

# Apology Unveiled: An Exploration of Iban Youth's Interactions with Elders and Peers

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## ABSTRACT

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*This study delved into the role of social identity and cultural factors in apologetic communication by examining the apology speech acts employed by Malaysian Iban undergraduates at UiTM Sarawak. Specifically, the research aimed to investigate the influence of social power and cultural factors on the use of Iban apologetic techniques among Malaysian Iban university students in six different apology situations. To gather data, the research utilised Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT), presenting participants with six distinct scenarios that required them to provide an apology in the Iban language. The collected data was then analysed to identify and categorise the apology strategies employed by the participants. By examining the impact of social power and cultural norms on the use of semantic formulas in Iban apologies, this study sheds light on how students' apologetic strategies are influenced by the social environment and cultural norms. The findings offer valuable insights into intercultural communication within multicultural academic settings. These insights hold significant implications for language teaching and intercultural communication training, emphasising the importance of recognizing and accommodating diverse apology strategies to foster effective communication and mutual understanding among individuals from various social and cultural backgrounds. By shedding light on the sociolinguistic behaviour of Malaysian Iban undergraduates, this study significantly contributes to the field of sociolinguistics and enriches our understanding of cross-cultural communication patterns in apology speech acts. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations of this study, including its specific focus on Malaysian Iban undergraduates at UiTM Sarawak, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Nonetheless, this study provides a foundation for future research in the area of apology speech acts and intercultural communication.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Effective intercultural communication requires a profound understanding of sociocultural norms and appropriate language use, which exhibit variations across diverse languages and cultures (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). Within this context, speech acts assume a pivotal role, as different languages embody distinct sets of linguistic regulations that align with their respective cultures (Wierzbicka, 2003). Among the myriad of speech acts, apologies hold particular significance as a fundamental communicative function, facilitating conflict resolution, maintaining social harmony, and expressing remorse and acceptance of responsibility (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

The study of apology speech acts has attracted considerable attention in sociolinguistics, as scholars seek to understand the intricate dynamics of how individuals express remorse, accept responsibility, and seek forgiveness across different sociocultural contexts (Searle, 1969). Recent studies have highlighted the significance of sociocultural factors in apology speech acts, emphasising the influence of social identity and context on communicative practices (Ogiermann, 2009, Pei et al., 2022). Although extensive research has explored strategies primarily in English-speaking contexts due to its global prominence as a lingua franca (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983), it is crucial to examine how speech acts, particularly apologies, are employed for intercultural communication in multicultural societies like Malaysia.

Malaysia, characterised by its diverse ethnic and linguistic landscape, provides a unique context for exploring the complexities of intercultural communication. While research has explored apology strategies in various languages (Aydin, 2013; Al-Zumor, 2011; Cohen & Olshtain, 1983; Jebahi, 2010; Kousar, 2015; Trosborg, 2010), there is a need to zoom in on specific regions and communities to understand their unique sociolinguistic dynamics. Within Malaysia, Sarawak is home to the Iban community, the largest ethnic group in the region and a sub-ethnic group of the indigenous Dayak people (Lim, 2022). The Malaysian Iban community in Sarawak holds a distinctive position within the country's multicultural landscape, with educated individuals proficient in multiple languages, including their native language, Iban, as well as English and Bahasa Malaysia (Ting et al., 2021). English serves as the medium of instruction in formal university classroom settings, while Iban holds significant importance as their mother tongue and plays a crucial role in their daily interactions (Ting et al., 2021). Therefore, investigating how apology strategies are utilised within this unique sociolinguistic context becomes imperative.

Apologizing is a crucial speech act that plays a pivotal role in both everyday interactions in formal as well as informal settings (Searle, 1969). However, there is a dearth of research on the apology strategies employed by the Iban community, particularly among the educated subgroup represented by undergraduate students attending higher learning institutions. Existing literature has mainly focused on Western cultures (Al-Khaza'leh, 2018; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Kashkouli & Eslamirasekh, 2013), neglecting non-Western perspectives. Previous studies, such as the work of Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), have emphasized the need for further investigations into apologies within non-Western cultures. This call for research is particularly pertinent within the context of educated Iban undergraduates who possess proficiency in both English and Iban languages. With their proficiency in both Iban, their mother tongue, and English, Malaysian Iban undergraduates in Sarawak engage in intercultural interactions and encounter situations that demand effective communication through apologies.

The limited research conducted on apology strategies employed by the Malaysian Iban community, particularly among educated undergraduate students, hinders our understanding of their sociolinguistic behaviour in intercultural communication. Furthermore, the use of both English and Iban languages by these students in different social contexts calls for an examination on how they navigate apology speech acts in both languages. As bilingual individuals proficient in English and Iban, these undergraduates navigate different linguistic contexts and social settings, making their apology strategies a fascinating area for exploration.

The present study aimed to address the research gap by examining the role of social identity and cultural norms in the utilisation of apology strategies among Malaysian Iban undergraduates in Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Sarawak. This study built upon existing research and extended its scope to Malaysian Iban undergraduates in Sarawak, a group that has received limited attention in previous studies. Exploring the apology strategies employed by this specific population can offer valuable insights into the sociolinguistic behaviour of this group and contribute to our understanding of cross-cultural communication patterns within multiple settings in Sarawak.

Based on the identified problem statement, this study aimed to achieve the following research objectives:

1. To identify the frequency and distribution of various semantic formulas used by the Iban undergraduates when apologising to elders and peers in the Iban language.
2. To compare how the use of various semantic formulas used by the Iban undergraduates when apologising to elders and peers in the Iban language vary in different situational contexts.
3. To gain insights into the sociolinguistic dynamics and cultural norms related to the way the Iban undergraduates apologise to the elders and peers.

By addressing these research objectives, this study aims to contribute to the field of sociolinguistics, enhance understanding of intercultural communication patterns, and provide practical insights for language teaching and intercultural communication training.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***2.1 Studies on The Speech Act of Apologising***

Effective communication encompasses not only language usage but also an understanding and application of appropriate speech acts within specific sociocultural contexts. In this regard, Searle's (1969) Speech Acts Theory, provides a framework for analysing how language is used to perform various acts, including apologies. Apologies play a crucial role in speech acts because they are powerful communicative tools that go beyond mere linguistic expressions. Apologies are complex acts through which speakers convey remorse, accept responsibility, and seek forgiveness for their actions or words (Searle, 1969). By examining apologies as speech acts, insight into the underlying structure and intention behind these communicative acts can be gained.

