The Occurrence of Apology Expressions in Moye's *Me Before You* and *After You*: A Pragmatic Study

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Abstract

Pragmatics in general and speech acts theory in particular have witnessed an ever-lasting revolution in the number of studies, papers and articles that are conducted and written to deal with how their nature and state of affairs have been developing and to depict the extent which they have been reaching. The present study adds and completes, but not beautifies, other pragmatic portraits already demarcated by others. It is an in-depth treatment of apology expressions manipulated in Moye's *Me Before You* and *After You*. It adopts a descriptive-analytical approach in which the frequencies and percentages are statistically used in the analysis of the apology expressions. The study concludes different findings as to how apology expressions of complex and simple types are concerned. The complex strategy of expressions is of more considerable variations than those of simple one in a way that for the complex one, the number of apology expressions is larger than the number of the other strategy.

Keywords: Apology expressions, Complex strategy, Simple strategy, Moye's *Me Before You* and *After You*

1. Introduction

Apology plays an important role in languages and should be mastered by any language learner. However, to be proficient in that domain, one has not only to learn apology and the language used to express it but he also has to acquire the ways people make it, simply because it may differ from one culture to another.

Language is viewed as a system through which all living organisms communicate to each other. Language is a way in which individuals can meet their own needs in the community. So, it is not only enough to know the grammar, phonology or any other linguistic branches of the target language. Many pragmatic studies have been conducted on different speech acts in

different languages, and the results have demonstrated the influential role played by tradition and culture in the production of the target language.

Various concepts of the act of apology have been introduced as to how it is employed in social communication, most of which focus on the communicative purposes and the social aspects that influence the process of communication. For example, apology is considered a speech act redressing an offense which an apologist adopts in front of a victim. It may also be described as a process through which the speaker in making his/her speech takes into consideration what he/she thinks to be the ideas and presumptions that are most accessible to the recipient. The recipient, in turn, endeavors to manipulate the most accessible ideas and presumptions. The situation is expanded until such impacts are accomplished; these effects shape such the interpretation. Therefore, it is important to recognize what is inferred, recommended or implied by a sentence or series of sentences and what is logically said in a certain context.

On this basis, it is possible to recognize between indirect and direct apology. The use of appropriate performatives reflects direct apology, while indirect apology contains linguistic forms that involve verbs different from the performatives. Therefore, it is obvious that the indirect apology may be understood by depending on speech acts' knowledge, apart from the general criteria of cooperative conversation which reciprocally share virtual data, and a capacity to draw deductions.

Many studies have been conducted to cast light on the interaction between pragmatics (discourse analysis) and literary works. It is, in fact, this interaction which is considered a fertile soil to inspire writers and researchers to write, explore and investigate any thin line between the two fields. The present study is hopefully assumed under such an interaction in an attempt to diagnose the kinds of apology expressions employed in Moyes' two selected novels entitled *Me Before You* (2015), and *After You* (2016) and to detect the possible pragmatic strategies applied.

2. Objectives of the Study

The study is concerned with (1) exposing the apology expressions fully manipulated and widely used by the two novels' characters, and (2) sorting pragmatic strategies whose adoption contributes to classify the apology expressions.

3. Questions of the Study

The study is an endeavor to answer the following questions:

1. What are the apology expressions and their sorts that are obviously manifested and entirely uttered by the novels' characters?

2. Which pragmatic strategies are adopted to analyze the characters' use of apology expressions?

4. Significance of the Study

Different studies and articles have dealt with the sharing area that combines pragmatics and literature. This study is not a claim of perfection, nor is it something new in pragmatic literature. It is an attempt to design a pragmatic frame which is supposed to fit the literary picture of apology expressions articulated by the novels' characters.

5. Some Theoretical Remarks

An apology is a part of human communication that occurs in every culture to maintain good relations between interlocutors. It is not only something people do to be polite, but it is also a crucial activity that must be performed to represent social rituals and show respect or empathy for wronged individuals. It is an act of acknowledging, namely, an act must not go unnoticed without a reconciliation of the relationship. An apology is that thing which can disarm the anger of others, prevent further misunderstanding and bridge the distance among people. It is that act which enables an individual to resolve conflicts, restore harmony, and maintain healthy relationships (Ogiermann, 2009).

