

Apologies and Compliment Responses: A Case of Pre-service EFL Teachers

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: apology, compliment response, equal-status interlocutor, pre-service EFL teachers, written discourse completion test (WDCT)</p> <p>DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21093/ijeltal.v7i1.1182</p> <p>How to cite: Turhan, B. & Tuncer, H. (2022). Apologies and Compliment Responses: A Case of Pre-service EFL Teachers. <i>Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics</i>, 7(1), 51-74</p>	<p>Apology may be defined as "a compensatory action for an offense committed by the speaker which has affected the hearer" (Marquez-Reiter, 2000, p. 44), and a compliment is another speech act "which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker... which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (Holmes, 1986, p. 485). The focus of this paper is to find out which strategies are employed by Turkish pre-service EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers while apologizing and responding to compliments especially with equal-status interlocutors, and whether these strategies show differences between females and males. Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) was administered to 27 pre-service EFL teachers. The WDCT included six apology and seven compliment response scenarios. The data were analyzed mainly by using the framework of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) for apologies, and the coding scheme by Ruhi (2006) for compliment responses. Main findings of the study suggest that the participants frequently used the strategy of regret while apologizing, and they preferred to use appreciation strategy while responding to compliments. In addition, chi-square test was applied to see any significant differences between the strategies of females and males in apologizing and responding to compliments. This gender-based comparison resulted in no statistical difference except for only one of the apology scenarios. The overall results imply that investigating pragmatic knowledge of students majoring in ELT through their speech act realizations is vital and may be the first step for organizing appropriate interventions aiming at improving and expanding their pragmatic knowledge.</p>

1. Introduction

Premiering in Bachman's (1990) communicative competence model, pragmatic competence is vital to enable EFL/ESL learners to attain effective communication skills. In order to open a new door into improving these skills, interlanguage pragmatics should be carefully considered. Interlanguage pragmatics is "the study of nonnative speaker's use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language" (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p.

3), and interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies (IPLSs) are regarded as one of the crucial individual differences influencing the development of pragmatic knowledge. IPLSs strictly depend on the nature of interaction which is dynamic, interactive and reciprocal (Malmir & Derakhshan, 2020; Youn & Bi, 2019) since pragmatic competence requires one to make good use of IPLSs (Cohen, 2019; Taguchi, 2019) encapsulating cognitive, metacognitive, social and affective variables for gaining pragmatic competence in any target language (Derakhshan, Malmir, & Greenier, 2021). As a prominent part of pragmatic competence, the ability to recognize and produce accurate speech acts is an indispensable component of EFL/ESL learners' communication skills. Regarding the speech acts, it can be stated that we do not only use language to say things but also to do things (Austin, 1962). This shows that speakers of a language should be familiar with the functions of that language so that they could convey intended meanings or messages to the hearers. Around this notion, Austin (1962) entitled his theory as speech act theory which was later elaborated by Searle (1976). Austin (1962) also developed three different components of speech acts which were "the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act". The first one refers to the act of saying something in the normal sense whilst the second one represents the intent of the speaker in saying a specific utterance. As for perlocutionary act, it is associated with the utterances' effect on the hearer.

According to Searle (1976), the effects of the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts on the hearers are closely tied with the speakers' word choice and way of expressing ideas. Moreover, he advanced Austin's (1962) speech act theory and formulized five categories of illocutionary force. Those categories are "representatives, directives, commissives, expressives and declarations" (Searle, 1976). *Representatives* describe the truthfulness of an expressed proposition. *Directives* refer to the attempts of the speaker to make the hearer do something. *Commissives* point to the fact that there will be a future course of action. *Expressives* are generally used to mention psychological states. Lastly, *declarations* mean immediate alteration in the state of affairs. As such, speech acts determine basic actions that we take while communicating; and they help researchers better conceptualize discursive variables in social interactions.

Among *expressives*, an apology is "a compensatory action for an offense committed by the speaker which has affected the hearer" (Marquez-Reiter, 2000, p.44). The apologizer shows her/his willingness to minimize the effects of a violation on the part of the apologizee. Thereof, apologizing is a face-saving act for the hearer while it is a face-threatening act for the speaker (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006). Further, apologies offer negative politeness (Nureddeen, 2008) and can be the starting point of solving a conflict by showing regret, responsibility and remedy (Takaku et al., 2001). In addition, the apologizee shows sincerity by accepting the apology (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006). In sum, "[w]hen we make a mistake or hurt others unintentionally or deliberately, we will do apologetic actions to express repentance as well as take responsibility for hurting the listener" (Ngo & Luu, 2022). The studies on apologies to date have various perspectives, some of the recent examples might exemplify this situation: comparison of non-native speakers' apology strategies to native speakers (Tabatabaei et al., 2018; Yalçınkaya, 2021), investigation of e-mailed apologies (Chen et al., 2022; Walker, 2022), investigation of the interplay of emotional intelligence and interlanguage pragmatic competence (Derakhshan, Eslami, & Ghandhari, 2021), examination of politeness in apologies (Nephawe & Lambani, 2022), discourse analysis of

official apologies (Rezaei, 2021), and analysis of gender differences in the use of apology strategies (Bibi et al., 2022; Irawan & Hardjanto, 2021). In addition to apologies, the current study also focuses on compliments, and a compliment is a speech act "which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker ... which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer" (Holmes, 1986, p. 485). Compliments can be valued as positive speech acts; however, they can also be face-threatening. Context, cultural courtesy or interpretation may be influential factors on determining whether compliments are positive or negative speech acts (Thang & Zhang, 2009). Moreover, as a speech act set, compliments require the hearer to respond, which lead into compliment responses. Responding to compliments appropriately might be difficult because building a balance between not rejecting the compliment and not self-praising may be challenging for second language learners (Shahsavari et al., 2014). Besides, this may be because compliment responses reflect cultural and social values in addition to politeness diversity of speakers (Cheng, 2011). The scope of studies investigating compliments and compliment responses include the examination of native culture, non-native culture, cross-cultural and EFL/ESL contexts. For instance, Alqarni (2020) proposed that western culture affects compliments and compliment responses of Saudi learners in the EFL context. In a native culture context, Tang (2020) revealed that compliment response preferences of female and male adults were affected by their social perceptions toward femininity and masculinity. Moreover, in their cross-cultural study, Almansoob et al. (2019) detected certain pragmatic similarities and differences between the compliment realizations of Yemeni Arabic native speakers and American English native speakers.

