or successful?

Table 12 Focus Group Questions (Arabic & English).
Appendix 8 Early stages of themes selection

8.8.1 Generating categories
The aim at this stage was to establish a set of categories that represents the codes generated in the previous stage of analysis. These were approximately 200 codes which represented the whole dataset. In the current stage, I aggregate these codes under different categories in an attempt to organise them before generating the themes. In doing this I distinguished 22 categories that represent the data, as seen in figure 6 below:
Factors leading up to acceptance

Background factors that affect accepting or rejecting apologies

Different meaning for repeating the offence

+Social Distance

The severity of offence

To show awareness of the wrongdoing

To strengthen the relationships

Different meanings for offering compensation

The apology timing effects

Types of apologies

Promise of forbearance

Factors leading up to rejection

Justifying the wrongdoing

+Power Distance

-Social Distance

Self-serving logics related to apologies

To maintain the public image

Different social effects for different degrees of severity

What does it mean to apologise?

It is difficult to apologise

Meanings underlying avoiding apologising

Admitting the wrongdoing

Figure 6 Apology Categories
These categories are considered the bedrock for the following stage in the analysis which is generating themes. Each category can either be elevated to become a theme on their own or aggregated with others to form a theme. Below is a table (13) including the categories and their definitions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors leading up to acceptance</td>
<td>It includes any reason that leads the offended party to accept an apology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factors leading up to rejection</td>
<td>It includes any reason that leads the offended party to reject an apology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background factors that affect accepting or rejecting apologies</td>
<td>It includes any background factors related to the incident that lead the offended party to decide either to accept or reject an apology (usually it is associated with the offended party not deciding and referring to some factors as a motivation for their decision, i.e. they would say, ‘it depends on…’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifying the wrongdoing</td>
<td>It includes any reasons presented by the offenders in an attempt to justify their offences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different meaning for repeating the offence</td>
<td>It includes what repeating the offence would mean for the offended party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Power Distance</td>
<td>It includes any factors related to a power distance existing between the interlocutors (they have a superordinate-subordinate relationship).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+Social Distance</td>
<td>It includes any factors related to the absence of a close relationship between the interlocutors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Social Distance</td>
<td>It includes any factors related to the existence of a close relationship between the interlocutors (e.g., they are close friends, colleagues, or relatives).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The severity of offence</td>
<td>It includes any factors related to the severity of the offence (to what extent the offence is severe for the offended party).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-serving logics related to apologies</td>
<td>It includes logics that motivate an offender to apologise or not, for instance where the offender’s decision to either apologise or not is motivated by their aim to convey certain goals to the other party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g., not apologising to maintain their pride, or apologising to feel better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show awareness of the wrongdoing</td>
<td>It includes any motivations that aim to show that the offender is aware of their offence, e.g., showing their regret.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maintain the public image</td>
<td>It includes any approach the offender may utilise in order to maintain their public image. This could be achieved through apologising or avoiding it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To strengthen the relationships</td>
<td>It includes reasons that motivate the offender to apologise in an attempt to maintain the relationship with others. It also includes any views that favour performing an apology to strengthen the relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different social effects for different degrees of severity</td>
<td>It includes what severe and less severe offences may lead up to in terms of the offended party’s reaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different meanings for offering compensation</td>
<td>It includes what it means for the offended party to receive compensation from the offender, and the importance of the offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does it mean to apologise?</td>
<td>It includes what the offender wants to achieve by apologising, and what the act of apologising means or leads up to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The apology timing effects</td>
<td>It includes the importance of time in the concept of apologising, either in terms of the time to apologise, or the time needed to accept the apology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is difficult to apologise</td>
<td>It includes the conditions under which the offender may find it difficult to apologise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of apology</td>
<td>It includes different types of apologising that were presented by the participants e.g., actions, instrumental apologies (which aim to achieve certain goals), or real apologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meanings underlying avoiding apologising</td>
<td>It includes why someone would avoid apologising, what that would mean and what consequences would ensue.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promise of forbearance</th>
<th>It includes the perception of promise of forbearance under different conditions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admitting the wrongdoing</td>
<td>It includes what admitting the wrongdoing means for the offended party, and what the consequences are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13 Categories and their definitions

These categories, as I mentioned earlier, represent the whole dataset. Thus, each one contains a set of codes that share its core concept. Furthermore, the list above contains categories that are not related to my research questions; however, they are related to the concept of apology in general. Hence, I report them to show the richness of the data that I have accumulated in the focus group discussion, and to illustrate that I have fully coded my data to arrive at my themes.

8.8.1.1 Generating initial themes

In order to form a set of themes that represents the data, the above categories were examined carefully to decide whether some categories share the same core idea and could therefore be aggregated to form a theme. At the same time, categories that have the potential to stand on their own to form a theme will be elevated to do so. Initially, I generated nine themes to represent these categories as shown in figure 8 below:
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

It is difficult to apologise. What does it mean to apologise?