Apology is also an act which is beneficial not only to hearer but also to speaker. For the hearer, it is beneficial because it shows that speaker would show a respect and positive feelings to him. On the other hand, it is beneficial to speaker because this indicates that speaker is not rude and it was an accidental act. An apology is an act which helps speaker to get rid of negative feeling by taking responsibility for the action and performing the act (Reiter, 2000; Deutschmann, 2006).

According to Holmes (1990:1550), apologies are defined as "primarily social acts carrying the effective meaning." Brown and Levinson's study (1987) shows that apology is a primarily and essentially social act. As stated by Goffman (1967), apologies are negative politeness strategies in way that they reflect a remedy act essential in remedial interchange. Bergman and Kasper (1993: 82) define apology as a "compensatory action to an offence; in the doing of it, the speaker was casually involved on which is costly to the hearer". Trosborg (1987) explained that apologies are expressive illocutionary acts which can be different from other expressive act by being convivial in nature.

There are many classifications which have been applied to apology to gather it under certain group of speech acts. According to Austin's classification of illocutionary acts (1962), apology is grouped in terms of the concept of behabitive. This class of performatives represents those verbs which are used in expressing attitudes and social behaviors. Behabitives may be produced as a reaction against wrong behavior which entails somebody to apologize.

Austin provides thirty-three verbs of this class. They include (apologize, thank, congratulate, condole, commend, blame, approve, bless, curse). Apology is a post event act and comes as a result of wrong doing. This justifies Austin's inclusion of apology along with behabitives. In apology, according to Austin somebody performs the act as follows:

A locutionary act: somebody utters the words (I apologize. I'm sorry).

An illocutionary act: somebody apologizes.

In a per-locutionary act, a speaker placates the hearer (who accepts the apology and forgives). Searle (1976, 1979) looks at apology from a different angle. He attaches apology to the class of "expressive" which represents the psychological state specified in the propositional content. Verbs, used in this class, express the psychological state about the feelings of speakers such as (thank, apologize, sympathize, congratulate). By applying Searle felicity conditions, the performance of apology is as follows:

Propositional content   past action A done by S

Preparatory condition S believes that A is an offence against H

Sincerity condition   S regret act A

Essential condition   count as an apology for act A

As for Leech (1983), it is argued that language is a means by which Ss accomplish their aims. The classification of illocutionary functions entails that apology is seen as a convivial speech act. In this kind of speech act, the illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal, and the social goal of apology is to maintain harmony between S and H which makes them inherently polite. Apology is regarded as an act that threatens Ss positive face. This is because that S wants to be socially liked and doing mistakes makes his likeness at risk (Staab, 1883).

Edmondson (1981) investigates the speech act of apology from a discourse analysis perspective. He approaches the nature of this act compared to other expressive: thanking and complements. Therefore, he defines apology as an illocutionary act where a speaker does a terrible performance for the hearer. An apology is indicated to have direct locutions, which involves "social politeness.

Edmondson considers apology as an expressive of "hearer–supportive behavior." As having many discoursal functions, apology is frequently regarded as a hearer-supportive move called a disarming move. As a pre-complaint act, it is grasped by a hearer due to various communicative strategies used to interpret the speaker's regret or fault in a particular situation. Besides, the disarming move appears in the form of "ritual-firming exchange" as to keep the speaker/hearer rapport. Such a function relies on the notion of "reciprocal complain" whose aim is to preserve the social relationship of the speaker and hearer away from disharmony.

Olshtain (1989) argued that most Hebrew speakers do not prefer to transfer the rules of their mother tongue. In addition, as proposed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), making a pragmatic transfer could be caused by the poor competence in English language. Thus, even having an excellent grammatical knowledge of the target language, second language learners still fail to communicate successfully due to different cultural variables.