As it can be seen from the related literature, numerous studies have examined apologies and compliment responses across cultures and languages; however, the speech act use of Turkish pre-service EFL teachers still invites much research from an interlanguage pragmatics perspective. As Esen (2021) expressed "[e]very culture has its own way of conveying meaning through language which gives major significance to studies carried out in order to understand different communication patterns with hopes of finding out the influence of culture and societal structure on the language use" (pp.1-2), and culture is constantly evolving. Therefore, this research is intended to more or less contribute to the literature on the effects of the status of the interlocutor and gender of the participants on apology and compliment response strategies within the theoretical framework of speech acts. Herein, the interlocutor is an interaction partner who has a double role as both the hearer (the role of interpreting what the speaker's utterance means) and the speaker (the role of coming to an understanding with the speaker) (Kecskes, 2016). Based upon these two variables, the purpose of this study is to explore the realizations of the speech acts of apology and compliment responses by Turkish pre-service teachers of English. Hence, three research questions were formulated:

1. What apology strategies are employed by Turkish pre-service teachers of English while responding to lower, equal and higher-status interlocutors?
2. What compliment response strategies are employed by Turkish pre-service teachers of English while responding to lower, equal and higher-status interlocutors?
3. Is there a significant difference between female and male Turkish pre-service teachers of English in their usage of:
 - a) Apology strategies, and
 - b) Compliment response strategies?

2. Literature Review

One of the main challenges in studying speech acts in particular and pragmatics in general is the issue of universality. The reason behind this notion is that it is difficult to know the degree to which the use of one language in context differs from the use of another language in similar contexts. This can also result in communication breakdowns or ineffective communication for second and foreign language learners; that is, they can experience pragmatic failures (Blum-Kulka, 1982) even though they have a very good command of the target language (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Some cross-cultural studies also support this claim by arguing that second language learners encounter difficulties in employing speech acts while interacting with native speakers (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Hao, 2017; Thijittang, 2010). Hence, it is vital to study the realizations of different speech acts by second and foreign language learners in various settings.

2.1 Apologies

Apologies are used across all cultures and languages (Koceva & Kostadinova, 2021), and they are crucial in maintaining social relationships. One of the most important projects in cross-cultural pragmatics is the Cross Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (CCSARP) which included the study of apology and requests in different languages in numerous contexts. In that project, DCT (Discourse Completion Test) was used as an instrument and participants were 400 college students majoring in linguistics (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The main conclusion strongly suggests that apologies and requests might be universal. However, the distribution of the strategies might vary from culture to culture. In another study, Cohen et al. (1986) investigated the differences in apology strategies used by native speakers and advanced level non-native speakers of English based on the severity of actions and distance between interlocutors. According to the findings, apology strategies of advanced level learners display similarities with native speakers. The difference between the ways the two groups apologized is linked to the strategies of modifying apologies.

In a study which focused on L2 proficiency and exposure to target language, Shardakova (2005) described the patterns American learners of Russian and native speakers of Russian used to apologize through a Dialogue Completion Questionnaire. The study demonstrated that L2 proficiency and exposure to the target culture has a distinctive impact on pragmatic knowledge. In fact, it was explored that exposure to target language influences pragmatic skills of learners who have lower proficiency levels. Regarding the issue of having an experience in the target country, the author believes that the long-term stay in the country has a positive effect on learning the pragmatics of the culture (Shardakova, 2005).

A study conducted on apology strategies of American English speakers and Jordanian Arabic speakers pointed to the fact that Jordanian Arabic speakers used a combination of numerous strategies more frequently than American English speakers did (Bataneh & Bataneh, 2008). Another contrastive study, which is also a corpus-based research, looked for whether there were differences in apology strategies between British English and Persian speakers (Chamani & Zareipur, 2010). The results suggested that although both participants were found to use similar strategies, British speakers preferred only one IFID (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device such as I apologize, I'm sorry, and Excuse me) in a variety of situations while Persians preferred an explicit apology along with other strategies. In a more recent study in which native speaker norms and Moroccan Arabic norms are compared in terms of strategy

choices in the speech act of apology, there were significant deviations in the overall desired strategies of Moroccan learners of English as compared to American native speakers of English (Ezzaoua, 2020).

With the aim of looking at apologies via a gender differences perspective, Iravan and Hardjanto (2021) analyzed apology strategies used by Indonesian EFL learners. The results showed that both genders preferred to use IFID the most, and there isn't any statistical difference in their strategy use. Nevertheless, female learners were found to apologize more intensely than males by using a combination of three or four apology strategies. Regarding the adverbial intensifiers such as 'so' and 'really', females used them in 66 utterances while males employed them in 27 utterances, which again demonstrates the intensity in female EFL learners' apology strategies.

