Apologies, Apology Strategies, and Apology Forms for Non-Apologies in a Spoken Corpus

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Like other speech acts, apologies are difficult to study, and they have been studied in a variety of ways, including Discourse Completion Tests, role plays, gathering of examples of natural language, and using spoken corpora. Each method has advantages and disadvantages. One possibility for studying speech acts is to use a spoken corpus compiled from subtitles downloaded from the DVDs of movies or television programs. In order to study apologies, apology strategies, and apology forms, we compiled a corpus of the first three seasons of the US television situation comedy *Modern Family*. Using five keywords – "sorry," "excuse," "apologize," "forgive," and "pardon" – we identified the apologies found in the corpus and analyzed them, looking at what strategies were used, how strategies were combined, and how apology forms were used for speech acts other than apologies.

1. Introduction

Apologies play an important part in maintaining human relationships. They help repair relationships when an offense has been committed, and they show that the speaker recognizes that an offense has been committed and takes a degree of responsibility for it. As Tronsborg (1995, p. 373) wrote, "an apology is called for when social norms have been violated…. When a person has performed an act (action or utterance), or failed to do so, which has offended another person, and for which he/she can be held responsible, the offender needs to apologize. The act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to 'set things right.'" Apologies include not only what is normally thought of as an apology (e.g., "I'm sorry," "I apologize," etc.) but also strategies which can help in mending the relationship, such as offering a repair, using intensifiers, and minimizing the offense.

Apologies are very important in repairing human relationships in a variety of situations. Leech (1983) classified apologizing as a convivial speech act, that is, one that helps achieve the social goal of maintaining harmony in a relationship. When an offense has been committed, apologies can have powerful effects, decreasing the blame attributed to the offender and increasing positive expectations and intentions for the future of the relationship. Research shows that even in very serious cases, such as those of medical errors, an apology can reduce the chances of a lawsuit (Robbennolt, 2008). While the vast majority of apologies do not involve such high stakes, this does demonstrate their importance and power.

Apologies are complex, because they can consist of one strategy or one of a variety of combinations of two or more strategies. The choice of these strategies is influenced by a variety of factors. Apologizing can be difficult, because by apologizing, a speaker is taking a degree of responsibility, downgrading the speaker's face, humbling him or herself to some degree and conceding a mistake, but on the other hand,

failing to apologize can threaten the hearer's face and possibly the relationship between the speaker and hearer (Wipprecht, 2004; Salago, 2011).

1.1 Apology Strategies

Cohen and Olshtain (1981) were among the first to study apology strategies. Using a Discourse Completion Test (DCT; a form of data collection in which participants respond to situations where they might apologize, for example, by writing down what they would say if they lost a book they had borrowed from a friend), they elicited apologies and developed a typology, which has been adapted by Hitomi Abe (personal communication, March 5, 2012) and Kitao (2012) (see Appendix). This typology includes major apology strategies: expression of the apology (the Illucutionary Force Indicating Device, or IFID), using a performative word such as "sorry" or "forgive;" a statement of the situation, that is, what the speaker is apologizing for, if it is not clear from the context; an explanation for how the offense happened or why the speaker committed the offense; an acknowledgement of responsibility; an offer of repair; a statement of an alternative; a promise of non-reoccurrence; a suggestion for avoiding the situation in the future; and verbal avoidance. The categories of acknowledgement of responsibility, offer of repair, statement of alternative, and verbal avoidance are further divided into subcategories. The typology also includes adjuncts to apologies, such as using intensifiers, minimizing the offense, and expressing concern for the interlocutor. The changes made by Abe (personal communication, December 10, 2012) were to add "statement of the situation," "suggesting a repair," "statement of alternative," "suggestion for avoiding the situation," "verbal avoidance," "gratitude," "wishing the best after apologizing," "feedback," "adjunct to the offer of repair," and "other." Kitao (2012) added "self-justification" and "request for understanding." In both cases, these were strategies found through analysis of data that was collected.

Research related to apologies has primarily been done in terms of comparing the realization of apologies in different languages and cultures (Salgado, 2011). Among the most important of these studies were studies that were part of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), which was initiated by Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper (1989), or used its approach. They identified three expressions for the IFID of apologies:

1) an expression of regret ("I'm sorry")
2) an offer of apology ("I apologize")
3) a request for forgiveness ("Forgive me," "Excuse me," "Pardon me")

The IFID is usually a formula. According to Wipprecht (2004), "The use of the IFID as an explicit expression of apology shows the acceptance of the need to apologize on the speaker's side and also the acceptance of the cost to do so."