In their analysis, Cohen and Olshtain (1981) state that apology responses performed by Hebrew speakers are highly influenced by their native language. Their responses are characterized by using intensifiers repeatedly; for example, they overuse the adverb 'very'

such as in 'Oh, I'm very sorry' whereas English native speakers do not repeat the same adverb but use another intensifier in combination with it, like 'I am really very sorry'. However, one major drawback in Cohen and Olshtain's study (1981) is that only eight situations for examining apologies were employed. The small number of apology situations used could be deemed as a limitation because yielding sufficient data for measuring pragmatic competence needs more contextualized situations.

Coulmas (1981) identifies the common features of apologies produced by non-native speakers of Japanese. She concludes that there is a big difference between the form of the apologies and the functions they realize. She claims that apology forms can be used for expressing thanks, greeting and offers. Thus, non-native speakers of Japanese exhibit a pragmatic failure when producing the speech act of apologies since they are not familiar with the cultural norms and values of the Japanese culture. This supports the validity of Coulmas' claim that people differ in their perceptions of interactional customs of which apology is a part.

The development of apologies in the Japanese EFL learners was conducted by Dawaele (2008). Apologies produced by the Japanese EFL learners, elicited by DCT, were compared with British native speakers' and Japanese native speakers' apologies. It was concluded that the Japanese EFL learners' use of IFIDs is significantly different from that of the native speakers of Japanese. Further, the Japanese EFL learners misused the expression of `Excuse me` as a strategy of apology as if they mean 'I am sorry'. It could be argued that the expressions 'I am sorry' and 'excuse me' are different. They can be freely alternate in certain situations, for example when someone wants clear off the way through a crowd of people in a train or bus; therefore, saying 'excuse me' gives an indication to the other party that there is something which might be violated whereas saying 'I am sorry' indicates the speaker feels regretful. However, Dawaele's study (2008) involved a small number of participants (totally 46) which can be regarded as a limitation. Further, inter-language analysis was conducted by Sanchez (2016) for examining the pragmatic competence in the Spanish university master students when performing requests and apologies.

Olshtain (1989) carried out a study with 63 college subjects (12 native English speakers, 12 native Hebrew subjects, 12 Russian subjects and 13 English speakers learning Hebrew at teacher's college in Jerusalem) to compare their apology usage, According to the results obtained from the study, he claimed that English speaker's data differed from native Hebrew data and they employed transfer. He used the categorization of Cohen and Olshtain (1981) such as:

1. An expression of apology (illocutionary Force Indicating Device IFID).

A. an expression of regret (e.g I'm Sorry).

B. an offer of apology. (e.g I apologize).

C. a request for forgiveness (e.g excuse me, forgive me).

2. An offer of repair /redress (REPR) (e.g I'll pay for your damage).

3. An explanation of an account (EXPL) (e.g I missed the bus).

Any external mitigating circumstances 'objective' reasons for the violation (e.g. the traffic was terrible).

4. Acknowledging responsibility for the offence (RESP) (e.g. it's my fault).

A. self-blame (e.g. it's my mistake).

B. Justifying hearer (e.g. you are right to be angry).

C. Lack of intention (e.g. I did not mean it).

5. A promise of forbearance (FORB) (e.g. I'll never forget it again).

6. Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive- analytical approach in which the frequencies and percentage are statistically used in the analysis of the expressions. It means that this study employs both descriptive and qualitative methods of analysis. In the first place, it focuses on the commonest research activities including collecting and identifying and accounting data. Next, the qualitative procedure enters the scene in a way that data are thoroughly scrutinized and deconstructed in the form of apologizing expressions of two strategies, i.e. simple and complex ones as they are manifested in *Me before* you and *after you*.

7. Sample of the Study

The samples of the present study are two literary works: two selected novels entitled *Me before You* and *After You* written by Moyes. The first novel consists of 480 pages and 27 chapters, while the second one is composed of 407 pages and thirty chapters. Importantly, the data of this study are taken from the dialogues and conversations uttered by the characters the two novels.

8. Instrument of the Study

Based on the statistical side, the study is concerned with displaying the frequencies and percentages of apologizing expressions of both simple and complex strategies. The statistical instrument adopted here is embodied in a form of graphs (figures) and tabulated data to illustrate the extent to which the apologizing expressions of the two strategies are divergent.