Apology strategies have been studied in the Turkish context as well. Among those, İstifçi (2009) conducted a contrastive study on apology strategies utilized by intermediate and advanced level EFL learners and found out that the most common formula was IFID+EXPL (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device + Explanation) which was followed by EXPL strategy. She also revealed that the formulas used by EFL learners varied based on the socio-pragmatic requirements of different situations. In another study, Tuncel (2011) studied the apology strategies of Turkish prep-school and senior year college students by comparing Turkish speaker data with native English speaker data. The DCT results indicated that advanced level learners used formulas which were contradictory to both Turkish and English norms. This may be an indicator that Turkish learners of English developed their interlanguage forms as their proficiency levels increased. In a more recent study, Aydın (2013) aimed to identify and compare apology strategies used by native speakers of Turkish and native speakers of English, and advanced non-native speakers of English in Turkey. The data collected through a DCT emphasized that advanced non-native speakers used similar apology strategies in terms of general strategies but L1 forms were detected in their modification of strategies. In another study by Yalçinkaya (2021), certain similarities and differences in the use of apologies by Turkish non-native speakers of English and native speakers of English were described. Accordingly, distinctive attributes in the realizations of apology speech act were found in both languages although similar patterns also existed; and the discrepancies were claimed to be due to cultural variations.

2.2 Compliment Responses

Compliment responses are worthy of attention for research because they are really common in daily speech, and they are also one of the most problematic speech acts to be employed (Yu, 2003). In terms of functions of compliment responses, compliments and compliment responses serve as a solidarity-negotiating function; and approximately all English speakers are in consensus that the correct response to a compliment is "Thank you" (Herbert, 1989). In relation to this, the problem is that speakers do not know what to say after they say "Thank you" (İstifçi, 2008).

Among the studies conducted on compliment response strategies, some of them focus on a single culture such as Chinese compliment responses (Cai, 2012; Chen & Yang, 2010; Yu, 2003). In those studies, people are found to employ rejection strategies more since Chinese society gives special attention to being modest, rather than being in agreement. Yet, Chen and Yang (2010) also argued that the most frequent compliment response strategies in the English language were acceptance strategies. Furthermore, they claim compliment

responses in Chinese display a larger percentage of rejection than in many other languages. On the contrary, speakers of English have been proven to have an obvious preference for compliment acceptance rather than rejection.

Another group of studies on compliment responses concentrate on EFL learners. For instance, in Iranian context, Shahsavari et al. (2014) conducted a study on compliment response strategies of EFL learners by collecting data via naturalistic role plays and retrospective interviews. They explored that participants used identical patterns with native speakers and the most common strategies were appreciation and offering further comments in many situations. Again in Iranian context, TamimiSa'd (2015) examined compliment response strategies of EFL learners by administering a DCT. He concluded that participants used acceptance, combination and amendment strategies more commonly. In addition, they found that males and females significantly differed in their use of compliment response strategies. Similarly, Allami and Montazeri (2012) implemented a DCT focusing on the variables of gender, age and educational background. Examining the pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL learners in responding to compliments in English, they proposed that appreciation token and comment acceptance (micro-level), and acceptance and positive elaboration (macro-level) were the most frequent strategies. In addition, in the context of online communications, Sharivan et al. (2019) investigated the realizations of Iranian EFL learners' Persian and English compliment responses in social networking sites and reached the conclusion that they used acceptance strategies for English compliments whereas they preferred non-acceptance strategies for Persian compliments.

In a cross-cultural study, the compliment response behaviors of Thai and Chinese English language teachers were compared (Chen & Boonkongsan, 2012). Results showed that both groups tended to accept compliments. In a similar context, Cedar (2006) compared the compliment responses of Thai students of English and American native speakers. The findings indicated that the two groups employed different types of compliment responses which were not recognizable to each other. Besides, a number of recent studies investigated the gender factor in the use of compliments and compliment responses. To exemplify, Suteerapongsit (2020) examined Thai EFL learners' compliment response strategies in certain role-play tasks and found that both gender and topic influenced the participants' compliment response strategies. Thus, gender-based social norms appear to play a role in responding to compliments in a foreign language. Similar to this, Tang (2020) claimed that compliment response preferences of female and male adults were influenced by their social perceptions toward femininity and masculinity. Contrary to this, gender differences did not have an impact on the employment of compliments and compliment responses by Saudi EFL learners (Alqarni, 2020).

Regarding Turkish context, by collecting naturally occurring data on women's use of compliment responses, Durmuşoğlu (1990) revealed that Turkish women not only accepted compliments, but also downgraded or deflected them. Apart from that, Ruhi (2006) searched undergraduate Turkish students' compliment response strategies and discovered that acceptance strategies were the most frequently preferred ones. In a comparative study, İstifçi (2008) stated that Turkish people were likely to accept compliments, but they did not use thanking strategy as much as native English speakers did. Rather than thanking, they often employed explaining strategy or shift credit to another person. As a result of these, she concluded that Turkish culture had a remarkable impact upon compliment response

strategies. In a more recent study, acceptance strategies were preferred as the second most employed strategy in order to respond to compliments in English by EFL learners studying in ELT (Karagöz-Dilek, 2020). That is, the effects of native culture on the tendency to accept compliments are evident in many Turkish studies.

In sum, the employment of apologies and compliment responses in various languages as either first language or second/foreign language appears to be affected by numerous variables such as native culture, gender and first language of the interlocutors. Even though there is a great number of studies focusing on apologies and compliment responses of participants with different interlocutors, making an effort to reveal Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' apology and compliment response strategies is important in order to have an overall idea of where they stand and whether some kinds of interventions are necessary for a better pragmatic competence.

3. Research Methodology

Studies on interlanguage pragmatic development research consist of two groups: interventionist/explanatory studies, and non-interventionist/descriptive studies (Bagherkazemi, 2016). The current study falls into the second group, and it is a qualitative descriptive study aimed at finding which apology and compliment response strategies are used by Turkish pre-service EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers and whether there is a difference between female and male participants.

