

DIGITAL POLITENESS: AN ANALYSIS OF APOLOGY STRATEGIES IN TEXT-BASED INTERNET DISCOURSE

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Annotation: *This paper studies apology strategies in text-based internet discourse through the viewpoint of digital politeness. Applying the apology speech-act-set framework - an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), explanation, acknowledgement of responsibility, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance - the study synthesizes recent research to show how the absence of paralinguistic cues online is compensated by emojis, orthographic variation, and platform-specific actions such as tagging and liking. Findings indicate that acceptance of responsibility, rather than the explicit IFID preferred in face-to-face research, dominates internet apologies, and that markers of power and position are being redefined within online hierarchies. The paper finds that digital politeness reflects an continuous tension between globalizing platform norms and persisting local sociocultural values.*

Keywords: *digital politeness, apology strategies, speech act theory, face theory, computer-mediated communication, netiquette.*

Kalit so‘zlar: *raqamli xushmuomalalik, uzr so‘rash strategiyalari, nutqiy akt nazariyasi, yuz saqlash nazariyasi, kompyuter vositachiligidagi muloqot, netiket.*

Ключевые слова: *цифровая вежливость, стратегии извинения, теория речевых актов, теория сохранения лица, компьютерно-опосредованная коммуникация, нетикет.*

Social media, messaging applications, and other computer-mediated platforms have changed the way how speakers manage face and enact politeness. Communication that once relied on tone of voice, facial expression, and physical closeness now occurs almost entirely through text, emoji, and platform-specific affordances such as liking and tagging. Apologies are particularly revealing site for studying this shift because of face-threatening, corrective speech acts, they must restore social equilibrium using only the resources available within a given medium. Modern linguistic anthropology situates this development within a broader tension between globalization and deglobalization (Malyuga & Larina, 2024). This paper explores how classical apology theory should be applied to text-based online communication, and what recent research reveals about the strategies speakers actually use online.

Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962) categorizes apologies as expressives with an inherently remedial role. Building on this basis, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) created the apology speech-act-set, identifying five recurring strategies: an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID, e.g., “sorry”), explanation or account, acknowledgement of responsibility, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory frames apology as a tactic that restores the addressee’s autonomy after an offense. These classical, face-to-face frameworks require adaptation once engagement moves

online. Suparno et al. (2023) suggest that indicators of social power previously associated with age or seniority are increasingly replaced by digital status — follower counts, platform visibility, technological fluency — and that users must perform politeness knowing most contextual information (location, time, gesture) is unavailable to the other person. According to Laabidi et al. (2025), in the absence of vocal and facial cues, users compensate through emoticons and purposeful orthographic variation, and these resources are used differently across genders, with female users generally showing greater emotional expressiveness and a wider range of mitigating strategies.

This study uses a qualitative, literature-based analytical approach, synthesizing recent theoretical and empirical work on digital politeness within the speech-act-set framework outlined above, using Uoti’s (2022) corpus-based analysis of twelve public apology posts by social media influencers (Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitter) as an illustrative empirical evidence.

Across the reviewed studies, acknowledgement of responsibility consistently appears as the dominant method in digital apologies, rather than the explicit IFID that face-to-face research typically identifies as primary. In Uoti’s (2022) dataset, acknowledgement of responsibility accounted for 40 percent of all coded strategies and appeared in every post, while explicit IFIDs occurred in only ten of twelve posts (17 percent of occurrences); offers of repair did not occur at all and were replaced by promises of forbearance, because the offenses - breaches of pandemic-related protocol - caused no material damage to repair. Additionally, posts were also strategically dense, averaging 3.75 of the five main techniques each, confirming that digital apologies tend to be intricate performances rather than brief formulas (Suparno et al., 2023).

This intrication compensates for the medium’s lack of paralinguistic cues. Where face-to-face apology relies on tone and posture to convey sincerity, text-based apology uses emojis - for instance, the “shaking hands” emoji used to index reconciliation - along with capitalization, punctuation, and, on some platforms, tagging or liking as indirect politeness moves (Laabidi et al., 2025). Power dynamics are also rearranged: rather than age or institutional rank, digital status - follower count, platform visibility, perceived authenticity - determines whose apology is scrutinized and how it must be performed (Suparno et al., 2023). Finally, the tension between globalization and deglobalization (Malyuga & Larina, 2024) is visible even here: platform affordances create a broadly shared digital politeness repertoire across cultures, yet community-specific address forms and routines continue to mark local identity within that global repertoire.

These trends are not confined to English-language platforms. In Uzbek digital communication, apology and gratitude formulas such as *kechirasiz*, *uzr*, *ming bor uzr*, *rahmat*, and *tashakkur* continue to perform the same face-repairing functions identified above, while online-specific address forms - *azizlar*, *do'stlar*, *hurmatli guruh a'zolari*, and even *admin* used as a direct term of address - increasingly accompany or replace traditional kinship-based terms such as *aka* and *opa* in group chats and social media comments (Abdullayeva, 2026). This implies that the same tension between global platform conventions (emoji use, tagging) and

local sociocultural routines (kinship terms, formulaic politeness expressions) observed above also structures apology practices in Uzbek-language digital spaces.

Digital politeness does not simply transplant face-to-face apology strategies into text; it reorganizes them around the limitations of computer-mediated communication. Acknowledgement of responsibility, rather than the explicit IFID favoured in traditional research, dominates online apologies, while emojis and platform-native actions substitute for missing nonverbal cues, and status hierarchies are redefined around digital rather than offline capital. Local pragmatic routines nonetheless exist within globalizing platform norms.

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