9. Data Analysis

The study data are best analyzed according to two perspectives. The first one pivots on the syntactic-pragmatic analysis of the apologizing expressions whereby justifications are given as to why some expressions are simply-oriented, and others are of complex behavior. The second perspective is a humble attempt to cast some light on what is gonging on behind the senses of the literary image drawn by the writer of the two novels to activate both of the simple and complex strategies of the apology expressions.

10. Results and Analysis of Data

This section covers detailed answers to the study questions whose aims are to "dig deep" the realm of apology expressions highlighted in *Me Before You* and *Me After*. The questions have already raised, and they are as follows:

1. What are the apology expressions and their sorts that are obviously manifested and entirely uttered by the novels' characters?

2. Which pragmatic strategies are adopted to analyze the characters' use of apology expressions?

10.1 The Analysis of Apology Expressions in Me Before You

Figure 1 lucidly illustrates direct apology first with its divergent types and secondly with its adopted strategies. It is apparent that there are drastic changes in its average of simple and complex strategies in *Me Before You*. It is evident that REGT of complex strategy is increased dramatically so that it scores the highest average among other kinds of strategies. In general, the variation of average is really seen and it shows such different frequencies as follows: EXSD is 8, EXLINT is 9, EXPL is 16, APOL is 3, and PROM is 2 respectively. Accordingly, the lowest average is PROM, but the highest average of simple strategy is that of APOL with 16 and the lowest one is REGT with 7.
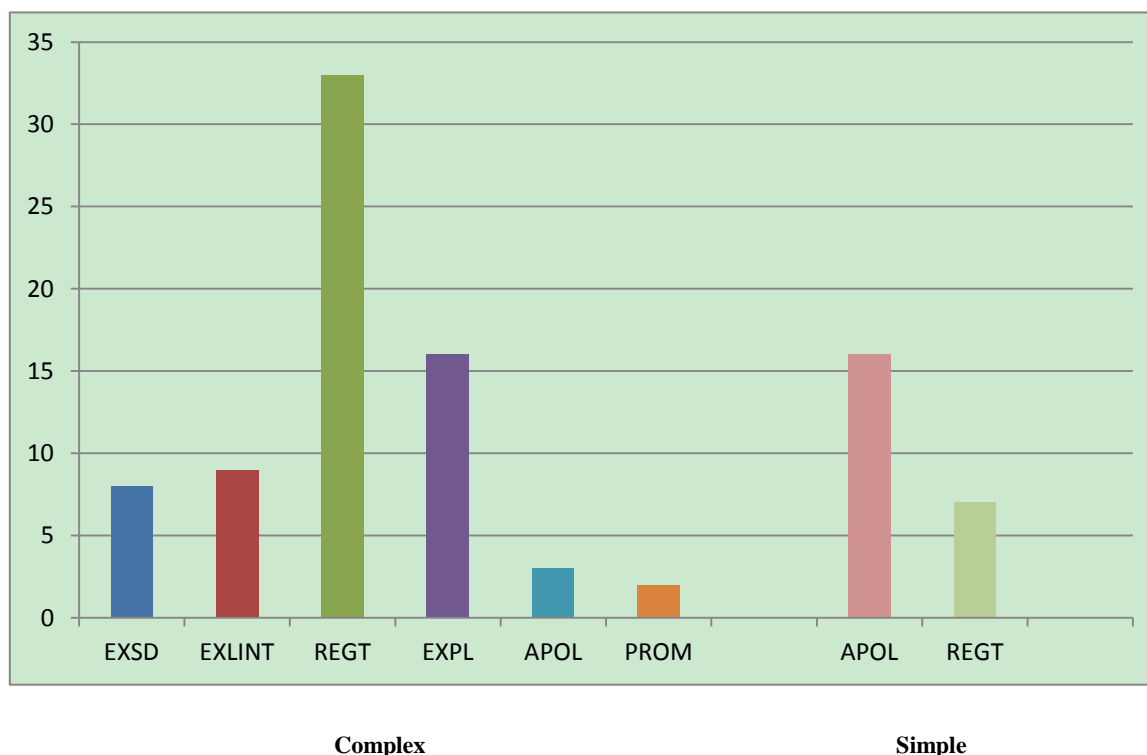