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 27 pre-service EFL teachers (13 females and 14 males) aged between 18 and 19 from the department of English Language Teaching (ELT) at Çukurova University. All of them were first year students at the time of the study. They are all non-native speakers of English and none of them received any specific training on pragmatics in English before.

3.2 Data Collection Tool

The data were gathered through a Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) (see Appendix A for both the scenarios and example statements of the participants) used by Yuan (2012). In this test, participants were requested to read different scenarios and write what they would say in that scenario in English. There were 13 different scenarios (6 apology and 7 compliment response scenarios), and Table 1 describes the apology and compliment response scenarios in the WDCT.

Table 1: List of apology and compliment response scenarios

Apologize for ...	Status of Interlocutor	Respond to a compliment on	Status of Interlocutor
ripping a magazine cover	Equal	a new hairstyle	Equal
mistaking a student's exam paper	Lower	a new watch	Equal
being late for a group trip	Equal	a presentation	Equal
accidentally interrupting a strange teacher's writing	Higher	a new sweater	Equal
forgetting to pass on a private message	Equal	delicious food	Lower
a bad memory and rudeness	Equal	intelligence in learning computer	Higher
-	-	your eyes	Lower

As illustrated in Table 1, there are various scenarios entailing to employ different apology or compliment response strategies based on the status of interlocutors. The status of interlocutors is divided into three categories as lower (e.g., your student), equal (e.g., your friend) and higher (e.g., your boss), yet the main focus is on equal-status interlocutors.

Apart from the WDCT, a background information form was given to the participants to collect demographic information to be used in the study. In addition, participants' consents were obtained, and the ethical committee approval was received from Çukurova University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee in the field of Social Sciences with the document number of 91770517-604.02.02/E.66316.

3.3 Data Analysis Frameworks

Participants' responses to each apology scenario in the WDCT were mainly analyzed with the help of the theoretical framework used by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). As shown in Appendix B, some other strategies were added to the framework when an appropriate strategy was absent. That is to say, the framework was expanded by including other strategies from Demeter (2006), Sadeghi (2013), Saleem et al. (2014), and Saleem et al. (2020).

Participants' responses to each compliment response scenario in the WDCT were primarily analyzed based on the coding scheme of Ruhi (2006). As understood from Appendix C, some other strategies were also inserted into the coding scheme from the schemes of Shahsavari et al. (2014) and TamimiSa'd (2015). Those strategies were integrated as micro-level strategies under the suitable macro-level strategies.

In the first phase of data analysis, the responses of each participant for apology scenarios were read in detail against the framework (Appendix B) with an aim to find out which strategies were used by participants while apologizing. For inter-rater reliability purposes, both researchers did their analyses on their own in this phase. Then, they compared their results and reached a common decision together for a few instances of mismatches. Inter-coder reliability was calculated as 0.97 (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which indicates a high agreement between the coders.

In the second phase, the frequency and percentages of apology strategies were calculated to demonstrate the strategies used by participants regarding the gender of the participants and the status of the interlocutors. Moreover, the chi-square test was run to see whether there was a difference between apology strategies of females and males. All these phases were repeated for compliment response strategies as well and inter-coder reliability was calculated as 0.95 (Miles & Huberman, 1994) which again indicates a high agreement between the coders.

4. Findings

The outcome of data analyses of apologies and compliment response strategies are presented in relation to three research questions under the following subheadings.

4.1. Research Question 1: Apology Strategies

To unravel participants' apology strategies, 4 scenarios for equal-status interlocutors, 1 for a lower-status interlocutor and 1 for a higher-status interlocutor were included in the WDCT. The main focus is upon equal-status interlocutors as is clear in Table 2.

Table 2: Apology strategies for equal-status interlocutors (scenarios 1, 3, 5 and 6 in Appendix A)

	Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%
Regret	22	24	20	23
Intensified regret	9	10	8	9
Request for forgiveness	3	3	3	3
Self-blame	9	10	1	1
Lack of intent	10	11	9	10
Justifying the hearer	3	3	1	1
Self-deficiency	3	3	1	1
Concern for the hearer	1	1	-	-
Explanation or Account	16	18	20	23
Oath taking	-	-	1	1
Offer of repair	5	6	7	8
Promise of forbearance	2	2	1	1
Demonstrating a sense of shame	1	1	1	1
Avoiding	2	2	6	7
Blaming the others	1	1	1	1
Attacking the complainer	-	-	4	5
Minimizing the effect	1	1	3	3
Shift of topic	2	2	-	-
Total	90	100	87	100

There are four apology scenarios with equal-status interlocutors, and both females and males used 16 strategies (f: 90 and f: 87 respectively) for those scenarios. The highest percentage belongs to *regret* category together with the *intensified regret* for females (24%+ 10%) and males (23% + 9%). *Explanation or account* has the second highest percentage; the third is *lack of intent* for the participants. The difference between females and males can be detected in five strategies: *Self-blame* was used nine times by females while it was used only for once by males. *Attacking the complainer* was used four times by male participants; females did not use that strategy at all. Similarly, females did not utilize the strategies of *oath taking*; however, males used this strategy for once. Moreover, males never used the strategies of *concern for the hearer* and *shift of topic*; yet, those strategies were preferred by females at least a few times.