Apologies serve multiple purposes, such as showing guilt, admitting one's mistakes, maintaining social relationships, repairing damaged bonds, and promoting interpersonal harmony within society (Leech, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Trosborg, 1994). Apologies are considered expressive acts under Searle's Speech Acts Theory as they allow speakers to communicate their sincere remorse and regret for their behaviour. For an apology to be effective, it must include a genuine sense of responsibility, sorrow, and a proposed solution

(Elsafar, et al, 2023). Individuals express their wish to apologise, accept responsibility for their actions, and acknowledge any pain they may have caused. Apologies serve as vehicles for empathy, understanding, and reconciliation, playing a vital role in resolving conflicts and restoring trust within interpersonal interactions.

In recent years, scholars have further explored the complexities of apology strategies within the framework of Speech Acts Theory. Initially introduced by the British philosopher J.L. Austin in the 1960s, this theory was later developed by philosopher John Searle (Thomas, 1995). It provides a framework for analysing the illocutionary power of apologies. Illocutionary force refers to achieving specific goals through utterances. When someone apologises, they aim to achieve illocutionary goals such as seeking forgiveness, demonstrating accountability, or expressing regret. Understanding the illocutionary force of apologies helps grasp the underlying intentions and motivations of speakers, enabling a more nuanced interpretation of their words (Thomas, 1995).

Numerous studies have focused on patterns of apology responses among non-native speakers of English. These studies explored cross-cultural differences between ESL learners and native speakers of the target language and investigated the function of apologies (Aydin, 2013; Al-Zumor, 2011; Jebahi, 2010; Kousar, 2015; Trosborg, 2010). These studies shed light on how cultural factors shape the expression and understanding of apologies.

One aspect that has been explored is the influence of social power on apology behaviour. For instance, a study by Al-Khaza'leh (2018) found that social power plays a role in the apology behaviour of Jordanian individuals. The level of responsibility accepted by the offender has also been shown to be influenced by their closeness to the offended party. This was observed in studies involving Thai and American English speakers conducted by Bergman and Kasper (1993). In contrast, studies with Armenian respondents revealed that the status and social distance of the offended party did not affect the apology patterns, similar to their Western counterparts (Kashkouli & Eslamirasekh, 2013).

Cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the way apologies are expressed and understood. Differences have been found between British and Jordanian individuals in terms of expressing regret versus offering direct apologies or requesting forgiveness (Al-Adaileh, 2007). These differences highlight the impact of cultural norms and values on apology strategies. For example, Hou (2006) identified similarities between Chinese and American individuals but noted that Chinese speakers found it more challenging to express apologies due to their cultural emphasis on politeness.

Cross-cultural variations in apology strategies have also been examined. Banikalef et al. (2015) found that acknowledging responsibility is the most frequently used apology strategy in Jordanian Arabic, often followed by a combination of acknowledging responsibility and swearing by God's name. Interestingly, non-apology strategies were also commonly employed. These findings underscore the significant influence of culture on the way apologies are expressed and understood. Additionally, the use of proverbs as an apology strategy was found to be unique to certain cultures and not commonly found in other societies. Proverbs are employed as a means to save face and may also imply a reluctance to accept responsibility.

Apology response types in Malaysian speakers have also been explored. A study among Malay university students in Malaysia found that expressing regret or apologising and providing excuses or explanations were the preferred strategies when refusing requests in an academic context (Abdul Sattar et al., 2011). This suggests the influence of Malay culture on how refusals

are realised in English. Malay culture highly values indirectness in speech to preserve other's face and foster positive relationships within society (Maros, 2006). Exhibiting cultural refinement is seen as a way for Malays to maintain face, which is crucial for establishing good relationships and upholding social harmony.

## ***2.2 The Iban Language (Cultural and Linguistic Significance)***

The Iban community, the largest ethnic group in Sarawak, holds significant cultural and linguistic prominence. With a population of 723,400 in 2020, the Ibans play a crucial role in the social fabric of Sarawak (Lim, 2022). They dominate regions such as Sri Aman, Betong, Sibuan and Kapit (Metom, et al, 2021). Historically referred to as the 'Sea Dayaks', the Ibans have long-established ties with the sea, dating back to the era of James Brooke in the late 19th century (Sutlive & Sutlive, 1994).

The Iban language, which exhibits striking similarities with the Malay, the national language of Malaysia, serves as a common means of communication for diverse ethnic groups in regions such as Song and Kapit (Ting et al., 2021). Studies have revealed substantial lexical and structural parallels between Iban and Malay, with approximately 60 percent of words being cognates (Omar, 1981; Sutlive & Sutlive, 1994). This linguistic connection facilitates communication and interaction among different ethnic groups within these regions.

The Iban language displays a high degree of homogeneity, with limited dialectal variations observed (Omar, 1981). However, variations in accents, customs and rituals exist among Iban speakers, often influenced by their geographical location and settlement patterns (Osup, 2019). Settlements along the same river system tend to share common cultural practices, setting them apart from other Iban communities (McKeown, 1983 cited in Osup, 2019).

## ***2.3 Expression of Apology in The Iban Culture***

In English, the term "sorry" encompasses various meanings and functions, including expressions of remorse, sympathy, or polite requests for clarification (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2023). The versatility of the term reflects its multiple dimensions in English communication. However, within the Iban ethnic group, explicit words or expressions for apology are lacking (Howell, 1908). Metom (2013) suggests in the Iban culture, openly expressing emotions openly and offering direct apologies is not a common practice. When an Iban wrongs another person, direct apology becomes challenging for them. Instead, alternative strategies are employed, such as non-verbal gestures of kindness towards the offended party. Furthermore, they rely on indirect speech, using ambiguous language that does not explicitly acknowledge the emotions of the offended person (Metom, 2013).

Central to Iban society is the concept of "*adat*", encompassing both "rules of logic" and "customary laws" (Sandin, 1980: xi). Adhering to "*adat*" is seen as a mark of respectability and reflects positively on one's upbringing. Individuals who embody good "*adat*" are regarded as well-mannered, verbally polite, and courteous. In contrast, those who fail to honour *adat* may face fines as a consequence (Metom, 2001). Within the Iban community, the determination of an offender's fate relies on "*adat*", the customary laws and norms. The head of the longhouse, known as the "tuai rumah", plays a pivotal role as a mediator between conflicting parties, upholding the community's *adat* (Sandin, 1980; Jawan, 2001; Metom, 2023). "*Adat*" guides the community on how to navigate interpersonal relationships and resolve conflicts.