Intensifiers are also commonly used in apologies, strengthening the apology, increasing support for the hearer and indignity for the speaker. This intensification is usually internal to the IFID, in the form of such expressions as "very" or "truly." This strategy is particularly used by lower status people in order to encourage a stronger and more sincere interpretation of the apology. (Olshtain, 1989).

Apologies are also sometimes downgraded by minimizing the offense, e.g., "I'm sorry, but still, you shouldn't be so sensitive" (Olshtain, 1989) or offering self-justification (Kitao, 2012), e.g., "I'm sorry for laughing at you, but in my defense, you do look pretty funny."

According to Salago (2011), among the CCSARP's most important conclusions was that the same apology strategies were available to speakers of different languages. The various studies found similarities across languages in the expression of the IFID and in the acknowledgement of responsibility. However, apologies do differ in different cultures based on the situations when apologies are appropriate, the strategies chosen in different situations, and they ways in which apologies were intensified or strengthened.

1.2 Subtypes of Apologies

In addition, there are some specific subtypes of apologies which are not dealt with in the typology developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), in part because their data was gathered using a Discourse Completion Test, which does not allow for interaction. They were identified in studies by Demeter (2012) and Kitao (2012) which used spoken corpora

to research apologies. These are:

1. Co-constructed apologies: apologies in which more than one speaker participates, when more than one person has committed the offense (e.g., "I'm sorry we're late." "Yes, the traffic was terrible.")
2. Repair apologies: apologies that a speaker uses to correct him/herself or otherwise repair an error (e.g., "Mr. Smith, excuse me, Mr. Schmidt, could you tell me….").
3. Apologies in advance: apologies where a speaker apologizes for something that he/she is about to do (e.g., I'm sorry to have to ask you to do this, but…)
4. Mutual apologies: apologies where two interlocutors apologize to each other (e.g., "I'm sorry." "No, *I'm* sorry.") because each committed an offense
5. Conditional apologies: apologies that make use of a conditional form (e.g., "I'm sorry if you were offended.")

1.3 Issues Related to Gathering Data

The methods used to gather data to study speech acts, including apologies, are an important issue. As Demeter (2012) pointed out, although using naturally occurring data is considered the best, most valid method, the reality is that most research on speech acts uses other data-gathering techniques. It is difficult to collect naturally occurring data while controlling variables, and it is often difficult to collect a large number of examples of a particular speech act. Therefore, the ability to gather large amounts of data and/or to control variables has been preferred over naturalness. There are advantages and disadvantages to each method of gathering data, and because of this, it is impossible to determine that one or the other is "best" (Demeter, 2007).

1.3.1. Discourse Completion Tests. DCTs are the most common method for collecting data about speech acts. Their greatest advantages are that variables can easily be manipulated, for example, by using an interlocutor of higher or lower status, and that large amounts of data can be gathered relatively easily. However, the responses that researchers get are

what participants believe they would say in a particular situation, and they are written rather than spoken. In spite of these limitations, research by Beebe and Cummings (1985) indicates that for refusals, the semantic formulas that respondents use in DCTs correspond with those that other subjects actually did say in a similar situation, although real life interactions involved more elaboration in face-threatening situations or in other complex situations.

In addition, because the apologies elicited in DCTs are not interactive, there are types of apologies that this method does not elicit, as mentioned above.

1.3.2. Naturally occurring data. While naturally occurring data represents the way speech acts are used in real conversation, it is difficult to gather a large enough number of examples of a particular speech act to make generalizations, and it is impossible to manipulate the variables related to the speech act (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989). Also, there are privacy issues with recording naturally occurring data, so it is often written down after the fact, raising questions the accuracy of the wording (Yuan, 2001).

1.3.3 Role plays. Role plays have also been used to gather data for speech acts, though they are less common. Role plays are a more difficult method of collecting data than DCTs, but they have the advantages of providing more context and allowing researchers to look at the effects of interaction. They elicit spoken language, though like DCTs, participants are being asked to imagine what they would say in a hypothetical situation. If the role plays are audio- or videotaped, researchers can also consider nonverbal aspects of speech acts.