Table 3: Apology strategies for a lower-status interlocutor (scenario 2 in Appendix A)

	Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%
Regret	2	9	3	14
Intensified regret	1	5	-	-
Offer of apology	1	5	-	-
Self-blame	5	23	8	36
Self-deficiency	1	5	-	-
Explanation or Account	3	14	-	-
Offer of repair	6	27	6	27
Blaming the others	1	5	1	5
Minimizing the effect	1	5	4	18
Pleading for understanding	1	5	-	-
Total	22	103	22	100

For this apology scenario with a lower-status interlocutor, the participants take the role of a teacher who has made a mistake in grading a student's paper, therefore causing the student to fail. The teacher understands the mistake and apologizes. As it is illustrated in Table 3 above, the frequency of the usage of the strategies by both female and male participants is 22 in total. Nevertheless, the males only used five different apology strategies; females used 10 different strategies. Females used the *offer of repair* the most (27%) while males used *self-blame* with the highest percentage (36%). Interestingly, with a lower-status interlocutor, males never resorted to the strategies of *intensified regret*, *offer of apology*, *self-deficiency*, *explanation or account* and *pleading for understanding* although females used each of these strategies for once.

Table 4: Apology strategies for a higher-status interlocutor (scenario 4 in Appendix A)

	Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%
Regret	8	42	10	63
Intensified regret	2	11	2	13
Self-blame	-	-	1	6
Explanation or Account	9	47	2	13
Avoiding	-	-	1	6
Total	19	100	16	101

This scenario situates the participants with a higher-status interlocutor in which they apologize for interrupting the teacher's writing. As it is seen in Table 4, females used three apology strategies (f: 19); however, male participants used five different apology strategies (f: 16). The highest frequencies of the strategies is *regret* together with *intensified regret* for both females (f: 10) and males (f: 12). The second top strategy utilized by females and males is *explanation or account* (f: 9, f:2 respectively). Regarding the strategies which were not used with a higher-status interlocutor, it is obvious that the strategies of *self-blame* and *avoiding* were not employed by females, but these two strategies were preferred by males.

Table 5: Total results of apology strategies

	Female		Male	
	f	%	f	%
Regret	32	24	33	26
Intensified regret	12	9	10	8
Offer of apology	1	1	-	-
Request for forgiveness	3	2	3	2
Self-blame	14	11	10	8
Lack of intent	10	8	9	7
Justifying the hearer	3	2	1	1
Self-deficiency	4	3	1	1
Concern for the hearer	1	1	-	-
Explanation or Account	28	21	22	18
Oath taking	-	-	1	1
Offer of repair	11	8	13	10
Promise of forbearance	2	2	1	1
Demonstrating a sense of shame	1	1	1	1
Avoiding	2	2	7	6
Blaming the others	2	2	2	2
Attacking the complainer	-	-	4	3

Minimizing the effect	2	2	7	6
Shift of topic	2	2	-	-
Pleading for understanding	1	1	-	-
Total	131	102	125	101

As it is demonstrated in Table 5, females used more apology strategies than males (f: 131 and f: 125 respectively). Top two strategies for the participants are the same: *regret* and *explanation or account*. The strategy of *regret* together with *intensified regret* was used by the participants with almost the same frequency (f: 44 for females and f: 43 for males). *Explanation or account* was used by female participants (21%) more than males (18%). While the third most frequent strategy used by females was *self-blame*, male participants preferred the *offer of repair*.

4.2. Research Question 2: Compliment Response Strategies

In order to explore participants' compliment response strategies, 4 scenarios for equal-status interlocutors, 2 for lower-status interlocutors and 1 for a higher-status interlocutor were included in the WDCT. The focus of the study is upon equal-status interlocutors as is clear in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Compliment response strategies for equal-status interlocutors (scenarios 7, 8, 9 and 10 in Appendix C)

Macro Level Strategies	Micro Level Strategies	Female		Male	
		f	%	f	%
Acceptance	Praise/upgrade	2	2	7	9
	Agreement	5	6	6	8
	Return (Reciprocate)	6	7	1	1
	Offer	4	5	2	3
	Appreciation	38	44	37	50
	Joke	1	1	3	4
	Laughter	-	-	1	1
	Pleasure	13	15	4	5
Deflection/Evasion	Shift credit to complimenter	3	3	-	-
	Shift credit to 3 rd person	2	2	-	-
	Questions	-	-	1	1
	Comment history	5	6	3	4
	Reassuring	3	3	-	-
Rejection	Downgrade	-	-	3	4
Self-made codes	Wish	4	5	2	3
	Giving advice	1	1	3	4
	Expressing surprise	-	-	1	1
Total		87	100	74	98

There are four scenarios with equal-status interlocutors. Table 6 demonstrates that both females (44%) and males (50%) were usually inclined to prefer the strategy of *appreciation* in reply to compliments of an equal-status interlocutor. Following this, if participants were expected to respond to compliments of an equal-status interlocutor, females were in favor of displaying *pleasure* (15%) more frequently than males (5%). On the other hand, males (9%) used the *praise/upgrade* strategy more than females (2%). Interestingly, frequencies indicate that females used the strategies of *pleasure*, *praise/upgrade* and *return* more than males did whereas females and males used the strategies of *appreciation*, *agreement* and *comment history* at approximately equal rates. Interestingly, there are some strategies females used

yet males did not or vice versa. For example, females used *shift credit to complimenter*, *shift credit to 3rd person*, and *reassuring*; however, males did not use any of them. Similarly, males preferred to use *laughter*, *questions*, *downgrade*, and *expressing surprise*, yet females did not utilize those strategies.

