What's Beyond the Language of Apology? A Case Study

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Abstract

This study investigates the realization of the speech act of apology. It seeks to analyze the linguistic patterns used to represent apology from a pragmalinguistic point of view. It aims at presenting an actual insight on the impact of gender and social practices on performing different apology strategies through providing empirical evidence on the impact of the mother tongue on acquiring apology competence by EFL learners. The study made use of the written Discourse Completion Test (DCT) including 20 scenarios administrated to three groups of respondents of both genders: 100 native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, 100 Jordanian EFL learners, and 50 native speakers of American English. The findings revealed that gender has influenced the use of different apology strategies between the males and females of each group. It was also indicated that the sociocultural practices have played a big role in the socio-linguistic realization of apology. This impact was more pronounced throughout the different preference to the use of apology strategies among the three groups. In addition, it was found that there are interlingual hypotheses concerning the foreign language pragmatics prompting the EFL learners to deviate from the native language and English norms of apology. Thus, it was concluded that the mother tongue influence is not the sole source of pragmatic deviations from the second language norms; this influence cannot be described as negative transfer but a creative process done by EFL Learners to master English.

Keywords: pragmatic competence, apology, interlanguage pragmatic competence, Jordanian Arabic, EFL, social practices

1. Introduction

Throughout the history of ethnography, scholars have been investigating the intertwined correspondence between language and culture. Despite of the two concepts' recognition, two controversial questions have been prevailing until now: "the extent to which language is shaping and controlling the thinking of its speakers by the perceptual requirements it makes of them, or the extent to which it is mentally reflecting their world view, and whether the relationship is universal or language-specific?" (Troike, 1989:32). Hence, the inquiry posited in these questions reflects on the correlation between the form and meaning existing in a language and the socio-cultural structures integrated with such meanings, such as beliefs, principles, conventions, and values. Representing these components all together, it has become pivotal to revisit Hymes' concept of communicative competence (CC) (Hymes, 1972).

The notion of communicative competence regards language basically as a social act that is exposed to sociocultural variables governing any kind of social interaction. In his view, Hymes asserts that there is no ideal competence existing in a society even within an individual since each linguistic act, either production or perception, involves distraction, memory loss, interruption, etc… Thus, language is controlled by "social experience, needs, and motives" (Hymes, 1972: 60). Under the communicative competence, pragmatic competence (PC) lies as a subcategory capturing the ability to produce and perceive linguistic patterns appropriate for various social contexts, denoting appropriateness of form and meaning (Kasper, 1997). This is briefly paraphrased in Rose' and Kasper's definition on PC (2001:64):

> Appropriateness of meaning paralleling Leech's sociopragmatic competence which includes an interlocutor's knowledge of pragmatic conventions and the ability to assess situational context and speech intentions. Appropriateness of form… resembles pragmalinguistic component and concerns the mapping of a linguistic realization of a speech invention to a situation.

To investigate the acquisition of pragmatic competence by native and non-native speakers, it is worthy to consider the speech act theory; i.e. the realization of different speech acts by those speakers (Harlig and Maylor, 2003). Generally speaking, each speech act accounts for degrees of directness. The concept of directness, involving its gradual degrees, is not only known for its being language-specific but also culture-specific (Harlig, 1996). Directness involves correlating appropriate linguistic form with a "direct" communicative function to deliver a particular act. Nevertheless, indirectness represents the interrelationship between language and culture as being the principal components for commencing any interactional behaviour.

The act of apologizing has been widely tackled since 1981 (Fraser, 1981; Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Sugimotu, 1997; Hussein and Hamouri, 1998; Bataineh, 2004; Bataineh, 2006; among others). Performing such an act requires the employment of different sorts of strategies realized in accordance with "the language typology and the cultural norms of a society" (AlQtaishat, 2016: 4). In other words, each community of a language, hence a culture, utilizes

different strategies varying from the most direct strategies to the least direct ones. The realization of apology necessitates a high degree of pragmatic competence since this act is highly sensitive to sociocultural factors like social distance, social power, culture, and speech situation. Adopting the right strategies for apologizing is also highly sensitive because of the possibilities of social interaction mishaps and breakdowns if chosen inappropriately.