1.3.4. Spoken corpora. Data to study speech acts can also be gathered from spoken corpora, which can be developed from actual conversations, transcripts of interviews, lectures, etc. Spoken corpora such as the spoken sections of the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) provide naturally occurring spoken language. Corpora potentially provide a large amount of data, and they can demonstrate the effects of interaction on speech act strategies. However, the BNC is made up of a combination of transcripts of conversations recorded by volunteers and of such events as lectures, news broadcasts, sermons, and interviews

(British National Corpus, n.d.), and COCA is made up of transcripts of news programs, news magazine programs, etc. (Corpus of Contemporary American English, n.d.). While these corpora have examples of speech acts, they are not primarily from everyday conversation.

Another possibility is spoken corpora compiled from film and television scripts, DVD subtitles, and so on. Researchers can compile corpora of DVD and movie subtitles by downloading them from the Internet, or they can use existing corpora.

Davies (2012) compiled a corpus of subtitles from US soap operas. The dialogue in such programs represents everyday language well and includes the topics that people use in everyday life. Compared to the spoken language from the BNC and COCA, Davies (2012) found that the language from the soap opera corpus was more informal in its expressions and included more informal vocabulary and less formal or technical vocabulary than the BNC and the COCA and thus the soap opera corpus better represented the everyday conversation of ordinary people.

Specifically in the case of speech acts, Rose (1993, 1994, 1997, 2001) showed that material from film and TV can be a suitable source of authentic input for teaching speech acts. Huang (2004) also found that "apologies in film do reflect a large portion of real-life situations" (p. 1).

In addition, when using dialogue from a movie or television program, it is possible to look at the non-verbal aspects of the speech acts and to consider the influences the situation or of relationships among characters on speech acts.

However, when using corpora to study speech acts, variables cannot be manipulated, and the speech acts that will be found by searching keywords are limited to those that use the keywords. Therefore, the usefulness of a spoken corpus for studying speech acts varies depending on the speech act. For example, Kitao (2012) found 98% of the apologies in a small corpus (160,000 words) using a lemmatized search for "sorry," "excuse," "pardon," "forgive," and "apology," so apologies can usefully be studied using a corpus of DVD subtitles. On the other hand, in a study of requests, only 76.8% of requests were found using 30 search terms in a corpus of 80,000

words (Kitao and Kitao, 2012), which limits the usefulness of corpora for studying requests.

1.4 Apology Strategies and Non-apology Speech Acts

Apology strategies are sometimes used to express other speech acts. For example, "I'm sorry" may be used to express regret or sympathy. These can be confusing even for native English speakers. An interlocutor might respond to "I'm sorry" as an expression of sympathy or regret as if it were an apology by saying, "It wasn't your fault," when the appropriate response would be "Thank you."

As far as we have been able to determine, no other researchers have looked at this use of apology forms in English.

1.5 Research Questions

In this study, we will consider the following research questions:
1. What apology strategies are found in the corpus? How are apology strategies combined?
2. How are apology expressions used in non-apologies?

2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

In order to study the occurrences of apologies in a spoken corpus, we compiled a corpus composed of the English subtitles from the American television comedy *Modern Family*. Using the lemmatized search terms "sorry," "forgive," "excuse," "apologize," and "pardon," we searched for those terms and then separated the apologies from the non-apologies and analyzed the apology strategies based on a typology. We also looked at how apology forms that were used for speech acts other than apologies.

2.2 Materials

We developed a corpus of spoken English using subtitles from the first three seasons (2009, 2010, and 2011) of the US television program *Modern Family* (Levitan and Lloyd, 2009). We downloaded the subtitles from the Internet in srt files, which are a type of file that contains subtitles downloaded from

DVDs using a program called SubRip. The three seasons include a total of 72 30-minute episodes. The spoken corpus that we created included approximately 246,000 words.

We chose *Modern Family* because it has a great deal of everyday conversation primarily among extended family members but also with co-workers, customers, friends, service people, strangers, etc., with many examples of apologies, and because it is a television series that we are familiar with, which made it easier to analyze the apologies that we found, since we could recognize, in most cases, the context. (Not all television series, even series which include a great deal of daily conversation, have many examples of apologies. For example, the long-running comedy series *Friends* has very few apologies [personal communication, Gusztav Demeter, February 17, 2012].) The series met Rose's (2001) criteria of being less than 15 years old and depicting contemporary characters in real-life situations. In looking at movies, Huang (2004, p. 5) found that movies of the genre romance/comedy portrayed protagonists that "experience ups and downs in relationships and the interactions between characters are emotionally packed; therefore, apologies were frequently made to tie up the bond." By extension, a television comedy would have similar characteristics.