Table 7: Compliment response strategies for lower-status interlocutors (scenarios 11 and 13 in Appendix C)

Macro Strategies	Level	Micro Level Strategies	Female		Male	
			f	%	f	%
Acceptance		Praise/upgrade	4	10	2	6
		Agreement	-	-	3	8
		Return (Reciprocate)	6	15	2	6
		Offer	1	3	-	-
		Appreciation	17	44	14	39
		Joke	1	3	3	8
		Pleasure	5	13	3	8
Deflection/Evasion		Shift credit to 3 rd person	3	8	5	14
		Comment history	1	3	3	8
Rejection		Downgrade	1	3	-	-
Self-made codes		Expressing surprise	-	-	1	3
Total			39	102	36	100

There are two scenarios with lower-status interlocutors, and Table 7 clearly shows that both females (44%) and males (39%) tended to employ the strategy of *appreciation* the most while responding to compliments of lower-status interlocutors as in the compliments of equal-status interlocutors. Other mostly preferred compliment response strategies were *return*, *pleasure*, *shift credit* and *praise/upgrade* on the whole. Comparatively, females seemed to use the strategy of *return* (15%) more than males (6%) did; yet, there was not a huge statistical difference between males' and females' use of strategies of *pleasure*, *shift credit* and *praise/upgrade*. To add more, it is surprising to encounter that females never resorted to the strategies of *agreement* and *expressing surprise*; yet, males used them at least a few times. Moreover, males did not prefer to use the strategies of *offer* and *downgrade* although those strategies appeared in the compliment responses of females.

Table 8: Compliment response strategies for a higher-status interlocutor (scenario 12 in Appendix C)

Macro Strategies	Level	Micro Level Strategies	Female		Male	
			f	%	f	%
Acceptance		Praise/upgrade	-	-	3	14
		Agreement	-	-	3	14
		Return (Reciprocate)	-	-	1	5
		Appreciation	7	30	9	43
		Pleasure	1	4	-	-
Deflection/Evasion		Shift credit to complimenter	2	9	-	-
		Questions	1	4	-	-
		Comment history	12	53	5	24
Total			23	100	21	100

For this compliment response scenario, participants were expected to respond to a compliment about their intelligence in learning a computer language. Table 8 presents that compliment response strategies appear to alter when the interlocutor is higher in status.

Accordingly, the most frequent strategy was found to be *comment history* for females (53%) and *appreciation* for males (43%) in response to compliments by a higher-status interlocutor. Another mostly preferred compliment response strategy was *appreciation* as in the responses to equal and lower-status interlocutors. Surprisingly, the strategies of *praise/upgrade*, *agreement* and *return (reciprocate)* were not used by females. However, males seemed to be inclined to employ those three strategies with the higher-status interlocutors. Lastly, males never used the strategies of *pleasure*, *shift credit to complimenter* and *questions* though females used these strategies at least a few times.

Table 9: Total results of compliment response strategies

Macro Level Strategies	Micro Level Strategies	Female		Male	
		f	%	f	%
Acceptance	Praise/upgrade	6	4	12	9
	Agreement	5	3	12	9
	Return (Reciprocate)	12	8	4	3
	Offer	5	3	2	2
	Appreciation	62	42	60	46
	Joke	2	1	6	5
	Laughter	-	-	1	1
	Pleasure	19	13	7	5
Deflection/Evasion	Shift credit to complimenter	5	3	-	-
	Shift credit to 3 rd person	5	3	5	4
	Questions	1	1	1	1
	Comment history	18	12	11	8
	Reassuring	3	2	-	-
Rejection	Downgrade	1	1	3	2
Self-made codes	Wish	4	3	2	2
	Giving advice	1	2	3	2
	Expressing surprise	-	-	2	2
Total		149	101	131	101

Based on Table 9, total results point to the fact that the strategy of *appreciation* is preferred by both females (42%) and males (46%) by a wide margin. Apart from this, the strategies of *pleasure* and *comment history* are among the most frequent compliment response strategies; both of which are the second and third most frequent strategies by females (13% and 12% respectively). Nevertheless, *praise/upgrade* and *agreement* are the second most frequent strategies by males (9% for both). In addition, *return*, *shift credit*, *joke*, *offer* and *wish* are compliment response strategies utilized by participants to a limited extent.

4.3 Research Question 3: Difference in Apology and Compliment Response Strategies in terms of Participants' Gender

For each scenario in the WDCT, chi-square analysis was employed via SPSS, and there was a significant difference only for the scenario which required participants to apologize to a higher-status interlocutor for an accidental interruption (see Table 10). Females tend to use *explanation or account* strategy more than males with a higher-status interlocutor while apologizing. That is, there is a statistically meaningful difference in apologies of female and male participants for only one occasion where the interlocutor is higher in status.

Table 10: Chi-square results of scenario 4

Scenario 4	Strategy	Value	df	Sig.
Apologize for accidentally interrupting a strange teacher's writing (higher-status interlocutor)	Explanation or Account	8.429	1	.004

(p≤0.05)

5. Discussion

The current study with its focus on apology and compliment response strategies of Turkish pre-service EFL teachers reveals important clues regarding how the status of interlocutor and gender of the participants influence the strategies for apologizing and responding to compliments in English. These two factors were intentionally selected as the primary variables in the study since in the context of second/foreign language learning, speech acts may be regarded as one of the troublesome points (Heidari-Shahreza, 2014), and these variables might help to document the strategies in a clearer fashion for further scrutiny.