Figure 1. Direct apology with simple, complex strategy in *Me before You*

Unlike Figure 1, Figure 2 refers to the emerge of indirect apology with its details. It obviously demonstrates the extent to which changes are averaged in both kinds of indirect strategy. The variation of the frequencies is very clear among them: the highest average is

EXSD with 26, following by EAS with 21 then EXLINT with 13. However, the average lessens dramatically as in ABLM with 1, REQF with 1, APOL with 6, AOR with 5, and REWGT with 3. In contrast, EXLINT of simple strategy records 6 represented as being the highest frequency whereas other kinds score the following frequencies respectively: EXSD with 2, PROM with 1, APOL with 2, AOR with 1, and EXPL with 3.
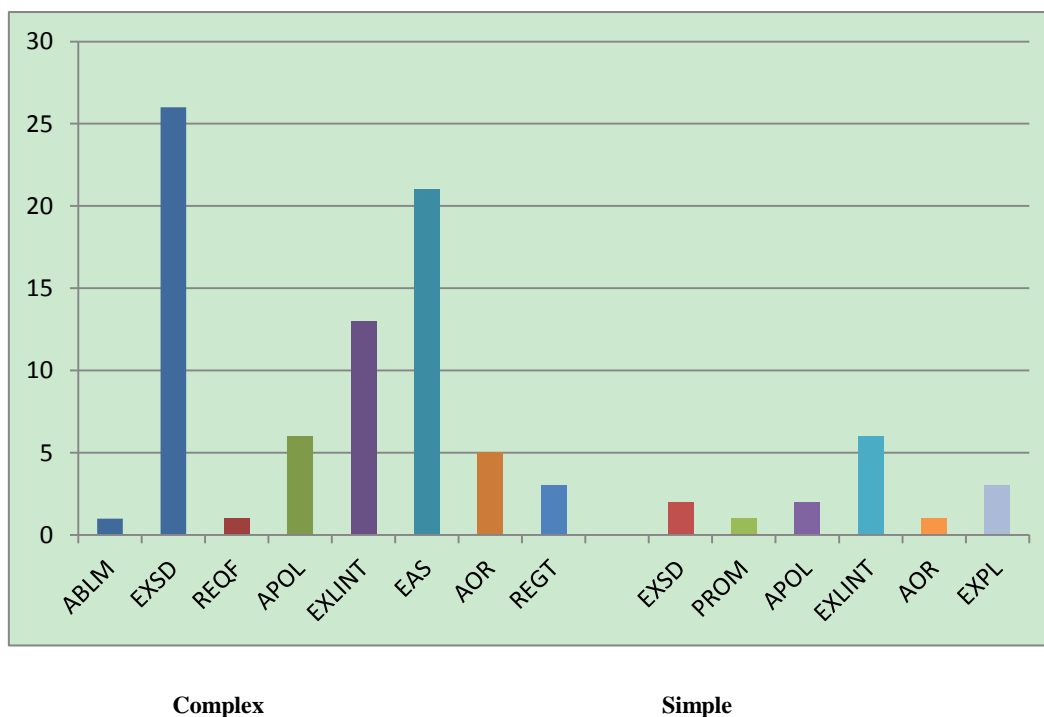