Over time, neighbouring languages have influenced the Iban language. The Iban have borrowed the term “*mintampun*” from Malay and “sorry” from English to convey a similar sentiment (Metom, 2023). These borrowed terms reflect the ongoing linguistic interactions and cultural exchanges between the Iban and their neighboring communities. As they interact with people from their own ethnic group and those from other ethnic groups, they see the need to express apologies using “words” as well, incorporating terms from both Malay and English.

#### ***2.4 Age Differences and Power Dynamics in Iban Communication***

In Iban culture, the Dayak Ibans are educated to value and show deference to their elders, believing that disobeying them can result in a curse (*tulah*) and misfortune. While going against elders does not always lead to bad luck, the fear ingrained in younger individuals through this belief acts as a deterrent against engaging in heated conflicts or disagreements (Jawan, 1996). Consequently, age differences hold significance in shaping power dynamics and levels of politeness during conversations (Mahmud, 2013).

Drawing parallel with Japanese culture, where the age of speakers influences the formality and politeness displayed in their speech, older individuals in the Iban community tend to use familiar language when addressing younger people, while younger individuals adopt a polite manner when communicating with older individuals. Conversely, individuals of the same age often employ casual speech styles when conversing among themselves (Mizutani & Mizutani, 1987).

Moreover, the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the addressee in the Iban community also plays a role in communication dynamics. Runggol's (2019) study on Iban speakers of English found that the proximity to the speaker determines the level of directness in compliment strategies, with closer relationships resulting in more straightforward communication, such as among family members or friends. These observations highlight the complex interplay between age, power dynamics, and social relationships in Iban communication, offering insights into the cultural nuances that shape language use and interaction within the community.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### ***3.1 Research Design and Instrument***

In this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted, utilizing an open-ended Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the research design. The researchers selected this data collection method for two reasons: its widespread usage in cross-cultural pragmatics and its ability to efficiently gather a substantial amount of data within a limited timeframe, as supported by previous studies (Wouk, 2006; Bergqvist, 2009; Al-Isa, 2003; Maros, 2006). The DCT consisted of six carefully designed situations which were adapted from Maros (2006). (see Appendix 1). The situations were accompanied by blank spaces, prompting participants to fill in the dialogues. This approach allowed participants the freedom to respond naturally, generating data that closely resembles real-life interactions. The situations in the DCTs were meticulously selected and designed so as to accurately reflect the familiarity of context. The relationship between the speaker and the interlocutors, including factors such as social distance and social status, were also considered to determine if there were any variations in the way apologies were expressed. For example, the interlocutors in Situations 1, 3 and 4 were those who are older and socially distant. The term 'socially distant' in this context pertains to the degree of familiarity (closeness and intimacy) or unfamiliarity (distance and dissimilarity) that

individuals feel towards those who belong to social, ethnic, occupational, or religious groups different from their own (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2014).

### ***3.2 Reliability and Validity***

The present study placed significant emphasis on ensuring content validity, which ensures the accurate measurement of the elements being studied. The six situations used in the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) were adapted from Maros (2006) to suit the specific research context. The translation of the English version of the (DCT) into Iban was conducted by a native Iban speaker who is also one of the researchers. To ensure the accuracy of the translation, a knowledgeable Iban language teacher was consulted to review and edit the content of each item before administering the DCT to the participants.

To enhance the clarity and comprehensibility of the DCT, a pilot test was conducted with 10 randomly selected Iban students. Their feedback and input were valuable in identifying any potential issues with the clarity of the items and instructions. Based on the pilot test feedback, minor adjustments were made to improve certain aspects, such as vocabulary and sentence structure. This ensured that the DCT items were linguistically and culturally appropriate for the target participants.

Inter-rater reliability was also taken into consideration in the analysis process to ensure consistency and agreement among the researchers. Both researchers independently read and analysed the participants' responses, identifying underlying themes and patterns. In cases where there were discrepancies in the analysis, the conceptual framework of the study (see Appendix 2) was consulted to reach a consensus. Moreover, if the meaning of any Iban vocabulary used in the responses was unclear, a knowledgeable Iban language teacher was consulted for clarification and interpretation.

### ***3.3 Sample and Sampling***

The sample for this study consisted of 28 fourth-semester Degree students from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), Samarahan, Sarawak. The sample size of 28 in this study is justified based on the principle of data saturation. Data saturation refers to the point in qualitative research where collecting additional data no longer leads to new information or insights emerging from the analysis. According to Morse (2015), a sample size of 20-30 participants is often sufficient to achieve data saturation in qualitative studies. During the analysis of the collected data, it was found that the responses from the 28 participants yielded a total of 168 semantic formulas. This indicates that the data collected was comprehensive enough to address the research questions and phenomenon of interest. As a result, there was no need to increase the number of participants as the research questions were adequately addressed with the available data. Furthermore, the use of purposive sampling allowed for the selection of participants who met specific criteria. The criteria included being at an advanced level, having a parental background of Iban ethnicity, and possessing proficiency in reading, speaking and writing in the Iban language. Additionally, participants were chosen based on their similar level of English proficiency and understanding of the given scenarios to ensure consistency throughout the study.

### ***3.4 Research Procedures***

Participants in this study were provided with clear information about the survey, and their informed consent was obtained prior to their participation. They were informed about the

voluntary nature of their involvement and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, measures were taken to protect the privacy of the participants and their data.

Upon completion of the data collection phase, a rigorous analysis was conducted to derive meaningful insights from the qualitative data collected. The open-ended responses in the questionnaire underwent thematic analysis using NVivo, a powerful qualitative data analysis software. The responses were carefully examined to gain a deep understanding of the students' perspectives on the six situations related to apologies. The data was systematically coded to identify meaningful ideas or concepts related to apologies. NVivo assisted in organizing and managing the data by creating nodes, representing categories or themes derived from the responses. The coding process involved iterative reviews of the data, refining codes and themes to accurately capture the essence of the students' responses. NVivo's analytical features were utilized to explore relationships and patterns within the coded data, facilitating the identification of commonalities, divergences, and sub-themes. The themes derived from the analysis were then categorized into the semantic formulas outlined in the framework of the present study, as indicated in Appendix 3. The percentages of the semantic formulas were computed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents a comprehensive comparison of the percentage of semantic formulas used in Iban apology discourse during interaction with elders and peers across six different situational contexts. The study identified a total of 168 semantic formulas, which were categorized into 11 categories and 2 main types. Illustrative examples (see Appendix 3) enhance understanding of the semantic formulas and their contextual usage. It is important to note that the examples in Appendix 3 are for explanatory purposes and do not represent the actual responses from the respondents.

