Apology Strategies on Characters' Utterances in *Moana and Moana 2 movies*

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Abstract. This study analyzes apology strategies used by characters in the Moana and Moana 2 animated movies. The study aims to find the types of apology strategies in the characters' utterances and to determine which strategy is most frequently used. The theory of apology strategies by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), which includes five main types: an expression of apology, an explanation or account, an acknowledgment of responsibility, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance was applied in this research. This research used a descriptive qualitative method. The results show that a total of 53 utterances contain apology strategies. Among them, an explanation or account was the most frequently used strategy, followed by acknowledgment of responsibility, expression of apology, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. These findings reveal that characters tend to provide reasons or explanations as a way to express regret and maintain harmony in their interpersonal communication. The study contributes to the understanding of apology strategies in animated movies and how they reflect real-life communication behavior.

Keywords: *Apology strategies, pragmatics, olshtain and cohen 1983, moana, movies.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential part of human life, allowing people to express their thoughts, emotions, and needs while also establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships. Adler and Proctor (2017) argue that communication builds relationships and reduces social disconnect. Adler, Rodman, and du Pré (2020) argue that meaning is constructed within context through a symbolic interaction rather than just the exchange of words.

Language, as the fundamental means of communication, becomes an important field of study in linguistics. Pragmatics is an aspect of linguistics that studies how context, speaker intention, and listener interpretation influence meaning. Pragmatics helps us understand how humans strategically utilize language in everyday contexts, including speech acts such as apologies. J.L. Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory divides speech into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, emphasizing that utterances like "I'm sorry" are more than just expressions; they are also actions intended to restore social balance.

Apologies are one of the most socially meaningful speaking acts. According to Olshtain and Cohen (1983), an apology is a verbal act that aims to apologize to the listener for an offense or mistake. They propose five main apology strategies: an expression of apology, an explanation or account, acknowledgment of responsibility, an offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. These methods may emerge alone or in combination, depending on environment, cultural norms, and interpersonal interactions. Holmes (1995) highlights that apologies help to maintain harmony and repair trust in both personal and public relationships.

The topic of apology strategies can be seen in both real-life conversations along with movies. Films mirror societal habits and ideals through their characters' interactions, making them excellent resource for pragmatic study. This study examines two animated films, Moana (2016) and Moana 2 (2024), which depict significant interpersonal dynamics and cultural communication. These films are particularly significant because of their broad audience appeal and the representation of explicit and implicit apology emotions by characters such as Moana and Maui.

Several previous research examined apology strategies in various film genres using diverse frameworks. However, the majority of them focus on live-action films or use distinct theories, such as Blum-Kulka, Trosborg, or Ishihara & Cohen. Although Larasati (2018) and Latifah (2021) investigated animated films, there has been little research on Moana and Moana 2. This study addresses that gap by integrating Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) approach to both films, providing a unique analysis of apology strategies within a continuous animated narrative.

This study is guided by two major questions: (1) What types of apology strategies are employed by the characters in Moana and Moana 2? (2) Which apology approach is most frequently used, according to Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) classification? The study's goal is to identify and define such strategies while also showing their pragmatic roles in film narratives. The predicted outcome of this research is the discovery of prominent apology strategies utilized by the characters, along with a clear classification based on Olshtain and Cohen's theory. This study has the potential to add to the field of pragmatics by providing insight on how apology strategies are portrayed in popular media and how they connect to real-life communication practices such as responsibility, empathy, and reconciliation.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Several studies examined into apology strategies in films using various frameworks. Mbeleng and Marantika (2023), using Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) theory, discovered that direct apologies were more common in Yes Day, a family comedy. Meanwhile, Nisa and Sutrisno (2018) used Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's model to the Harry Potter books and discovered that indirect techniques predominate, particularly explanations.
Larasati (2018) investigated four unrelated animated films and discovered that direct apologies and explanations were the most often, however her reach was broader and less targeted than this study. Latifah (2024) used a combination theory to assess Raya and the Last Dragon, with apology expressions coming out on top.

Harijanto and Bramantya (2024) examined the Spider-Man Home Trilogy, which, like Moana and Moana 2, follows a continuous narrative. He employed Ishihara and Cohen's approach and discovered that utterances of apology were the most common. While similar in technique, his research took a different framework and genre.

Other research by Farhan (2024), Maghfiroh and Ratih (2023), and Suseno (2023) investigated apology strategies in movies, although they focused on various theories or genres, such as psychological animation, superhero action, and romance.

In conclusion, most previous study relied on distinct theories, genres, or solitary films. This study addresses a gap by focusing on a continuous animated narrative and applying Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) approach, providing a more detailed and cohesive interpretation.

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive design to examine apology strategies in the films Moana (2016) and Moana 2 (2024). Qualitative research was chosen because it provides for a thorough investigation of language use in natural settings. The study focuses on how characters communicate apologies and the strategies they employ, using the framework provided by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). The researcher was directly involved in the data collection process, watching the films multiple times and analyzing the characters' dialogue. The population of this study consists of all the characters who appear in both Moana films, while the sample consists of only the characters who make apology utterances.