Complex   **Simple**

Figure 2. Indirect apology with simple, complex strategy in *Me before You*

10.2 The Analysis of Apologizing Expressions in After You

Turning to the sequel to *Me Before you* would carry with it essentially statistic data. Figure 3 elucidates the direct apology with simple and complex strategy .So we can see that APOL is greater in its frequency than REGT because the former scores 18, while the latter scores 4. On the same footing, APOL of complex strategy still preserves its own superiority recording 9. Other types of complex strategy tend to have an ever-lasting increase in their average: EXLINT with 3, EXPL with 6, EXSD with 8, and REGT with 6.
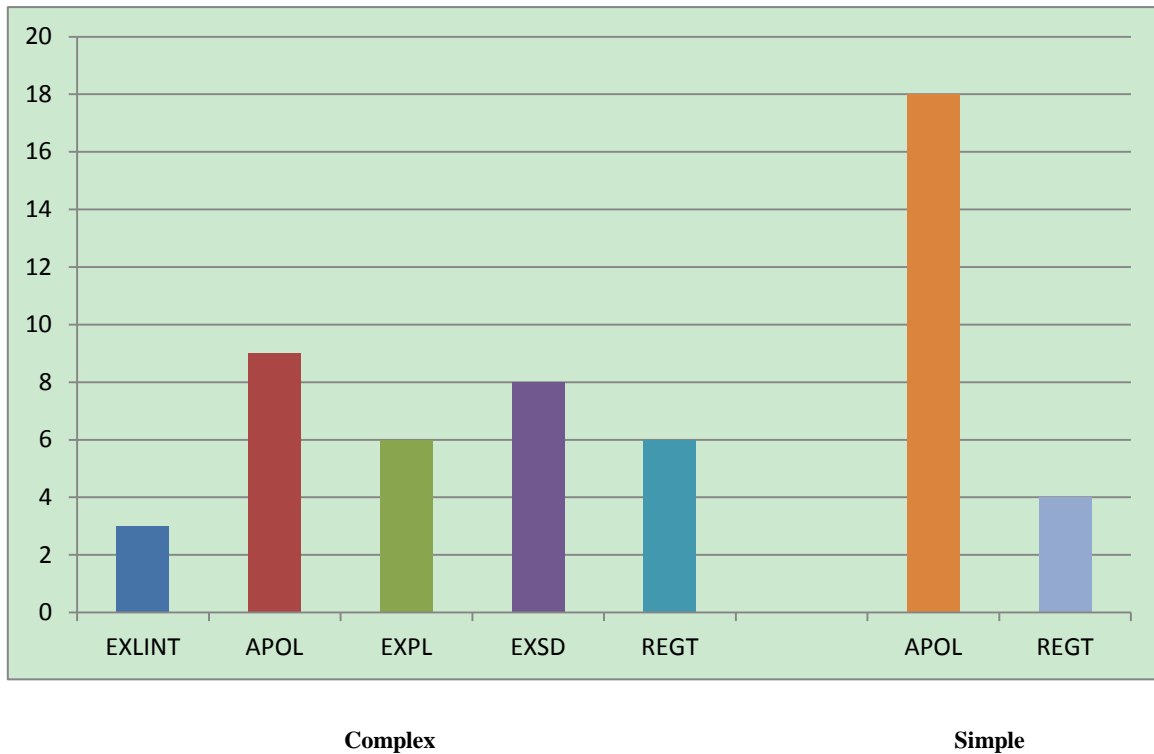
Figure 3. Direct apology with simple, complex strategy in *After You*

As far as indirect apology with a simple and complex strategy is concerned, Figure 4 shows that the highest average is scored in the complex strategy compared with the simple one. In other words, the sorts of indirect apology of the complex strategy are averaged as follows: EXPL with 18, EXLINT with 14, EXSD with 9, APOL with 4 and PROM with 1.