Table 1: Comparison of Iban Semantic Formula Used When Interacting with Elders and Peers in Different Situational Contexts (in percentage)

No	Type	Semantic Formula	Percentage (%)						
			Elder Interlocutor			Peer Interlocutor			
			S1	S3	S4	S2	S5	S6	
1	Single formula	DA	28.6	25.0	0	3.6	21.4	28.6	
2		DA + J	35.8	39.3	17.6	35.7	42.9	32.1	
3		DA + J + OR	0	21.4	0	14.3	0	0	
4		DA + AR	14.4	0	0	7.1	3.7	7.1	
5		DA+AR+OR	0	0	0	17.9	7.1	0	
6		DA + OR	3.6	14.3	0	21.4	0	0	
7		Combination of formulas	DA + DR	17.6	0	0	0	7.1	14.3
8			DA+ H	0	0	0	0	10.7	0
9			DA + Q	0	0	0	0	0	17.9
10			AA + J	0	0	75.0	0	7.1	0
11			AA + J + C	0	0	7.4	0	0	0
		Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	

Note: DA-Direct Apology, J-Justification, OR-Offer of Repair, AR-Accepting Responsibility, DR-Denying Responsibility, H-Humour, Q-Question, AA-Avoiding Apology, C-Compliment, S1-Situation 1, S2-Situation 2, S3-Situation 3, S4-Situation 4, S5-Situation 5, S6-Situation 6



#### 4.1 Single Semantic Formula: Direct Apology

The "Direct Apology" formula emerged as a prevalent approach used by UiTM Sarawak's Iban undergraduates when apologizing to both older individuals and peers across different situational contexts. In interactions with older individuals, it was employed in 28.6% of the cases in Situation 1 (S1) and 25.0% in Situation 3 (S3) (see Table 1). Similarly, when apologizing to peers, it was used in 21.4% of the cases in S5, 28.6% in S6, and 3.6% in S2 (see Table 1). These findings indicate the importance of directly expressing remorse and taking responsibility for one's actions when interacting with both older individuals and peers. However, it is interesting to note that this formula was not used in S4 (with older individuals), suggesting potential differences in apology approaches in that specific context. Extract 1 demonstrates the application of this single semantic formula.

Table 2: Extract 1 (Situation 1)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Minta ampun, Prof. (DA)</i>	You: Sorry, Prof. (DA)	DA

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology

Extract 1 showcases the application of the direct apology (DA) semantic formula in an interaction between a speaker and a professor. The speaker apologizes directly for being 15 minutes late by using the phrase, "Sorry, Prof.". This indicates that the speaker acknowledges his lateness and expresses remorse for his actions. The use of a direct apology demonstrates the speaker's sociolinguistic understanding of the importance of taking responsibility and showing respect towards the professor, who is an elder and holds a position of authority. It is noteworthy that the speaker's use of the honorific "Prof." further highlights his recognition of the professor's status and the necessity for a formal and respectful apology. By delivering a concise and straightforward apology, the speaker aims to convey his regret for the delay and uphold a positive rapport with the professor. This finding contrasts with Metom's (2013) assertion that openly expressing emotions and offering direct apologies is not common in Iban culture, suggesting a potential variation in apology practices within the undergraduates' Iban community in UiTM Sarawak.

#### 4.2 Combination of Semantic Formula: Direct Apology, Justification, Offer of Repair

The study's findings highlight that a "Direct Apology" alone is insufficient in the Iban apology discourse, which aligns with the results of Banikalef et al. (2015) where a combination of strategies was observed to be prevalent. In this study, the combination of a "Direct Apology" with a "Justification" emerged as the most commonly used strategy in interactions with both elders and peers. This combination was consistently utilized with both age groups across different situational contexts, indicating its significance in the apology process. The percentages ranging from 17.6% to 42.9% (see Table 1) suggest that individuals recognize the importance of providing justifications alongside their apologies, regardless of the age involved. These findings are similar to Abdul Sattar et al. (2011), whose study among Malay university students in Malaysia revealed that expressing regret or apologising and providing excuses or explanations were the preferred strategies when refusing requests in an academic context. An example of the semantic formula is shown in Extract 2.

Table 3: Extract 2 (Situation 3)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Aku minta ampun Ibuk (DA), aku enda sengaja (J)</i>	You: I am sorry aunty (DA), I didn't mean to (J)	DA + J
Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology, J-Justification		

In this scenario, the speaker employs a combination of a direct apology (DA) and a justification (J) in response to accidentally spilling soup on an elderly lady's blouse (see Extract 2). This pattern of apology demonstrates the speaker's social awareness and sensitivity in handling the situation. It aligns with the Iban cultural belief mentioned by Jawan (1996) and Mahumud (2013) that younger individuals are discouraged from engaging in conflicts or disagreements with their elders. By apologizing directly, the speaker acknowledges his responsibility and expresses genuine remorse for the unintended spillage. The inclusion of a justification aims to provide context and clarify that the act is unintentional, minimising misunderstandings or negative perceptions. By saying "I am sorry Aunty" and explaining "I didn't mean to", the speaker shows empathy and respect towards the elderly lady, acknowledging his discomfort and expressing a sincere desire to rectify the situation. This skilled use of a direct apology with a justification demonstrates the speaker's understanding of sociolinguistic norms, the importance of maintaining social harmony, and the efforts to mitigate any negative impact caused by the accident.

Moreover, the occurrence of the combination of "Direct Apology + Justification + Offer of Repair" among both elders and peers further highlights the multifaceted nature of apologies in the Iban society. This strategy, observed in 21.4% of the cases with elders in S3 and 14.3% of the cases with peers in S2 (see Table 1), reflects a tendency to apologize while simultaneously offering justifications and proposing ways to rectify the situation or make amends. The absence of this combination in the other four situations indicates potential variations in the utilization of this particular strategy, which may be influenced by contextual factors or individual preferences. Extract 3 provides an illustrative instance of the semantic formula.

Table 4: Extract 3 (Situation 5)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Aku deka minta ampun laban laun datai ari jam ti udah ditetapka. (DA) Aku enda sengaja tetinduk sepengudahka ngereja pengawa sekula sebedau aku nurun tadi. (J) Legi aku melanja nuan makai bak McDonald's. (OR)</i>	You: I am sorry for being late. (DA) I accidentally slept right after doing my homework and was not aware of the time. (J) I'll give you a treat at McDonald's later. (OR)	DA+ J+ OR
Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology, OR-Offer of Repair, J-Justification		

In Extract 3, the speaker combines a direct apology (DA) with a justification (J) and an offer of repair (OR) when addressing her friend after being 15 minutes late for their meeting in front of a cafe. By saying "I am sorry for being late", the speaker takes responsibility for her tardiness and expresses remorse. The justification, "I accidentally slept right after doing my homework and was not aware of the time," explains the delay and highlights that it was unintentional. Additionally, the speaker offers an act of repair by suggesting, "I'll give you a treat at McDonald's later", showing her willingness to make up for her lateness. This combination of apology strategies demonstrates the speaker's understanding of the importance of expressing remorse, providing context, and offering a tangible way to address the inconvenience caused. It reflects her desire to maintain a positive relationship with her friend and address the impact of her actions. These findings align with the study by Bergman and Kaper (1993) on Thai and American English speakers, where the level of responsibility accepted by the offender was

influenced by their closeness to the offended party. In contrast, the study with Armenian respondents by Kashkouli and Eslamirasekh (2013) showed that the status and social distance of the offended party did not affect the apology patterns, similar to their Western counterparts.