The plots of episodes of *Modern Family* revolve around the Pritchett family, Jay Pritchett and his adult children, Claire Dunphy and Mitchell Pritchett. Jay is divorced from DeeDee Pritchett, the mother of his children, and is re-married to Gloria Delgado-Pritchett, who is from Colombia and who has a young son, Manny Delgado, from her first marriage. Claire is married to Phil Dunphy and has three children, Haley, Alex, and Luke. Mitchell lives with his partner, Cameron Tucker, and their adopted daughter, Lily Tucker-Pritchett.

2.3 Procedures

We did lemmatized searches for five performative words for apologies: "sorry," "forgive," "apologize," "excuse," and "pardon." We separated the apologies from the non-apologies, including lines before and after the apology to provide a context.

2.4 Analyses

Using the typology of apology strategies developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981) and updated by Hitomi Abe (personal communication, March 5, 2012) and Kitao (2012), we identified the apologies and counted the strategies used as well as the most common combinations of strategies. We counted the number of expressions of apology (performatives) and of each of the apology strategies. Where the performative was repeated as part of the same apology (e.g., "I'm sorry, I'm sorry"), it was counted as only one occurrence and was coded as a repetition, if both performatives were directed at the same interolocutor. We also counted the subtypes of apologies (co-constructed apologies, apologies in advance, mutual apologies, conditional apologies, and repair apologies).

Finally, in order to look at how apology expressions were used for other speech acts, we separated them from other non-apology uses of the search terms and identified and counted the speech acts that they were used for.

3. Results

3.1 Apologies and Apology Strategies

There were a total of 566 occurrences of the keywords (excluding reoccurrences of performative verbs within the same apology). Among those occurrences, 362 were apologies. The results of the search of the corpus for keywords are summarized in Table 1. The vast majority of the apologies, 97.51%, used

Table 1. Apology strategiesWords

	Sorry	Excuse	Forgive	Pardon	Apology	Total
Performative	353	3	2	3	1	362
	97.51%	0.83%	0.55%	0.83%	0.28%	
Explain	123	1	1		1	126
	34.84%	33.33%	50.00%		100%	

statement of situation	99		1	3	1	104
	28.05%		50.00%	100%	100%	
Repetition	31					
	8.78%					
Explicit ack. of resp.	17					
	4.82%					
Implicit ack. of resp.	13					
	3.68%					
Reluctance	2					
	0.57%					
Lack of intent	12		1			13
	3.40%		50.00%			
Self-deficiency	4					
	1.13%					
Embarrassment	3					
	0.85%					
Non-specific offer of repair	3					
	0.85%					
Specific offer of repair	11		1			12
	3.12%		50.00%			
Silver lining	1					1
	0.28%					
Intensity	54					54
	15.30%					
Minimizing	8					8
	2.27%					
Emotional	6	1	1		1	9
	1.70%	33.33%	50.00%		100%	
Concern	5					5
	1.42%					
Introduction of an apology	4					
	1.13%					
Self-justification	14					
	3.97%					
Request for understanding	1					
	0.28%					
Clarification	3					
	0.85%					

the performative "sorry." Among the additional strategies used with "sorry" were an explanation (34.84%), a statement of the situation (28.05%), and an intensifier (15.30%). Fewer than 1% of the apologies use each of the other performatives – "apology," "excuse," "forgive," and "pardon." Because of the rarity of the performatives other than "sorry, it is difficult to make generalizations about their usage, so we will concentrate on the usage of "sorry."

We also looked at the combinations of strategies. The number of strategies in addition to the performative is reported in Table 2. Among the expressions of apology using "sorry," almost one quarter used the performative alone, and nearly half used one strategy in addition to the performative, and almost one fifth used two strategies. Fewer than 10% of the apologies used three, four, or five strategies in addition to the performative.