Factors leading up to acceptance

Factors leading up to rejection

Contextual factors

Background factors that affect accepting or rejecting apologies

Psychological aspects of apologising

Apology strategies

Meanings underlying avoiding apologising

Types of apologies

The severity of offence +Social Distance +Power Distance -Social Distance

Different social effects for different degrees of severity

To maintain the public image

To strengthen the relationships

The apology timing effects

Different meanings for offering compensation

Justifying the wrongdoing

Promise of forbearance

Admitting the wrongdoing

To show awareness of the wrongdoing

Different meaning for repeating the offence

Self-serving logics related to apologies

Background factors that affect accepting or rejecting apologies

Figure 7 Initial Themes.
In order to explicate how I arrived at these themes and what shared factors or concepts shaped them, I will walk through the approach that I followed. I first began by generating codes for the whole data. Then, from these codes, I attempted to create categories under which these codes could be represented. I then defined each category in terms of what it represented and what it included. After that, I scrutinised these categories in an attempt to generate themes out of them. To do that, I asked myself whether there were shared concepts among these categories, and if so, what they were, what they represented, and whether they could form a theme. Where there were no shared concepts, I asked myself what the category represented, and whether it could survive on its own if I elevate it to become a theme. From this process I arrived at the initial themes, as shown in figure 8 above, which represents themes and categories in different colours.

The nine initial themes are shown below in table 14:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>SUBTHEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Contextual factors</td>
<td>+/- Social distance, + power distance, and the severity of the offence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Apology strategies</td>
<td>Promise of forbearance, offer of repair, justifying the wrongdoing, and admitting the wrongdoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Difficulties to apologise</td>
<td>The logic underpinning avoiding apologising.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>What does it mean to apologise?</td>
<td>Different types of apology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sociological aspects of apologising</td>
<td>The social effects for different degree of severity e.g., what does less severe offence or severe offence mean socially? It also includes the apologies that aim to strengthen the relationship and maintain a public image.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Psychological aspects of apologising</td>
<td>The effect of apology timing, showing awareness of the wrongdoing, and self-serving logic related to apology, i.e. to apologise or avoid it to achieve some other goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Background factors leading to either accepting or rejecting an apology</td>
<td>For instance, whether this was a first offence or a repeat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Factors leading up to acceptance</td>
<td>Any factors that may lead the offended party to consider accepting the offender’s apology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Factors leading up to rejection</td>
<td>Any factors that may lead the offended party to consider rejecting the offender’s apology.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.8.1.2 Reviewing Potential Themes
Having generated these themes, my next step was to ask myself whether I could further aggregate some of these themes by grouping some that share the same concept to form a broader theme, and if so, what assumptions would support this.

Repeating the earlier process, I started examining each theme to establish whether there is any common concept that they might share with other themes. By following this process, I further reduced the number of themes, as shown in figure 8 below:
Figure 8 The second attempt for generating themes.
In figure 8, the green represents the categories or subthemes, and blue represents the themes. Compared to figure 7, 5 themes were converted to subthemes under other wider themes: these are coloured as themes in order to highlight the changes.

The reduction from nine to four themes was conducted by aggregating some initial themes to form other themes that I thought shared the same concept. For instance, themes 7, 8, 9 above were aggregated with theme 1 (contextual factors), because I assumed that most of the factors involved in these different themes are related to the context. Therefore, I presumed that aggregating them under contextual factors would be more appropriate and lead to a better analysis.

Another modification was related to theme 3 above (difficulties to apologise), which was divided into two parts: one part was aggregated under theme 5 (sociological aspects of apologising), and the other was aggregated under theme 6 (psychological aspects of apologising). Furthermore, theme 4 (what does it mean to apologise) was aggregated under theme 5 (sociological aspects of apologising) as I thought these different meanings are essentially related to societal aspects. The theme of Apology Strategies has not been modified.

The resulting themes are listed in table 15 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>SUBTHEMES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | Contextual factors             | • The severity of the offence.  
  |                               | • +/- Social distance.  
  |                               | • + Social power.  
  |                               | • Factors leading up to acceptance.  
  |                               | • Factor leading up to rejection.  
  |                               | • Background factors leading to either accepting or rejecting an apology.  
| 2 | Sociological aspects of        | • Social effects for different degrees of severity.  
  | apologising                   | • To strengthen the relationships.  
  |                               | • To maintain the public image.  
  |                               | • Socially difficult to apologise.  
  |                               | • What does it mean to apologise?  
  |                               |   • Types of apology  
  |                               |   • Social aspects of avoiding apologies.  
| 3 | Psychological aspects of       | • The effects of apology timing.  
  | apologising                   | • To show awareness of the wrongdoing.  
  |                               | • Self-serving logic related to apologies.  
  |                               | • Psychologically difficult to apologise.  
  |                               | • Psychological aspects of avoiding apologies.  

### Table 15 Refined version of the themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4</th>
<th>Apology strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admitting the wrongdoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Justifying the wrongdoing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Different meanings for offer of repair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promise of forbearance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 8.8.1.3 Finalising my themes

In my attempt to finalise my themes, I reviewed my themes again and scrutinised them in relation to my research questions. Given that the aim of formulating themes that represent the data set is to answer the research questions, I immersed myself again in the data for each theme and tried to find their orientation towards my research questions.

This further iteration of my themes helped me to notice that there are some factors that affect the apologissee’s acceptance of an apology, which are related to my research questions concerning the acceptance of apology strategy combinations, and how this is influenced by the social relationship and the degree of the offence. My data suggested that there are three themes which can encompass all the codes and data, namely the interpersonal effect, the effect of the act itself (the act that is being apologised for), and the effect of apology strategies, as shown in figure 9 below.
An Explanatory Mixed Methods Approach to The Effects of Integrating Apology Strategies: Evidence From Saudi Arabic

The interpersonal effects

The effects of the act itself

The effects of apology strategies

Figure 9 Final themes