#### 4.3 Combination of Semantic Formula: Direct Apology, Accepting Responsibility, Offer of Repair

The combination of "Direct Apology + Accepting Responsibility" was consistently employed when apologizing to peers across all three situational contexts. This indicates the recognition among peers of the importance of not only offering a direct apology but also accepting responsibility for one's actions. However, with older interlocutors, this combination was only observed in Situation 1 (S1) at a usage rate of 14.4%. In the other situations (S2, S5 and S6), the usage percentages among peers were 7.1%, 3.7% and 7.1% respectively (see Table 1), suggesting potential variations in the utilization of this strategy between the two groups. These findings align with the study by Bergman and Kasper (1993) on Thai and American English speakers, which showed that the level of responsibility accepted by the offender was influenced by their closeness to the offended party. An example of the semantic formula is shown in Extract 4.

Table 5: Extract 4 (Situation 2)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Aku minta ampun. (DA) Sigi penyalah aku. (AR)</i>	You: I am sorry. (DA) It is my fault. (AR)	DA+ AR

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology, AR-Accepting Responsibility

In Extract 4, the speaker uses the Direct Apology-Accepting Responsibility formula in response to a car accident for which he was at fault. By immediately apologising and accepting responsibility, the speaker acknowledges his role in the incident and demonstrates his willingness to take ownership of his actions. This straightforward admission of fault shows his understanding of the seriousness of the situation and his commitment to resolving it. The combination of these strategies effectively addresses the conflict and highlights the speaker's ability to navigate difficult situations and demonstrate accountability. By employing the DA-AR formula, the speaker showcases his sociolinguistic competence in handling conflicts and emphasises the importance of expressing remorse and accepting responsibility to maintain harmonious relationships and facilitate resolution.

The combination of "Direct Apology + Accepting Responsibility + Offer of Repair " was not observed in the interactions with elder interlocutors, while it appeared in a limited percentage of cases with peers (see Table 1). This suggests a potential difference in the usage and effectiveness of apology strategies with older individuals and peers. The absence of this combination with elders may indicate variations in their expectations or preferences regarding apology expressions, which aligns with the influence of age differences on power dynamics and levels of politeness in conversations, as mentioned by Mahmud (2013). To illustrate the semantic formula of "DA+ AR+ OR", consider Extract 5.

Table 6: Extract 5 (Situation 2)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Aku minta ampun. (DA) Sigi salah aku enda meda kereta nuan. (AR) Tu lumpur aku. Anjung ke bingkil dulu kerita nuan, legi aku mayar semua. (OR)</i>	You: I am sorry. (DA) It is my fault. I didn't see your car. (AR) This is my number. Send your car to a workshop and I will pay for it. (OR)	DA+ AR+ OR

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula. DA-Direct Apologu, AR-Accepting Responsibility, OR- Offer of Repair

In Extract 5, the speaker combines multiple apology strategies to address the situation. She begins with a direct apology, expressing remorse and acknowledging her fault in causing the accident. By accepting responsibility, she demonstrates accountability and shows awareness of her role in the collision. She also provides a justification, explaining the lack of awareness that led to the accident. Additionally, she offers to pay for the damages, providing an offer of repair as a means to compensate for the inconvenience caused. This comprehensive combination of “Direct Apology + Accepting Responsibility + Offer of Repair” reflects an understanding on the importance of expressing remorse, taking ownership of one’s actions, and offering a tangible solution to resolve the situation. Such a combination of strategies can help alleviate anger and contribute to a respectful resolution of the incident.

The findings of the study reveal notable differences in the usage of apology strategies between interactions with elders and peers. Specifically, the combination of “Direct Apology + Offer of Repair” (DA-OR) was predominantly used with elders, with percentages of 3.6% in S1 and 14.3% in S3 (see Table 1). However, among peers, it was only observed in Situation 2 with a percentage of 21.4% (see Table 1). These findings suggest that when apologizing to elders, individuals perceive a direct apology and an offer to repair the damage as sufficient, without explicitly acknowledging responsibility. In contrast, when apologizing to peers, individuals recognize the importance of not only offering repair but also explicitly accepting responsibility for their actions, as demonstrated by the "Direct Apology + Accepting Responsibility + Offer of Repair" (DA-AR-OR) combination. Extract 6 provides an illustrative example of the DA-OR semantic formula given by the respondents.

Table 7: Extract 6 (Situation 3)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Minta ampun Ibuk. (DA) Legi aku ngambi ke nuan kain lap. (OR)</i>	You: Sorry Aunty. (DA) I'll get you a washcloth. (OR)	DA+ OR

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology, OR-Offer of Repair

In Situation 3 which takes place at a buffet restaurant, an individual accidentally spills soup on an elderly lady’s blouse while walking between tables. The individual’s response consists of a direct apology (DA) and an offer of repair (OR) (see Extract 6). By saying, “Sorry Aunty”, the individual immediately acknowledges her mistake and expresses remorse for her actions. This direct apology conveys sincerity and respect towards the elderly lady, reflecting the speaker’s awareness of the importance of proper etiquette and consideration. Additionally, the individual’s offer to get a washcloth, exemplifies the offer of repair component in her response. This gesture demonstrates the individual’s willingness to take responsibility for her actions and make amends for the inconvenience caused. The combination of the direct apology and offer of repair aims to address the immediate needs of the elderly lady and alleviate any discomfort or distress caused by the soup spill. This response aligns with the social norms and cultural values of Iban society, emphasising the importance of politeness, empathy, and resolving unintended harm or inconvenience promptly. The findings of the study, similar to Runggol’s

(2019) study on Iban speakers of English, suggest that the nature of the relationship between the speaker and the addressee plays a role in communication dynamics. Apologizing to elders may involve a more deferential approach, emphasizing respect and repair, while apologizing to peers may involve a greater emphasis on accepting responsibility alongside repair. These variations in strategy usage reflect the complex social dynamics and norms surrounding interactions with elders and peers.