Meanwhile, the simple strategy represents four kinds of apology in which EXPL shows the greater average of 15 followed by EXLINT with 7 , EXSD with 5 and finally the smaller one is REGT with 2.
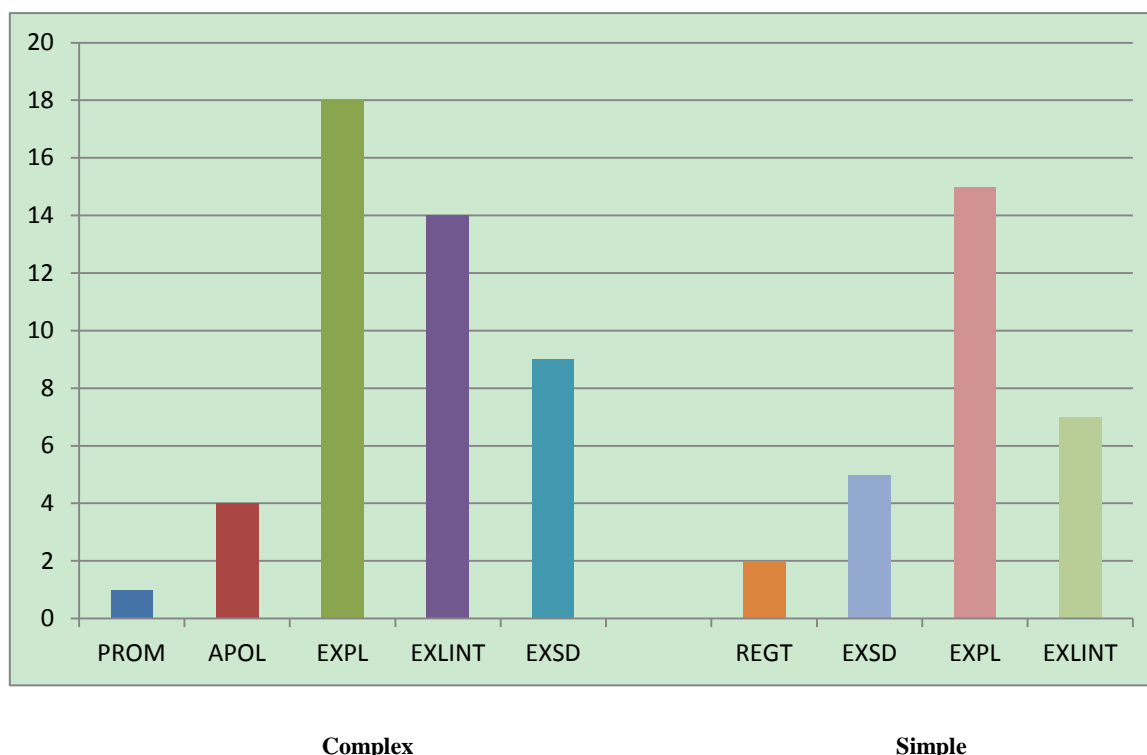
Complex   **Simple**

Figure 4. Indirect apology with simple, complex strategy in *After You*

10.3 The Analytic Percentage of Apologizing Expressions in the Two Novels

Now, it is time to have a scrutinizing look at tabulated percentages of the kinds of apology the characters have manipulated in both novels. As for direct apology in ***Me Before You***, table (1) indicates that there is a growing tendency on the novel characters' part to employ more apology expressions of complex strategy than those of simple strategy, and this is clearly illustrated in percentile values in both strategies. The simple strategy has mirrored its own full percentage via two sorts, i. e. REGT and APOL with total frequency of 23, whereas the complex one has had its own complete percentage in accordance with six kinds, i. e. PROM, APOL, EXPL, REGT, EXLWT, and EXSD with total frequency of 71.

Table 1. Percentages of Direct Apology in *Me Before You*

	Subject	Frequency	Percentage
Simple	REGT	7	30%
	APOL	16	70%
	TOTAL	23	100%
Complex	PROM	2	3%
	APOL	3	4%
	EXPL	16	23%
	REGT	33	46%
	EXLWT	9	13%
	EXSD	8	11%
	TOTAL	71	100%

On the other hand, Table 2 shows that the use of indirect apology with simple strategy gets 15%, whereas the greatest percentage is given to the complex one with 76%.

Table 2. Percentages of Indirect Apology in *Me Before You*

	Subject	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Simple	EXPL	3	20%
	AOR	1	7%
	EXLWT	6	40%
	APOL	2	13%
	PROM	1	7%
	EXSD	2	13%
	TOTAL	15	100%
Complex	REGT	3	4%
	AOR	5	7%
	EAS	21	28%
	EXLINT	13	17%
	APOL	6	8%
	REQF	1	1%
	EXSD	26	34%
	ABLM	1	1%
	TOTAL	76	100%

On the different footing, Table 3. demonstrates that in ***After You***, the characters employ the direct apology of the simple strategy with 22%,while they make use of the complex one with 32%.