The data was collected by repeatedly watching the films, reading the transcripts, identifying apology-related utterances, and categorizing each instance using Olshtain and Cohen (1983) five strategy theory: expression of apology, explanation or account, acknowledgment of responsibility, an offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. Each speech was coded using a systematic method that included the strategy kind, character name, occurrence number, and film source. The research tools included downloadable subtitle files, a laptop for data organization, and internet access to retrieve relevant scripts and references.

Data analysis was carried out in three steps. First, each utterance was classified based on the strategy it represented. Second, the frequency of each method was calculated to determine the most common type in both films. Finally, the findings were evaluated to derive inferences about how apology strategies work in the movie's narrative framework. The study was conducted in a non-classroom context, with the researcher serving as the sole observer and analyst. The study lasted several weeks, providing time for multiple viewings, transcription, categorization, and data evaluation. To verify validity, the data was cross-checked against subtitles and actual spoken utterances, and all coding was done in a consistent and transparent manner.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzed 53 utterances containing apology strategies from the movies Moana (2016) and Moana 2 (2024) using the framework of Olshtain and Cohen (1983). The strategies identified include: An expression of apology, acknowledgment of responsibility, an explanation or account, an offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. The utterances were classified based on these types, and the dominant strategy was determined based on frequency of occurrence.

Table 4.1 Frequency of Apology Strategies

No.	Apology Strategies	Frequency
1.	An Expression of an Apology	9
2.	An Explanation or Account	18
3.	Acknowledgment of Responsibility	16
4.	An Offer of Repair	8
5.	Promise of Forbearance	2
	Total Data	53

These data shows that an explanation or account was the most dominant strategy used by the characters, followed by an expression of apology and acknowledgment of responsibility. Strategies like an offer of repair and promise of forbearance appeared less frequently.

A. Discussion of Apology Strategies

1. An Expression of an Apology

In this strategy involves the direct expression of regret or remorse for the mistakes made. A simple sentence like "I'm sorry" conveys the speaker's feelings of regret and acknowledges that their actions have caused harm or inconvenience to others.

> **Data 1**
> **Moana:** "*Sorry*. I thought you were a monster, but… I found your hook and you're right… This Tamatoa really likes treasure."
> **Maui:** "Stay."

In this scene from movie Moana, Moana begins her utterance with "Sorry," addressing her incorrect assumption about Maui. This strategy include the Expression of Apology from Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) framework, in which sorrow is expressed directly using phrases such as "sorry" or "I'm sorry." Moana says this because she initially thought Maui was a monster, which resulted in a misunderstanding. By apologizing, she hopes to acknowledge her error, demonstrate respect, and repair the interaction, as Maui is someone with whom she must collaborate. Her usage of "Sorry" at the start implies a strong desire to accept responsibility and preserve a positive relationship.

2. An Explanation or Account

This strategy involves providing context or reasons for the behavior that led to the apology. In addition this strategy is used by the speaker/ writer as an indirect way to apologize.

> **Data 1**
> **Moana:** "Sorry. *I thought you were a monster*, but… I found your hook and you're right… This Tamatoa really likes treasure."

Maui: "Stay."

In Moana, when Moana utters "I thought you were a monster," she gives an honest reason for her past reaction. Rather than expressing "I'm sorry," she utilizes her explanation to demonstrate that her behavior was based on misunderstanding, not judgment. This mirrors the Explanation or Account method, which softens the charge while clarifying intent. Moana restores trust with Maui in this way, demonstrating that genuine explanations may be just as effective in restoring relationships as straightforward apologies.

Data 2
Moana: "Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Mmhmm."
Maui: "Took guts. But… I'm sorry. *I'm tryin' to be sincere for once, and it feels like you're distracted.*"

In movie Moana, Maui utterance, "I'm tryin' to be sincere for once, and it feels like you're distracted," after apologizing to Moana. This shows the Explanation or Account strategy from Olshtain and Cohen (1983), where he adds context to his apology. Maui explains that being sincere is hard for him, which makes his apology more meaningful. By sharing his struggle, he helps Moana see that he's trying to change. This kind of explanation builds trust and shows that the apology is genuine.

Data 3
Moana: "Tautai Vasa's canoe…"
Maui: "*Uh, it's a bad time to say I told ya so, so (I'm not gonna do that)* cause that would make you feel worse…"

In movie Moana 2, when Maui utters, "Uh, it's a bad time to say I told ya so, so I'm not gonna do that," he uses the Explanation or Account strategy from Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Instead of blaming or bragging, he explains why he's holding back to avoid making Moana feel worse. This shows he's being thoughtful and trying to keep the situation calm. Even though it's not a direct apology, his explanation helps maintain harmony and shows he cares about Moana's feelings.

3. Acknowledgment of Responsibility
This strategy included admitting to a mistake or expressing blame.

Data 1
Moana: "*He was right.* About going out there. It's time to put my stone on the mountain."
Gramma Tala: Okay. Well, then head on back. Put that stone up there.