#### 4.4 Combination of Semantic Formula: Direct Apology, Denying Responsibility, Humour, Question

A distinct difference in the usage of the combination “Direct Apology + Denying Responsibility” in interactions with peers was observed. This particular semantic structure was exclusively observed in S5 (7.1%) and S6 (14.3%) (see Table 1). This finding suggests that there may be variations in cultural norms and practices related to apologies within this specific group. In contrast, when interacting with elder interlocutors, the utilization of the “Direct Apology + Denying Responsibility” was only observed in S1 (17.6%). It is important to clarify that “Denying Responsibility” and “Justification” are distinct concepts. While “Denying Responsibility” involves placing the blame on others or external factors, “Justification” (as mentioned in Section 4.2) entails providing reasons or explanations for one’s actions. Extract 7 is an illustrative example of the utilization of DA+DR semantic formula.

Table 8: Extract 7 (Situation 1)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Minta ampun Profesor. (DA) Aku laun laban palan endur engkah entukar udah penuh. (DR)</i>	You: Sorry Profesor. (DA) I was late because the parking place was full. (DR)	DA+DR

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology, DR-Denying Responsibility

In Extract 7, the speaker apologizes to his professor for being late to their appointment. The semantic formula used in this instance is “Direct Apology + Denying Responsibility”. The speaker begins with a direct apology, acknowledging his lateness and expressing remorse for his actions. However, he follows it by providing a justification for his tardiness, attributing it to the unavailability of parking spaces (Denying Responsibility). The utilization of the DA+DR combination reflects an intriguing aspect of apology strategies within the culture of UiTM Sarawak’s Iban undergraduates. By denying responsibility, the speaker deflects blame and shifts it onto external circumstances, such as the lack of parking space. This strategy allows the speaker to acknowledge his lateness without fully accepting personal accountability for the situation.

The use of the DA+DR strategy raises sociolinguistic questions about accountability, interpersonal dynamics, and the negotiation of social relationships within the Iban community. Apologies involving the denial of responsibility may serve various functions, such as preserving face, maintaining harmony or mitigating potential conflicts. The findings of this study suggest that the influence of Malay culture on these Iban undergraduates is observed in their apology strategies, as their course mates are predominantly Malays. In Malay culture, expressing regret or apologising while providing excuses or explanations is preferred when refusing requests in an academic context (Abdul Sattar et al., 2011). This cultural influence may explain the utilisation of the DA + DR strategy among the Iban undergraduates. It is also worth noting that the use of proverbs as an apology strategy, observed in some cultures (Baikalef et al., 2015), is not found in the findings of this study. Instead, the Iban undergraduates employ strategies of

denying responsibility to serve a similar purpose of preserving face and avoiding full acceptance of responsibility.

The presence of the semantic formula “Direct Apology + Humour” in interactions with peers, particularly in S5 (10.7%) (see Table 1), is another noteworthy finding. This indicates that Iban undergraduates utilize humour as a strategy to address apologies when interacting with their peers, potentially aiming to ease tension or discomfort in S5. This finding underscores the significance of interpersonal dynamics and the use of humour in the apology process within peer interactions. Extract 8 provides an illustrative example of the “Direct Apology + Humour” semantic formula.

Table 9: Extract 8 (Situation 5)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Minta ampun wai. (DA) Senyum mimit meh. Ndak te bangga lela nuan nganti aku deh. (H)</i>	You: I’m sorry, friend. (DA) Smile a little. It is not as if you melted while waiting for me. (H)	DA+ H

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology, H-Humour

Extract 8 exemplifies the utilisation of the “Direct Apology + Humour” semantic formula. In this interaction, the speaker offers a direct apology to his friend, acknowledging his mistake or delay. However, what sets this apology apart is the incorporation of humour as a means of addressing the situation and potentially diffusing any tension or discomfort. By making a light-hearted comment about the friend not melting while waiting, the speaker employs humour as a strategy to lighten the mood and potentially alleviate any negative feelings caused by the delay. This finding highlights the significance of interpersonal dynamics and the role of humour in the apology process, particularly when interacting with peers. It suggests that individuals within this social group may utilise humour as a tool for apologising, emphasising the importance of maintaining a positive and friendly atmosphere during the reconciliation process. This finding is unique to the Iban culture and not explicitly accounted for in the existing Framework of Semantic Formulas adapted from Cohen & Olshtain (1983) and Trosborg (1987), which primarily focuses on apologies in Western contexts. Therefore, the inclusion of humour as a semantic formula in Iban apologies expands the framework’s applicability to different cultural contexts and reflects the unique communicative practices of the Iban community. This finding regarding the utilisation of humour in apologies aligns with Runggol’s (2019) study on Iban speakers, which found that their use of humour and light-hearted responses in certain interactions reflects their level of comfort and closeness with the person they are engaging with. It is important to note that their humorous responses are not intended to be mean-spirited, but rather reflect their jovial and cheerful demeanour. This highlights the cultural and social norms surrounding apologies within the Iban community, where humour is employed as a tool to maintain positive relationships and foster a friendly atmosphere even in the face of conflicts or mistakes.

In S6, the combination of “Direct apology + Question” was exclusively observed in peer interactions, highlighting the influence of situational context on the choice of Iban apology strategies. This semantic formula, which appeared in 17.9% of cases (see Table 1), suggests that Iban speakers may incorporate questions within their apologies as a means of seeking clarification or fostering further understanding during the apology process. Extract 9 illustrates an example of the situation.

Table 10: Extract 9 (Situation 6)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Minta ampun. (DA) Enda pedis nuan? (Q)</i>	You: Sorry (DA) Are you hurt? (Q)	DA+ Q

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, DA-Direct Apology, Q-Question

In Extract 9, the speaker combines a direct apology with the addition of a question to seek clarification and confirmation. By apologizing directly and asking if the peer is hurt, the speaker expresses remorse for his action and shows genuine concern for the well-being of the other person. This unique approach reflects the adaptability of Iban speakers in their apology strategies, as they integrate questions to foster understanding and address immediate concerns. This finding highlights the importance of considering situational context and the specific relationship between individuals when analyzing Iban apology strategies. It suggests that Iban speakers use questions within their direct apologies to promote dialogue, seek clarification, and demonstrate empathy. The incorporation of questions in the apology reflects the cultural norms and communication patterns within the Iban community of undergraduates in UiTM Sarawak. It is worth noting that this particular semantic formula, involving direct apology with a question, is not explicitly accounted for in the existing framework of semantic formula commonly used in the analysis of apologies, which predominantly focuses on Western contexts. Therefore, this finding added to the literature of such studies.