Table 3. Percentages of Direct Apology in *After You*

	Subject	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Simple	REGT	4	18%
	APOL	18	82%
	TOTAL	22	100%
Complex	REGT	6	19%
	EXSD	8	25%
	EXPL	6	19%
	APOL	9	28%
	EXLWT	3	9%
	TOTAL	32	100%

Last but not least, Table 4 illustrates that the use of indirect apology of the simple strategy scores 29%, while 46% is recorded by the complex one.

Table 4. Percentages of Indirect Apology in *After You*

	Subject	Frequency	Percentage
Simple	EXLWT	7	24%
	EXPL	15	52%
	EXSD	5	17%
	REGT	2	7%
	TOTAL	29	100%
Complex	EXSD	9	20%
	EXLINT	14	30%
	EXPL	18	39%
	APOL	4	9%
	PROM	1	2%
	TOTAL	46	100%

In brief, the following is a detailed and comprehensive table which provides a panoramic view on the frequency, percentage of apology expressions (simple and complex) strategies in both novels:

Table 5. Overall Percentages and Frequencies of Apology Expressions in *Me Before You* and *After You*

		Subject	Frequency	Percentage
My before you	**Simple**	EXPL	3	20%
		AOR	1	7%
		EXLWT	6	40%
		APOL	2	13%
		PROM	1	7%
		EXSD	2	13%
		TOTAL	15	100%
	Complex	REGT	3	4%
		AOR	5	7%
		EAS	21	28%
		EXLINT	13	17%
		APOL	6	8%
		REQF	1	1%
		EXSD	26	34%
		ABLM	1	1%
		TOTAL	76	100%
After you	**Simple**	EXLWT	7	24%
		EXPL	15	52%
		EXSD	5	17%
		REGT	2	7%
		TOTAL	29	100%
		EXSD	9	20%

Complex	EXLINT	14	30%
	EXPL	18	39%
	APOL	4	9%
	PROM	1	2%
	TOTAL	46	100%

11. Conclusion

After surveying apology expressions in *Me Before You* and *After You* thoroughly and in some detail, the present study is ended with the following conclusions:

1. Apology expressions are dominantly manifested and very widely used in both novels at different ranges.

2. Considerable variations and undeniable divergences have been seen in the employment of apology expressions so that they are categorized into two different strategies: simple and complex ones.

3. Priority, sovereignty, authority, albeit preference, are all given to the complex strategy of apology expressions as far as statistic data and percentage values are concerned.

4. It is not surprised that the complex strategy is statistically and then pragmatically prior over the simple one simply because its apology expressions are basically doomed to the concept of implicitness, whereas apology expressions of the simple type are moved within the orbits of explicitness.

5. Implicitness imposes its linguistic constraints on apology expressions so that they can never be interpreted and inferred without referring to the context of the dialogues or conversations in which these expressions are being said. In short, implicitness provides some sort of "legitimacy" to contextualize apology expressions of the complex strategy.

6. Explicitness does not entail what implicitness has to do with apology expressions. It only necessitates the use of apologizing verbs that are formed in very plain and to-the- point sentences.

7. In either case, the simple and complex type of apology expressions come into being as a result of different background situations the novels' characters have shared each other. That is to say, there is a degree of background situations according to which the novels' characters can fairly measure their relationship to each other: intimate or not, formal or not, and so on.

In addition to what have been concluded, it is highly convenient to make some recommendations for those who will pursue researching, studying and investigating further areas of the concept of apology in general and apologizy expressions in particular. The present study offers the following lists of recommendations:

1. Apology, as one of pragmatic items in the linguistic realm, deserves to be more and more explored and diagnosed in different data such as literary works, political, and social discourses. Thus, conducting this study does not really shut the door of surveying and screening apology expressions, but it, in fact, opens the door for extra search and check up.

2. As stated above, apology is a "floating" topic in the sense that it can possibly be found in any discourse. It is also like the proverbial "hydra" in that it takes many forms and moves into different directions. Accordingly, it is possible for those who are interested in studying apology to trace its "floating" nature and its "hydra-like" forms.

3. Pragmatic items can also be tackled and studied thoroughly in the same way as apology has been covered. That is, this study may trigger to shed light on other pragmatic items like turn-takings or greetings in many types of discourse.

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