Table 2. Number of strategies in addition to performative

	Sorry	Excuse	Pardon	Forgive	Apologize
0	80 (22.66%)	1 (33.33%)			
1	171 (48.44%)	2 (66.67%)	3 (100%)	1 (50.00%)	
2	69 (19.55%)				
3	28 (7.93%)				1 (100%)
4	4 (1.13%)			1 (50.00%)	
5	1 (0.28%)				

We counted the combinations of strategies with performatives that appeared more than once. The results are reported in Table 3. In the case of apologies using "sorry," the most common patterns were to combine it with an explanation, which was done in 17.56% of the cases, or a statement of the situation, which was done in 16.15% of the cases. The only combination of two or more strategies with the performative with occurred more than once was an explanation plus a statement of the situation, which occurred 4.53% of the time. The other combinations with "sorry" occurred less than 5% of the time.

Table 3. Combinations of strategies with the performative.

	Sorry	Excuse	Forgive	Pardon	Apologize
Explanation	62 (17.56%)	1 (33.33%)			
Situation	57 (16.15%)		1 (50.00%)	3 (100%)	
Explanation plus situation	16 (4.53%)				
Intensification	15 (4.25%)				
Repetition	13 (3.68%)				
Self-Justification	7 (1.98%)				
Explicit or implicit ack. of responsibility	6 (1.70%)				
Specific or non-specific repair	4 (1.13%)				
Lack of intent	4 (1.13%)				
Emotional	3 (0.85%)	1 (33.33%)			
Minimization	2 (0.57%)				

3.2 Subtypes of Apologies

We found examples of five subtypes of apologies. These are summarized in Table 4. While none of the subtypes are very common – none of them occurred more than 3% of the time – they are types that interlocutors might encounter. However, they are not likely be elicited by a Discourse Completion Test, and so they demonstrate the importance of using methods of gathering data that involve interaction, such as corpus methods.

We will discuss examples that we found of the subtypes of apologies.

Table 4. Subtypes of apologies

	Sorry	Excuse	Forgive	Pardon	Apologize
Co-constructed	7 (1.98%)		1 (50%)		
Repair	9 (2.55%)				
Conditional	8 (2.27%)				
In advance	5 (1.42%)	1 (33.33%)	1 (50%)		
Mutual	4 (1.13%)				

3.2.1 Co-constructed Apology. Mitchell and Cameron arrive late to a family event.

Mitchell: Hi, hi, sorry. We would have been here sooner, but this one had a wardrobe crisis.

Cameron: You know, it's a somber occasion, and all my tops are too joyful.

In this case, two speakers are involved in the apology. Mitchell expresses the apology and explains why they were late, and then Cameron adds to the explanation.

3.2.2 Repair Apology. Phil and Claire are talking to their daughter Alex about the fact that she is under a lot of pressure to succeed in school.

Phil: This is my fault. You see me achieve excellence, and it puts a lot of pressure on you.

Claire: What about me?

Phil: Sorry. Yeah. It puts a lot of pressure on both of you.

In this case, Phil thinks Claire's question refers to herself and Alex, so he apologizes and then corrects himself – his achieving excellence puts pressure on both Alex and Claire.

3.2.3 Conditional Apology. Jay was rude to some friends of his wife's, and she gets angry with him. Later he recognizes that she was right.

Jay: I've been thinkin' about and I'm sorry if I embarrassed you. You're right. You never would have done that to me.

Gloria: I forgive you.

In this case, Jay uses a conditional to apologize, saying he was sorry if he had embarrassed her rather than he was sorry that he had embarrassed her. In doing so, he avoids actually admitting what he had done.

3.2.4 Apology in Advance. Mitchell and Cameron and their daughter are visiting an acquaintance, Amelia, and her son. She receives a phone call and learns that she will have to go to her restaurant.

Amelia: I'm so sorry. I have to run down to the restaurant for a minute. I really feel terrible asking, but would you guys mind?

Mitchell: It's not a problem. We'll watch the kids.

Amelia needs to commit the offense of leaving her guests, so she apologizes in advance.

3.2.5 Mutual Apology. Cameron is staying with Manny's parents temporarily, and they had had an argument.

Cameron: I'm sorry. You're right.

Manny: No. I'm sorry I snapped.

Both Cameron and Manny feel that they were wrong, so they both apologize, the second apology being facilitated by the first one.

3.3 Using Apology Forms for Other Speech Acts

As mentioned above, in addition to apologies, apology forms are sometimes used to perform other speech acts.