#### 4.5 Combination of Semantic Formula: Avoidance Strategies, Justification, Compliment

In Table 1, an interesting finding emerges regarding the utilization of avoidance strategies in the interactions of Iban undergraduates. These strategies involve the avoidance of direct apology expressions and instead rely on justifications or a combination of justifications and compliments. Notably, these avoidance strategies were more prevalent when interacting with elders compared to peers. The finding contrasts with the findings of Mizutani and Mizutani (1987), whereby individuals of the same age often employ casual speech styles when conversing among themselves. Specifically, the combination of "Avoiding Apology + Justification" was employed in 75.0% of the cases in S4 (elder interlocutor) (see Table 1), indicating instances where individuals chose to circumvent offering a direct apology while providing justifications to explain their behavior. In contrast, among interaction with peers, this strategy was observed in S5 with a lower percentage of 7.1% (see Table 1). Extract 10 presents the illustrative example of the semantic structure, showcasing the use of avoidance strategies.

Table 11: Extract 10 (Situation 4)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Ukai pia Ibuk. (AA) Aku rinduk makai kek digaga nuan nya tang aku kenyang. (J)</i>	You: It's not like that Aunty. (AA) I like the cake you made but I'm full. (J)	AA+ J

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, AA-Avoiding Apology, J-Justification

In Extract 10, the speaker utilises the semantic formula of "Avoiding Apology + Justification" (AV+J) during an interaction with an elder. Instead of offering a direct apology, the speaker chooses to avoid it and provides a justification for his behaviors. By saying, "It's not like that Aunty", the speaker indirectly addresses the situation without explicitly admitting fault or expressing remorse. The justification provided, "I like the cake you made, but I'm full.", serves as an explanation for not consuming the cake, deflecting the need for a direct apology. This combination of avoiding apology and providing a justification reflects the complexity of the

Iban apology discourse. It demonstrates how individuals navigate social interactions while respecting cultural norms and considering interpersonal dynamics. The use of avoidance strategies in interactions with elders aligns with the belief ingrained in younger individuals to avoid heated conflicts or disagreements, as going against elders is seen as potentially bringing bad luck (Jawan, 1996). Age differences also play a role in shaping power dynamics and levels of politeness during conversations (Mahmud, 2013). By employing the AV + J strategy, the speaker aims to maintain harmony and save face while acknowledging the efforts of the elder interlocutor in preparing the cake. This finding highlights the importance of understanding the cultural and sociolinguistic nuances within the Iban community and how individuals adapt their communication strategies to uphold respect and preserve relationships.

In S3, the combination of "Avoiding Apology + Justification + Compliment" was exclusively observed in interactions with elder interlocutors, accounting for 7.4% of the cases (see Table 1). This finding suggests that Iban undergraduates employ compliments as a strategy to avoid offering direct apologies while simultaneously justifying their actions. This aligns with the finding of Metom (2013), where alternative strategies, such as non-verbal gestures of kindness towards the offended party, were observed in Iban culture. Additionally, individuals tend to rely on indirect speech, using ambiguous language that does not explicitly acknowledge the emotions of the offended person (Metom, 2013). The semantic formula is exemplified through the example in Extract 11.

Table 12: Extract 11 (Situation 4)

OV(I)	TV(E)	SF
<i>Nuan: Udah makai aku ba rumah tadi nya (AA) alai aku enda ulih ngabiska kek tu. (J) Amat landik nuan ngagak kek Ibuk. (C)</i>	You: I have eaten at home (AA) so that's why I couldn't finish off this slice. (J) You are so talented in baking Aunty. (C)	AA+ J + C

Note: OV-Original version, TV-Translated version, I-Iban Language, E-English, SF-Semantic Formula, AA-Avoiding Apology, J-Justification, C-Compliment

In Extract 11, the speaker utilises a combination of "Avoiding Apology + Justification + Compliment" during an interaction with an elder. By stating that they have already eaten at home, the speaker offers a justification for not finishing the slice of cake and avoids directly apologising. This strategy allows the speaker to shift responsibility while providing a valid reason for their actions. Additionally, the speaker adds a compliment by acknowledging the elder's baking, diverting attention from her lack of consumption. The use of the AV+J+C strategy in this context reflects the complexity of the Iban apology discourse. It showcases the speaker's ability to navigate social interactions by employing linguistic strategies that balance avoiding direct apologies, providing justifications, and offering compliments. This combination allows the speaker to indirectly address the situation while simultaneously acknowledging the elder's talents. The presence of avoidance strategies, combined with justifications and compliments, demonstrate the intricate sociolinguistic dynamics involved in managing apologies within the Iban cultural context.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research on understanding Iban apology strategies among UiTM Sarawak undergraduates provides valuable insights into the dynamics of apologizing within the Iban community. The findings reveal that Iban speakers predominantly utilize combinations of strategies rather than single strategy, highlighting the complexity and adaptability of their apology discourse. While the study's focus is limited to a specific group of Iban speakers, it underscores the importance of considering cultural and social factors in communication practices, particularly in multicultural academic environments. The inclusion of justifications,



offers of repair, humour, and questions as part of apology strategies reflects the nuanced nature of Iban apologies, shaped by cultural norms, age group dynamics and situational contexts. These findings contribute to the broader field of sociolinguistics, emphasizing the significance of cultural sensitivity and adaptability in intercultural communication. To further enhance the validity and generalizability of the findings, future research should involve a wider range of Iban respondents and incorporate naturally spoken language data. By recognizing and appreciating the unique apology patterns within the Iban culture, effective intercultural communication and conflict resolution can be fostered, promoting understanding and respect among diverse communities.

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

All authors contributed equally to the various sections of this manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None declared

## APPENDIX

### 1. Framework of Apology Instrument adapted from Maros (2006)

Situation Number	Situation (Iban version)	Situation (English translation)
1	<i>Nuan siku nemiak Universiti. Nuan udah besemaya enggau Profesor nuan deka betemu enggau iya ba opis. Taja pia, nuan laun 15 minit ari jam ti udah ditetapka laban palan endur engkah entukar udah penuh. Nuan ngetuk pintu opis Profesor lalu tama ke dalam opis iya, Nuan lalu madahka Professor nuan ....</i>	You are a college student. You made an appointment with your professor at his office. But you were 15 minutes late because the closest parking place was full. You knock on the door, go in, and say to the professor ...
2	<i>Lebuh maya pansut ari palan endur engkah entukar, nuan ngelantak siti entukar sechara enda sengaja. Nya sigi penyalah ti datai ari nuan empu. Pintu entukar ke dilantak nuan tadi bisi balat bebekau. Orang ke beempu entukar nya pansut ari entukar iya lalu bejalai nuju nuan enggau ati ti pedis. Umur orang nya serambau enggau nuan. Orang ke beempu entukar : Nama nuan enda meda jalai? Peda nuan nama utai udah digaga nuan!</i>	Backing out of a parking place, you run into the side of another car. It was clearly your fault. You dent the side door slightly. The driver gets out and comes over to you angrily. He is an adult, about your age: Driver: Can't you look where you're going? See what you've done!