In movie Moana, when Moana says, "He was right. About going out there. It's time to put my stone on the mountain," she shows the Acknowledgement of Responsibility strategy from Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Although she doesn't say "I'm sorry," she admits that she was wrong to doubt the advice she got earlier. This moment shows Moana taking responsibility for her past choices and realizing that she should've trusted that advice. It's a form of indirect apology that shows growth and helps fix any past misunderstanding.

Data 2
Moana: "Tautai Vasa's canoe…"
Maui: Uh, it's a bad time to say I told ya so, so (I'm not gonna do that) *cause that would make you feel worse…*

In Moana 2, when Maui says, "cause that would make you feel worse...," he shows the Acknowledgement of Responsibility strategy from Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Even though he doesn't directly say sorry, Maui shows that he understands his words could hurt Moana in a tough moment. By holding back and thinking about her feelings, he takes emotional responsibility. This moment shows Maui's growth and his effort to be more caring and supportive.

4.   An Offer of Repair
In this strategy includes actions or statements that aim to repair the situation or apologize.

Data 1
Maui: I'm not going back.
Moana: "What… *We still have to restore the heart.*"

In Moana, when Moana says, "We still have to restore the heart," after Maui says he's not going back, she uses the Offer of Repair strategy from Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Even without saying "sorry," Moana shows she wants to fix the problem and keep going. Her words offer a solution and show commitment to making things right, both for their mission and their teamwork. It's an indirect but strong way to apologize through action.

Data 2
Moana: "And did you meet the Kakamora? I thought he doomed us in that clam, but turns out it was super great, 'cause otherwise I never would've met Matangi - who's great by the way - and found you and now we're gonna break Nalo's curse and–"
(Maui literally pinches Moana's lips shut…)
Moana: "Sorry, *you go*"

In Moana 2, when Moana says, "Sorry, you go," after chatting nonstop, she employs the Offer of Repair method developed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Despite her brief statements, she knows she is dominating the conversation and offers Maui the opportunity to speak instead. It's an easy way to resolve the situation while keeping the interaction respectful and balanced.

5.   Promise of Forbearance
This strategy is the speaker's promise not to repeat the same mistake, as a form of responsibility and good faith to repair social relations after a norm violation.

Data 1
Maui: "It was made by the gods. You can't FIX it."

> **Moana:** "***Next time we'll be more careful.***Te Ka was stuck on the barrier island. It's can't go in the water. We can find a way around."

In Moana, when Moana says, "Next time we'll be more careful," she uses the Promise of Forbearance strategy from Olshtain and Cohen (1983). She doesn't directly apologize, but she shows they've learned from the mistake and will do better next time. It's a way of showing responsibility and commitment to improve. Her words help keep the team focused and show leadership without blaming anyone.

> **Data 2**
> **Simea:** "I'm coming with you"
> **Moana:** "***I'll be back as soon as I can... I promise.***"

In the movie Moana 2, when Moana says "I'll be back as soon as I can... I promise" she uses the Promise of Forbearance strategy from Olshtain and Cohen (1983). She doesn't say "sorry," but her promise shows care and responsibility. Moana reassures Simea that she'll return, even though the decision to go alone is painful. This kind of promise helps maintain trust and shows emotional commitment, making it a strong example of an indirect apology.

B.   Discussion of the most frequently Apology Strategies
The findings show that the most frequent apology strategy in Moana and Moana 2 is Explanation or Account, used in 18 of 53 utterances. This suggests that the characters often explain their actions rather than directly saying "sorry." By doing so, they help the listener understand the reason behind their behavior and show that their actions weren't meant to hurt. This makes the apology feel more sincere and personal. For instance, Maui sharing about his past or Moana explaining her choices builds emotional connection and trust. According to Olshtain and Cohen (1983), apologizing means offering support to the offended person. Through explanations, the characters show empathy and responsibility, which helps maintain relationships. This strategy fits well with the themes of both movies, which emphasize growth, leadership, and honesty making Explanation or Account a powerful and meaningful way to apologize.

CONCLUSION
This study examined the types and frequencies of apology strategies used by characters in Moana (2016) and Moana 2 (2024), using the framework of Olshtain and Cohen (1983). The utterances were categorized into five types: Expression of Apology, Explanation or Account, Acknowledgment of Responsibility, Offer of Repair, and Promise of Forbearance. From 53 identified utterances, the most frequently used strategy was Explanation or Account found in 18 utterances, showing that characters often chose to explain their actions rather than simply express regret. Acknowledgment of Responsibility with 16 instances, followed by Expression of Apology was used 9 times. Less frequent were Offer of Repair with 8 utterances, and Promise of Forbearance with only 2. These findings suggest that the characters tended to favor indirect strategies that

emphasized reflection and justification over direct apologies. The results highlight that animated films can present nuanced and meaningful forms of interpersonal communication. Apology strategies in the movies of Moana and Moana 2 reflect the emotional growth and cultural values embedded in the characters' journeys, revealing how fictional narratives can mirror real-life conflict resolution and social interaction.

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