

## **Do Apologies in E-mails Follow Spoken or Written Norms?: Some Examples from British English**

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**Abstract.** Advances in technology, easy access and efficiency have firmly established e-mailing as an important medium of communication in the last few decades. Nowadays, all over the world, especially in educational organisations, the medium has started to rapidly replace the more traditional forms of communication such as mailed letters and telephone conversations. Despite their important role in our lives, however, very little is known about the language used in e-messages. Experts in the area argue that more research is needed because the rules of interaction suitable for spoken and written language may not be valid for the new medium. In an attempt to contribute to this particular area of linguistics, the current paper, first, examines the form and type of the apologies used in e-mail messages and then compares and contrasts them with the attributes of the remedial acts employed in spoken and written language. The corpus studied in the research consisted of 126 e-mail messages which were collected between January 2002 and March 2004. The data gathered were first transcribed in CHAT format and the apologies used in e-mails were coded according to an adaptation of the system developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981). The analyses of the data included a frequency count of apologies and apology types and syntactic-semantic analyses. Findings from the study show that e-mail apologies have some characteristics of written, some of spoken and some new emergent qualities that can be used to differentiate them from apologies used in other modalities.