This paper addresses the realization of apology as a competence by itself. It studies how this act is performed in two contexts: The Jordanian Arabic context and the American English context. Throughout this investigation, the researcher will be able to underline the reflection of social practices of both cultures on the apology competence of each. In addition, it will examine the sort of pragmatic transfer in using pragmalinguistic resources of apology by English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in the Jordanian context.

A body of research has investigated the pragmalinguistic performance of apology in Jordan. Some of these studies are concerned with capturing the use of these strategies compared to other cultures. However, some others are more overwhelmed with discussing the impact of social variables on the selection of apology strategies, such as age and gender.

Al Hami (1993) is the first study to tackle this speech act in the Jordanian context. The researcher's purpose of this study is to show the areas of similarities and differences between the Jordanians and Americans as to the performance of apology. In addition, he aims at depicting the influence of three social variables on the selection of the strategies governing such an act. These variables are: sex, age, and the level of education. Using a DCT of eight situations, the study findings reveal that gender, as a social variable, does not have much influence on the choice of apology strategies. Nonetheless, age and the level of education show a pronounced difference.

In a similar vein, Hussein and Hammouri (1998) address the differences between the Jordanian undergraduates and Americans in performing apology. The study aims at finding out what sorts of strategies the subjects of both culture have in common and in what way they are different. It also aims at shedding the light into how those subjects respond to various social situations controlled by diverse social power and social ranks. This study makes use of the DCT as a sole tool for eliciting the data. It is subjected to 100 Jordanians of undergraduate level and 50 Americans. Based on Fraser's (1981) Model, data were analyzed to unravel that the Jordanian subjects perform apology using more sorts of strategies than the American subjects. In addition, the Jordanian subjects combine more than one strategy for expressing guilt on the same situation. These differences between the Jordanians and Americans, as indicated by the researchers, are due to cultural and religious orientations.

Following Hussein and Hammouri's study, ELKhalil (1999) conducts a study on the speech act of apology from an intercultural point of view. The researcher's purpose is to depict what contextual factors prompting the pragmalinguistic realization of apology. For this, two groups of subjects are employed, considering the variables of gender and age. Thus, a group of 40 male subjects and a group of 40 female subjects are involved to elicit the data, each of which is also classified into above or below the age of 40. The used elicitation-data tool is a questionnaire divided into two parts; the first part includes demographic information while

the second one comprises three sections reflecting stereotypical offending acts. The main result shows that gender and age have a great impact on the performance of apology.

Bataineh (2004) studies the use of apology strategies from a cross-cultural perspective as an aim to highlight the differences between the Jordanian culture and the American culture as to such a use. In addition, she aims at underlying the impact of gender on using particular strategies over another between subjects of each culture. Using a DCT designed following Sugimuto's Model (1997), the key findings denote that the realization of apology strategies is culture-specific; every culture has its strategies for apologizing that are different from others. Also, gender by all means plays a role in the selection of apology strategies. Corresponding to this study, Rula and Ruba Bataineh (2006) investigates the performance of apologizing by undergraduate Jordanian EFL learners, using a ten-scenarios DCT. The analysis of data reveals that gender plays a vital role in the diverse preference of the JEFL learners' apology. Mostly observed, male JEFL learners prefer remorse as an apology while female JEFL learners tend mostly to keep silent in an apology-warrant speech event.

Ala' Abdullah and others (2013) examine how graduate Jordanian EFL learners respond to apology-warrant situations. The researchers' principal objective is to underline the degree of influence of social distance and social status on the performance of apology. The study makes use of two instruments: DCT and some interviews. Through testing the subjects' performance, it is evident that the social status variable has a higher influence over the social distance as to the selection of apology strategies.