As for the way of apologizing, the participants were found to use similar strategies for interlocutors who have different status, yet the frequency of that demonstrates variations. To specify, the participants regardless of their gender prefer to use the strategies of *regret*, *explanation or account* and *lack of intent* while apologizing to equal-status interlocutors. Examining total results for apologies, *regret*, *explanation or account*, *self-blame* and *offer of repair* are the top four strategies -respectively- employed by the participants. Regret -included in IFID- is the most frequent strategy in the current study, and IFID is the most direct and routinized expression (Al-Rawafi et al., 2021; Holmes, 1989). The studies conducted on apologies with EFL participants support our findings as well. For instance, the most preferred apology strategy of Arab and Turkish EFL learners was that of IFID (Çetin et al., 2021) which includes the regret strategy. Malaysian and Iranian EFL learners displayed an expression of regret in most apology situations, too (Farashaiyan & Amirkhiz, 2011). Similarly, apology expression (IFIDs) and offer of repair were among the most frequent strategies used by Iranian and German EFL upper intermediate learners (Keshani & Heidari-Shahreza, 2017). Likewise, IFID was the most frequently used strategy by Arabic native speakers, English native speakers and advanced Saudi learners of English in Alhusban and Alshehri's study (2022). Alfghe and Mohammadzadeh's study (2021) also gives support for this situation since the most frequent strategies used by Libyan EFL learners are IFID and explanation, which is also the same for Indonesian EFL learners (Irvan & Hardjanto, 2021). Despite sociological, cultural, and personal variables, these common outcomes can be accepted as the indication of the universality of apology which was also scrutinized by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984).

Concerning compliment responses, *appreciation*, *pleasure*, *comment history* and *praise/upgrade* are the most frequent strategies employed by the participants. This shows that acceptance strategies (e.g., *appreciation*, *pleasure* and *praise/upgrade*) dominate the choice of Turkish students' compliment responses in English. In parallel with this, senior Turkish EFL learners majoring in ELT are found to use acceptance strategies as the second most preferred responses to compliments in English (Karagöz-Dilek, 2020). Similarly, Iranian EFL learners tend to use acceptance strategies most frequently to respond to English compliments (Sharivan et al., 2019). Likewise, Iranian Persian speakers have a strong tendency to accept English compliments (Derakhshan et al., 2020). Taking the status of interlocutor into consideration, *appreciation* is the top strategy used for both equal and lower-status interlocutors. For equal-status interlocutors, *pleasure* is the second strategy used

frequently by both males and females. Nevertheless, for lower-status interlocutors, females employ the strategy of *return* as the second preferred strategy while males utilized the strategy of *shift credit*. Interestingly, in responding to compliments from higher-status interlocutors, *comment history* is the most preferred strategy which is followed by the strategy of *appreciation*.

Regarding gender differences for apologies, female participants used more strategies (f: 131) than males (f: 125) in the current study, which is in line with Alfghe and Mohammadzadeh's study (2021) in which female Libyan EFL learners used more strategies than males. Females using more strategies than males was also supported with the findings of Holmes (1989), Harb (2015) and Alzebaree and Yavuz (2017). At the end of the chi-square analysis, a statistically significant difference ($p=0.004$) was observed for only one case (scenario 4 in Appendix A) in which females used *explanation or account* strategy more than males for apologizing to a higher-status interlocutor. This situation is contradictory with some studies in the field. For instance, a study with Kurdish EFL learners revealed that there was no significant difference between males and females in terms of strategies used to apologize (Alzebaree & Yavuz, 2017). Likewise, no statistical difference emerged among female and male Pakistani EFL learners in terms of their apology strategies (Bibi et al., 2022). For the gender differences in compliment responses, chi-square analyses showed that there was no significant difference between males and females in the current study. Likewise, Alqarni (2020) reached a similar result indicating that female and male Saudi EFL learners did not show any differences in their uses of compliments and compliment responses despite a contradictory outcome in a study by TamimiSa'd (2015) in which he detected that Iranian female and male EFL learners significantly differed in their use of compliment response strategies.

6. Conclusions and Suggestions

The objective of the present study was to investigate the strategies of Turkish pre-service EFL teachers for apologies and compliment responses and to look into possible differences between female and male participants. With this aim in mind, six apology scenarios and seven compliment response scenarios within a Written Discourse Completion Test were submitted to 27 pre-service EFL teachers at a state university in Turkey. Data analysis was realized with the guidance of a framework for apologies and a coding scheme for compliment responses and the application of chi-square tests. The results showed that the most frequent apology strategy is *regret* and in order to respond to a compliment, the participants mostly preferred to use *appreciation* strategy. The chi-square analyses for each apology and compliment response scenario showed that there is not a statistically significant difference between female and male participants except for one apology situation with a higher-status interlocutor.

This paper embodies a number of implications for EFL contexts. English is today's lingua franca and is spoken by many nationalities. This situation necessitates that pre-service EFL teachers should be aware of the fact that English is a means of communication in a vast geography across the world. To accomplish that, they should be taught how to use English in different cultural contexts with various interlocutors, and pedagogical interventions designed by taking individual differences and status of interlocutors into consideration may enhance students' pragmatic competence to promote such awareness. In fact, the new ELT curriculum

in Turkey, put into use in 2018, includes some elective courses related to pragmatics. That is, special attention to pragmatics has begun to be paid in recent years. If students, especially the ones who are majoring in ELT, gain pragmatic competence in English as early as possible, then they might be more successful at implementing practical ways of using and teaching pragmatics with their future students as well. El-Dakhs and Amroun's study (2021) also pinpoints the importance of the implementation of instructional pragmatics -both explicit and implicit teaching- from beginner levels of proficiency, which was also indicated in Baghouh and Radja (2022). This is crucial because language teachers can help L2 learners develop better speech-act knowledge by applying more interlanguage pragmatic learning strategies and classroom activities (Derakhshan, Malmir & Greenier, 2021).

The conclusion of the present study supports the following idea: lack or insufficient pragmatic competence in using speech acts eliminates the probability of success in conveying the intended goal. Thus, pre-service EFL teachers should be provided adequate assistance with regard to speech acts. To that end, intervention may be the only key part of learning pragmatics (Shakki et al., 2020) because EFL learners need to be able to realize others' intentions with the purpose of using English appropriately (Sanchez-Hernandez & Alcon-Soler, 2020). Through instruction, learners' pragmatic knowledge can be dramatically enhanced (Ziafar, 2020). For a proper intervention, the first step is to assess where the learners are in terms of strategy use so that required interventions can build upon those, which the current study aimed at.