3	<i>Nuan nemuai ngagai siti kedai makai "buffet". Sepengudah ngambi pemakai, maya nuan benung bejalai nuju mija endur nuan duduk, dia nuan teterap lalu sup ti dibai nuan naya ba baju siku indai tuai.</i>	At a buffet restaurant: You are carrying your meal to your table. When you are walking between tables, you stumble and your soup spills over an elderly lady's blouse.
4	<i>Siku kaban nuan ngemai nuan nemuai ngagai rumah apai indai iya. Nuan sigi suah kia. Lebu ba rumah kaban nuan nya, indai iya bisi mantaika siti kek ti chukup manis. Nuan enda ulih ngabiska kek nya, lalu ninggalka setengah ari kek nya. Indai kaban nuan : Enda rindu makai kek nya nuan?</i>	A friend invited you to his parents' house. You always go there. While you were there, his mother served a very sweet cake. You cannot eat it and leave half of it. Mother: Don't you like the cake?
5	<i>Nuan udah besemaya deka betemu enggau kaban nuan ba depan siti kedai kupa tang nuan laun 15 minit ari jam ti udah ditetapka laban nuan tetindung.</i>	You were supposed to meet your friend in front of a café but you were 15 minutes late because you had taken a nap.
6	<i>Lebu maya dalam lif ti sekut sereta mayuh orang, dia nuan teindikka kaki siku orang. Umur orang nya tadi serambau enggau nuan.</i>	In a crowded elevator, you step on somebody's (adult-your age) foot.

## 2. Framework of Semantic Formulas adapted from Cohen & Olshtain (1983) & Trosborg (1987)

No.	Apology Strategy	Definition	Examples
1.	Avoiding or postponing apology	Speaker neither offers an apology nor acknowledges the need to say sorry. No expressions of apology are used.	<i>The cake is very nice, but I am full / I didn't notice you there.</i>
2.	Direct apology	Speaker uses apology expressions.	<i>I'm sorry / Sorry / I apologise.</i>
3.	Use of intensifiers	Speaker employs the use of intensifiers to give force and emphasis.	<i>I'm very sorry / Terribly sorry / Sorry Sorry.</i>
4.	Providing justification	Speaker gives explanations why something happened.	<i>I missed the bus. / I overslept / I saved the wrong file.</i>
5.	Acknowledgement of responsibility	Speaker admits his mistakes	<i>My bad! / It is totally my fault.</i>
6.	Offer of repair	Speaker tries to make up for the unintentional mistake / damage he had caused.	<i>I will pay for the damages caused / Let me get you another bowl of soup.</i>
7.	Denying responsibility	Contrary to providing justification, the speaker avoids admitting his mistake. Instead, he shifts the blame onto others or circumstances	<i>They should have placed a signboard there / The closest parking lot was full.</i>
8.	Promise of non - recurrence	Speaker pledges not to commit the same mistake.	<i>It won't happen again, I promise. I will not be late the next time we meet.</i>

## 3. Examples of Semantic Formula used for reference.

No	Type	Examples
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	Semantic Formula	Iban version	English Translation
1	Single formula	DA	<i>Minta ampun.</i> (DA) Sorry (DA)
2		DA + J	<i>Minta ampun.</i> (DA) Aku tertinggal bas. (J) Sorry. (DA) I missed the bus. (J)
3		DA + J + OR	<i>Minta ampun.</i> (DA) <i>Laban ke begaut ka nurun gawa nyu enda ingat ngemai selipar nuan.</i> (J) <i>Aram tua nurun meli selipar baru.</i> (OR) I'm sorry. (DA). I was in such a hurry to get to work that I forgot your slippers. (J). Let's go out and I'll buy you a new pair. (OR)
4		DA + AR	<i>Aku minta ampun.</i> (DA) <i>Sigi salah aku enda ninga jako ajar nuan.</i> (AR) I'm sorry. (DA) It's my fault. I should have listened to the advice you gave me. (AR)
5		DA+AR+OR	<i>Minta ampun.</i> (DA) <i>Aku sepatut ia ngemai baju chelum nuan tadi.</i> (AR) <i>Aram tua kin meli baju ke nuan.</i> (OR) Sorry. (DA) I should have brought your black shirt along. (AR) Let's go there and I'll get you a new shirt. (OR)
6	Combination of formulas	DA + OR	<i>Minta ampun Mak.</i> (DA) <i>Legi aku ngasuh urang ngechat dinding nyak baru.</i> (OR) Sorry Mom. (DA) I will get someone to paint that wall again. (OR)
7		DA + DR	<i>Minta ampun tuan.</i> (DA) <i>aku laun nganjung proposal tok. Sandra ndak ti ngaga bahagian ia nyak lah aku terpaksa nganti ia.</i> (DR) I'm sorry for the late submission of this proposal, Sir. (DA) Sandra didn't do her part so I had to wait for her to finish. (DR)
8		DA+ H	<i>Aku minta ampun.</i> (DA) <i>Umbas meh pedis ati ngai ka gamal kitai enda bajik.</i> (H) I apologise. (DA) Quite sulking, otherwise you won't look beautiful. (H)
9		DA + Q	<i>Minta ampun wai.</i> (DA) <i>Nuan ka aku nyuchi kasut nyak baru?</i> (Q) Sorry pal (DA). Shall I wash your shoes again? (Q)
10		AA + J	<i>Aku enda meda nuan duduk dia.</i> (AA + J) I didn't see you sitting there. (AA+ J)
11		AA + J + C	<i>Aku nyu kelalu kenyang.</i> (AA + J) <i>Enda kala aku nyepi utai se-nyamai tok.</i> (C) I am too full. (AA + J) I've never tasted anything as nice as this. (C)

Note: DA-Direct Apology, J-Justification, OR-Offer of Repair, AR-Accepting Responsibility, DR-Denying Responsibility, H-Humour, Q-Question, AA-Avoiding Apology, C- Compliment

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