Surveying the related literature, it was found that despite of the contribution of these studies to the foreign language teaching field, there are still missing gaps that need to be filled in more research. Most of the abovementioned studies have placed the attention on the cross-cultural difference between Jordanians and Americans as to the use of apology strategies. Other studies have focused on particular social dimensions and their influence on apology performance. As to JEFL learners' placed studies, the two studies done in the Jordanian context have not addressed the issue of pragmatic transfer that JEFL learners are exposed to. However, the studies have only been confined also to depict the social variables affecting the learners' apologizing realization. Therefore, this study aims at focusing the attention on the impact of sociocultural practices on the preference of using some apology strategies over others by male and female respondents. It will test the performance of apology by Jordanians and Americans as well as JEFL learners. Through examining the performance of Jordanians by Arabic and native Americans by English, the researcher will to address the degree of pragmatic transfer JEFL learners is exposed to. Hence, it is a bi-faceted study where gender role is examined in addition to the role of mother tongue in learning the second language (L2) pragmatics.

The researcher aims at answering the following questions:

1. To what extent does gender play a role in the acquisition of apology competence?
2. In what way does the mother tongue influence the EFL learners' acquisition of pragmatic competence?

2. Method

2.1 Respondents

Three groups of respondents were employed for investigating the realization of the speech act of apology: native speakers of Jordanian Arabic, native speakers of American English, and Jordanian learners of English as a foreign language (JEFL). All groups' respondents were educated, aging from 18-25, and of both genders: male and female, distributed equally for the sake of considering the influence of gender variable.

The first group consisted of 100 respondents who were native speakers of Jordanian Arabic (JA) whereas the second group consisted of 50 respondents who were native speakers of American English (AE). As for the third group, they were 100 undergraduate students enrolling in English language programmes: English Language and Literature, Translation, and French Language and English Literature.

2.2 Procedures

2.2.1 Data Collection Instrument

The data-elicitation tool employed in this study was the written discourse completion test (WDCT). This tool was exclusively chosen for meeting the pragmatic inquiries posted by the researcher related to the realization of the speech act of apology.

Based on Bataineh's (2004) and Hussein and Hammouri's models (1998), the used WDCT was designed and modified in two similar versions: Arabic and English version. The Arabic version was administered to the Jordanian-Arabic group while the other version was directed to the American native speakers group and the JEFL learners group. The tool comprised of two main parts. The first part was used to elicit the respondents' demographics. On the other hand, the second part included 20 hypothetical scenarios based on informal and formal social situations, equally distributed but haphazardly arranged. These situations were designed to meet the Jordanian and American cultures as these situations are real-life oriented.

2.2.2 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in the light of Cohen and Olstain's taxonomy of apology strategies (1981). The rationale behind selecting this model particularly is that the researcher found it parallels to the other classification models of apology strategies but more comprehensive than them (Fraser, 1981,Trosborg, 1987, Sugimoto, 1997; Hussein & Hamouri, 1998). Furthermore, adding to this model, it was added two dimensions to this model for the sake of analysis, which are: the use of two or multi strategies and the use of non strategies.

3. Results

The elicited data were analysed following Cohen and Olshtain's scheming taxonomy of apology strategies (1981). It was added to the categories of analysis two further dimensions which are: the use of two or multi apology strategies and the "none" use strategy where the apologizer remains silent. Briefly, the categorization of apology strategies of the model is listed below:

1. **Expression of apology:**
   a. Expression of regret: using overt apologizing words like "sorry" or "معلش متاسف".
   b. Offer of apology: using apology expressions such as "I apologize".
   c. Ask for forgiveness: where the apologizer uses some expressions of forgiveness like " forgive my fault" or "سامحني".
   d. Excuse: Indirectly, the apologizer expresses his/her justification for the fault.
2. **Acknowledgement of responsibility**: The apologizer confesses his/her guilt.
3. **An offer of repair**: the apologizer places a remedial action for his/her fault.
4. **A promise of forbearance**: the apologizer gives a promise for the offended to not repeat his/her guilt.