In consideration of the studies conducted on apologies and compliment responses, it can be deduced that despite the generalizations over some strategies across cultures and languages, there are various crucial factors affecting the use of those strategies. Those crucial factors range from personality, gender, individual, cultural factors to exposure to target language, exposure to target culture, and even perception of English. Among all those, this study scrutinized the gender differences from Turkish pre-service teachers of English, and it is hoped that this study adds to an ever-growing body of literature by paving the way for opening new avenues for further studies.

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Appendix A

The Written Discourse Completion Test (WDCT) with example statements of the participants

Directions: *Please read the following 13 scenarios. After each scenario, you will be asked to write a response in the blank after "you". Please read each scenario carefully. Respond as if you would talk to the person in English in real life conversation. Please respond as naturally as possible. Do not worry about your grammar. You have 30 minutes to finish the following tasks.*

1. You borrowed a magazine from your best friend, and you ripped the cover page by accident. You are giving back the magazine to your friend.

Friend: Oh! What happened to the magazine?

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *I'm sorry. Children ripped it.*

2. You are the English teacher who mistook one student's examination paper for another due to the similarity in their names and failed him. You have recognized that you had made a mistake, and the student has known what had happened and came to meet you in your office.

Student: What has happened, Sir?

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *I guess I mistook you for your friend. I'm sorry but I will compensate it.*

3. You showed up an hour late for a group trip on a winter morning because you got up late on that morning. Your classmates are blaming you at the meeting place.

Classmates: Hey, what's happened to you? You are so late!

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *I'm very sorry, I felt asleep. I won't do it again if you forgive me for this time.*

4. You wanted to meet your English teacher in his office, but you went to the wrong office and interrupted a strange teacher's writing.

You: _____

Teacher: It's all right. Take it easy.

» Example statement by a participant: *Sorry, sir. I've been looking for my teacher.*

5. You and Tom are co-workers. You forgot to pass a private message to Tom, and this is the second time you forgot to pass a message on to him. Tom knew you had a message for him and went up to you.

Tom: I've been told that you have a message for me.

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *I know, you are absolutely right, but I forgot it again.*

6. You and Mary are classmates. Someone in the class borrowed money from you and did not give it back. You insisted that Mary was the person who borrowed money from you. Mary insisted that she did not borrow money from you. At that moment, another student came into the classroom and told you that he was the person who had borrowed the money.

Mary (*angrily*): Do you believe me now?

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *I'm so sorry about that. Let me buy two coffees for us.*

7. You have just had your hair cut in a fashionable style, and you bump into a friend in the street.

Friend: That hair cut makes you look great. It makes you look younger!

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *Was I old before?*

8. You are wearing a new watch. You meet one friend at your office.

Friend: Wow! What a nice watch! I wish I had one like that.

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *Thank you. I hope you can buy it one day.*

9. You have given a presentation in English class. After the presentation, one of your classmates comes to you.

Classmate: That was a great presentation. I really enjoyed it.

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *Thanks for such a positive feedback and I hope we will all progress in this course.*

10. You are wearing a new sweater. One of your friends meets you on the playground in the morning.

Friend: What a nice sweater! You look great in it!

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *I can give it to you bro if you like it*

11. You are a teacher in a language school. You have invited a group of students to your house for a meal. After the meal, one of your students comes to speak to you.

Students: I didn't know you were such a talented cook. The food was wonderful!

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *My father was also a good cook.*

12. You started a computer course three months ago. At the end of a lesson your teacher comes up to you.

Teacher: You are very intelligent and have a flair for computers. Besides, you show a lot of interest in what we do in the lessons.

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *Thank you. I'm interested in it since my childhood.*

13. You have been appointed as the sales manager of a large department store recently. You are out for coffee with a group of colleagues. One of your employees says to you.

Employee: You've got beautiful eyes.

You: _____

» Example statement by a participant: *Oh my God! So cute. I'm flattered. Thank you so much.*

Appendix B

The framework* used for the analysis of apology strategies

Strategies	
1	IFID (<u>Illocutionary Force Indicating Device</u>)
1a	Regret
1b	Intensified regret
1c	Offer of apology
1d	Request for forgiveness
2	Acknowledgement of responsibility
2a	Self-blame
2b	Lack of intent
2c	Justifying the hearer
2d	Self-deficiency
2e	Concern for the hearer
2f	Offense
3	Explanation or Account
3a	Oath taking
4	Offer of repair
5	Promise of forbearance
6	Demonstrating a sense of shame
7	Avoiding
7a	Denial
7b	Blaming the others
7c	Attacking the complainer
7d	Minimizing the effect (incident as non-important)

7e	Shift of topic
7f	Pleading for understanding

*This framework was based upon the following studies: Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Demeter (2006), Sadeghi (2013), Saleem, et al. (2014) and Saleem, et al. (2020).

Appendix C

The coding scheme* used for the analysis of compliment response strategies

Strategies	
Macro-Levels	Micro-Levels
Acceptance	Praise/upgrade
	Agreement
	Return (Reciprocate)
	Offer
	Appreciation
	Joke
	Laughter
	Pleasure
Deflection/Evasion	Shift credit
	Shift credit to complimenter
	Shift credit to 3 rd person
	Questions
	Comment history
	Topic shift
Rejection	Legitimate evasion
	Reassuring
	Disagreement
	Silence
	Downgrade
Self-made codes	Request interpretation
	Wish
	Expressing surprise
	Giving advice

*This coding scheme was based upon the following studies: Ruhi (2006), Shahsavari et al. (2014) and TamimiSa'd (2015).