From this corpus, we identified ten uses for apology forms other than for apologizing. They are:

1. Getting attention: using apology forms to get another person's attention in order to get past them, to speak to them, etc.
2. Irony: using an apology, sometimes including the performative plus other apology strategies, to make some other point, often by making use of irony. This can often be recognized when the speaker apologizes for something that is obviously not his/her fault or something for which he/she is obviously not sorry.
3. Expressing sympathy: using apology forms to express sympathy over some negative aspect of the interlocutor's experience.
4. Expressing disbelief/surprise: using an apology form to show that one is surprised by or disbelieving of what the interlocutor has said.
5. Interrupting: using apology forms when breaking in without waiting for the end of the interlocutor's turn.

6. Expressing regret: using apology forms to express regret over a situation

7. Indicating inability to hear/understand: using apology forms when the speaker has either not heard or understood what the interlocutor said.

8. Introducing disagreement/correction: using apology forms when the speaker is about to disagree with the interlocutor

9. Excusing oneself: using apology forms when the speaker is going to leave, answer a telephone, wants the interlocutor to leave, etc.

10. Joke: using an apology form as part of a joke

The occurrences of apologies that are used for other speech acts, along with the percentage of each keyword search that they represent, are reported in Table 5.

Table 5. Non-apologies using apology forms

	Sorry	Excuse	Forgive	Pardon	Apology
Getting attention	1 (1.72%)	14 (45.16%)		3 (100%)	
Irony	17 (29.31%)		4 (100%)		1 (100%)
Sympathy	20 (34.48%)				
Disbelief/Surprise	10 (17.24%)	4 (12.90%)			
Interrupting	1 (1.72%)	2 (6.45%)			
Regret	3 (5.17%)				
Can't hear/ understand	4 (6.90%)				
Disagreement		5 (16.13%)			
Excusing self		6 (19.35%)			
Joke	2 (3.45%)				
Total	58	31	4	3	1

3.3.1 Getting Attention. "Excuse me" and "Pardon me," particularly the former, are the expressions most frequently used for getting attention.

3.3.2 Irony. Irony is an interesting usage of apology forms. The usage can be confusing, because the speaker is making some point other than the one they appear to be making on the surface. The hearer needs to recognize, for example, that the speaker is apologizing for something that he/she is not really sorry for, or for something that should clearly not be considered his/her fault.

Haley is trying to write a college application essay about a challenge she has overcome. She is having trouble with the essay and is talking to her mother about it.

Haley: I've lived a boring, sheltered, pathetic life.

Claire: I am sorry that we made things too easy and comfortable for you.

Haley: Oh, you should be. This is all your fault.

Claire is making the point that she doesn't think that Haley should be complaining about having had a comfortable life. In order to understand that Claire is not really apologizing and to understand her actual meaning, a hearer must recognize that Claire is not sorry that she has been able to give her family a comfortable life.

3.3.3 Expression Sympathy and Expressing Regret. "Sorry" is the performative used for expressing sympathy and expressing regret in all cases (using the expressions "Sorry" or "I'm sorry").

3.3.4 Expressing Disbelief/Surprise. "Sorry," "I'm sorry," and "Excuse me" were sometimes used to express disbelief.

Cameron and Gloria go to a restaurant for dinner. Gloria orders a dish called carnitas diablos, and Cameron tries to order the same thing.

Waiter: No, no, no. You should have the chicken enchiladas.

Cameron: Mm-hmm. No, I'll have the carnitas diablos.
Waiter: These are not for you.
Cameron: Excuse me?
Waiter: They're too spicy. Miss Gloria's used to it.

In this example, Cameron does hear what the waiter said, but he is surprised at being told that he should not order a certain dish, and particularly surprised at being told so by the waiter.

3.3.5 Introducing disagreement/correction. "Excuse me" was used in some cases to introduce an expression of disagreement or to correct someone else.

Claire has difficulty learning to use the remote control that Phil bought and ended up breaking it.

Claire: Okay. Phil, I apologize for breaking the world's worst remote that you bought... stupidly.
Phil: Excuse me, but the experts at CNET.com rated it the best remote.

Phil disagrees with Claire's characterization of the remote as "the world's worst," and he prefaces his expression of disagreement with "excuse me." (Note that Claire's apology makes use of irony.)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Findings
Based on the apologies found in the corpus, "sorry" is by far the most common performative in apologies. It is most frequently used alone or with a statement of the situation or an explanation for how the offense happened (or, less frequently, both).

We found apology forms being used for ten purposes other than to apologize. Among these, the most common were irony, expressing sympathy, getting attention, and expressing disbelief or surprise.