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

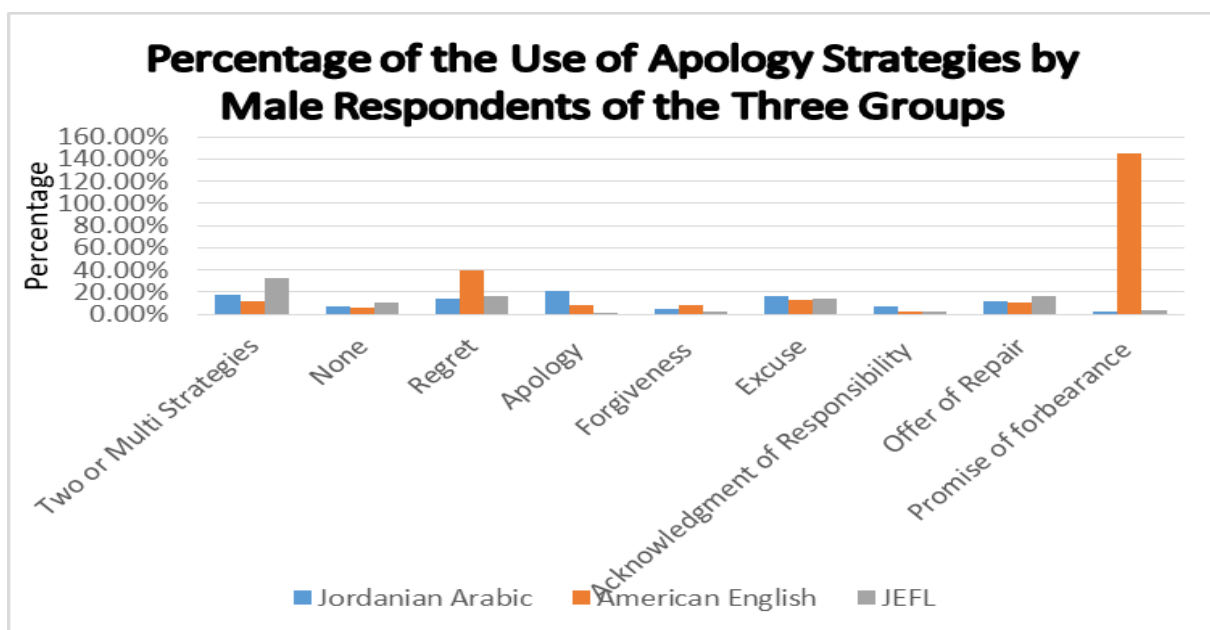3.1.1 Apology Strategies by Male Respondents

Figure 1. Percentage of the Use of Apology Strategies by Male Respondents of the Three Groups

Figure (1) shows the performance of apology by the male respondents of the three groups employed in this study. Starting by the Jordanian Arabic group, it appears that apology as a direct strategy is ranked first by 21.3%. The use of multi strategies is ranked second with a percentage of 17.4%. The strategy of excuse comes third with a percentage of 16.0% while the strategy of regret is ranked fourth by 13.7%. On the other hand, the use of repair strategy is ranked fifth with a percentage of 11.4%. As for the least frequently used strategies, these respondents use the strategy of acknowledgement as the fourth least used strategy with a percentage of 6.8%. The "None" strategy is ranked third by 6.6% while the strategy of forgiveness is ranked second with a percentage of 4.2%. Lastly, the strategy of promise of forbearance is the least strategy to be used by 2.6%.

As for the male American respondents, regret expressions are used as the first most frequent strategy with percentage of 39.0%. Second comes the strategy of excuse by 13.2%. The use of two strategies or more is ranked third a percentage of 12.2% while the strategy of repair is ranked fourth with a percentage of 10.2%, followed by the strategy of apology by 8.6%. On the contrary, the strategy of forgiveness use is ranked as the fourth least frequently-used strategy with a percentage of 8.2%. The "None" strategy use is ranked third with a percentage of 5.4%, followed by the strategy of acknowledgement by 1.8%. Lastly is the use of forbearance with a percentage of 1.4%.

JEFL male respondents use the two-strategies combination or multi strategies mostly with a percentage of 33.1%. The next most frequently used strategy is regret by 16.5%. Other strategies are also used; The JEFL male learners use the strategy of repair as the third most frequent strategy with a percentage of 16.2%. Excuse is selected as the fourth commonly used strategy by 14.5%. Keeping silent or not to show concern of the hearer in front of the others is ranked as fifth by 10.3%. According to the least frequently used strategies, those learners selected the strategy of promise of forbearance as the fourth least used strategies with a percentage of 3.4%. The strategy of acknowledgement is ranked next by 2.8%. On the other hand, the use of forgiveness and apology are the least used strategies. The use of forgiveness is expressed by 2.0%; whereas apology percentage is by 1.2%.

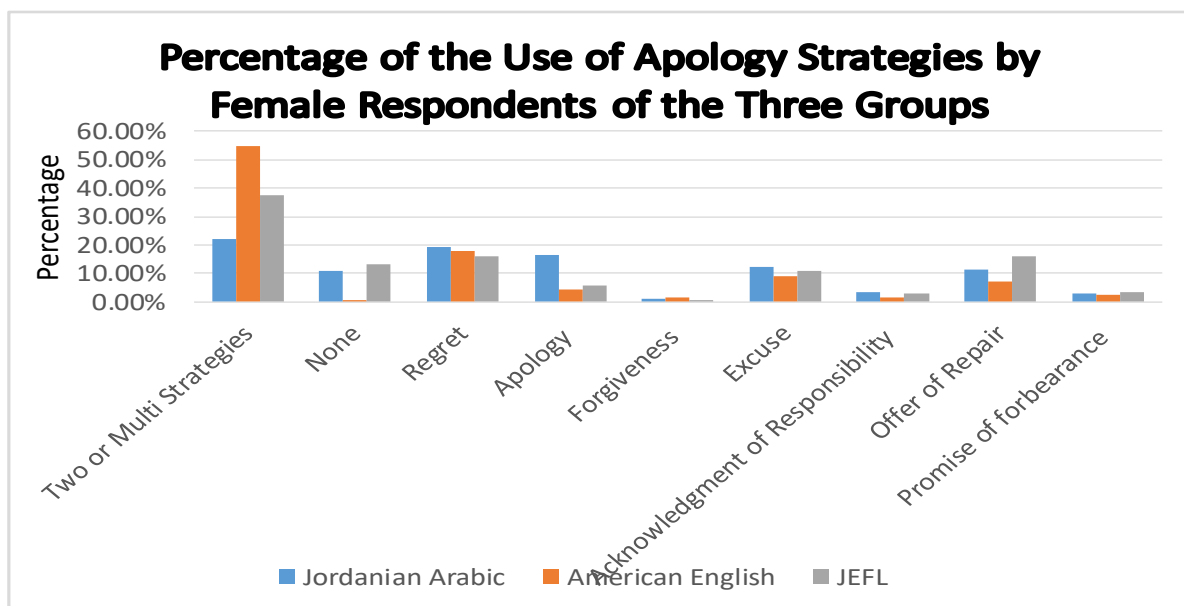### 3.1.2 Apology Strategies by Female Respondents

Figure 2. Percentage of the Use of Apology Strategies by Female Respondents of the Three Groups

Figure (1) presents the percentage of the use of apology strategies by female respondents of the three groups. As to the Jordanian Arabic respondents, the use of two strategies combination or more is ranked first with a percentage of 11.1%, followed by using the strategy of regret 19.4%. The strategy of apology is ranked third with a percentage of 16.3%

while the strategy of excuse is ranked fourth with a percentage of 12.5%, followed by the strategy of repair by 11.2 %. On the other hand, the "None" strategy is used with a percentage of 11.1%. The strategy of acknowledgment is ranked third as the least used strategies by 3.5%, followed by the strategy of forbearance with a percentage of 2.8%. Last, the strategy of forgiveness is used with a percentage of 1.0%.