4.2 Limitations of the Study
This study is based on a relatively small corpus with a limited number of types of conversations. The majority of conversations were among members of an extended family who lived together or close together and saw each other frequently, and therefore, they were among people who knew each other well and in informal situations. Though there were some conversations between the family members and various other people (friends or acquaintances, employers or employees, etc.), these were in the minority.

Also, the study only includes apologies that can be identified through the five performative verbs. Apologies that didn't include the performative verbs were not be included in the analyses.

4.3 Suggestions for Future Research
A larger corpus could be compiled using a variety of television programs or movies. This would allow analysis of a wider variety of situations and conversations among people with a wider variety of relationships.

In addition, comparisons could be done between apologies performed by males and females or older and younger speakers, in response to larger or smaller offenses, and so on.

Responses to apologies could also be studied.

It may also be possible to explore the use of other speech acts, if search terms could be identified, or if tagged corpora were used. This type of research could also be done with a corpus of naturally occurring spoken language, such as the spoken section of the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), or the corpus of soap opera subtitles, which are available at http://view.byu.edu/.

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Appendix

This apology strategies typology was developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981) and adapted by Hitomi Abe (personal communication, March 5, 2012) and Kitao (2012).

-Expression of apology: Use of an expression which contains a relevant performative verb. e.g., "I'm sorry"; "I apologize"; "Excuse me"; "Forgive me"; "Pardon me."

-Explanation: An explanation or an account of situation which caused the apologizer to commit the offense

-Statement of the situation: A description of the situation that led to the need for apology, e.g., "I dropped your camera and broke it."

-Acknowledgment of responsibility: A recognition by the apologizer of his or her fault in causing the offense. This semantic formula can be subcategorized into:
1. Implicit acknowledgment, e.g., "I should have called you before."
2. Explicit acknowledgment, e.g., "It completely slipped my mind."
3. Expression of reluctance, e.g., "I hesitate to say this, but it is true."
4. Expression of lack of intent, e.g., "I didn't mean to."
5. Expression of self-deficiency, e.g., "You know I am bad at remembering things."
6. Expression of embarrassment, e.g., "I feel so bad about it."
7. Request for understanding: asking the interlocutor to understand the speaker's situation, e.g., "I hope you understand."

-Offer of repair: An offer made by the apologizer to provide payment for some kind of damage caused by his or her infraction, which can be specific or non-specific.
1. Non-specific offer of repair, e.g., "I'll see what I can do."
2. Specific offer of repair, e.g., "I will do extra work over the weekend."

-Suggesting a repair: Suggesting something that the interlocutor rather than the apologizer could do. e.g., "Do you want to come with me?"

-Statement of alternative
1. I can do X instead of Y
e.g., "I'd rather…"
2. Why don't we X instead of Y
e.g., "Let's do…instead"

-Promise of non-recurrence: A commitment made by the apologizer not to have the offense happen again. e.g., "It won't happen again."

-Suggestion for avoiding the situation: e.g., "Let's put it in writing next time."

-Verbal avoidance
1. Topic switch
2. Joke
3. Finding a silver lining: Referring to something good that came out of the apologizer's mistake, e.g., "You have a lead on a new job."
4. Laugh

Adjuncts to apologies
1. Intensity of apology: e.g., "really," "very," "so," "terribly," "awfully," "truly," "please";
2. Repetitions, e.g., "I'm sorry, I'm sorry."
3. Minimizing offense: e.g., "It's O.K. No harm done."
4. Self-justification: explaining why the action was justified, e.g., "I'm sorry I laughed at you, but in my defense – look at you!"
5. Emotionals: e.g., "Oh!" "Oops!" "God!"
6. Gratitude: e.g., "Thank you.", "I appreciate it."
7. Wishing the best after apologizing: e.g., "I hope you enjoy yourselves."
8. Concern for the interlocutor: e. g., "Are you okay?", "Have you been waiting long?"
9. Feedback: e.g., "This book was interesting."
10. Adjunct to the offer of repair: e.g., "Please wait."

"Just a moment."

11. Introduction of an apology: e.g., "I need to apologize."

12. clarification: when the interlocutor misunderstands exactly what the speaker is apologizing for, the speaker clarifies, e.g., "I'm not sorry I did it, but I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner."

Other

1. utterances related to apology: e.g., "Believe me." "What's wrong?"

2. utterances not related to apology: e.g., "Let's go."