As to the female American respondents, the combination of two strategies for apology or more is used most frequently with a percentage of 54.6%. The other top frequently used strategies are: the strategy of regret ranked second by 17.8%; the strategy of excuse by 9.2%; the strategy of repair by 7.2%; and the strategy of apology with a percentage of 4.2%.   As to the least frequently used strategies, the ranking starts by the use of promise of forbearance with a percentage of 2.6%. The strategy of acknowledgement is ranked third by 2.0%. The strategy of forgiveness is ranked second by 1.6%. The least strategy to be used is the avoidance of apology or "None" strategy with a percentage of 0.8%.

It appears that JEFL female respondents tend to the use of two combined strategies most frequently with a percentage of 37.3%, followed by the strategy of regret by 16.1%. Ranked as third, it is used the strategy of using silence or avoidance with a percentage of 13.2%, followed by the strategy of repair with a percentage of 11.4%. The use of excuse strategy is ranked fifth with a percentage of 10.9%. In contrast, the least frequently used strategies by the JEFL female respondents are as follows: the strategy of apology by 5.6%; the strategy of acknowledgement by 3.0 %; and the strategy of forbearance by 1.9%. The least frequently used strategy is the strategy of forgiveness with a percentage of 0.6%.
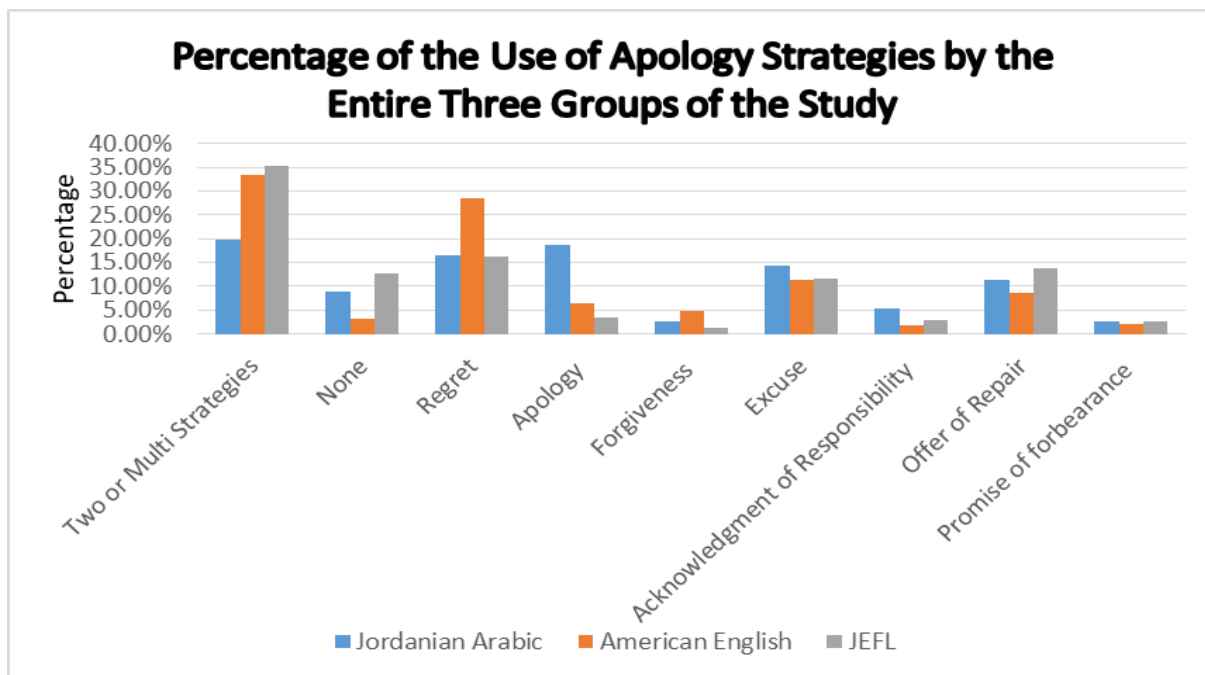
3.1.3 Apology Strategies by All Groups

Figure 3. Percentage of the Use of Apology Strategies by All Respondents of the Three Groups

Figure (3) shows the use of apology strategies by the three groups of the study. As the main purpose of the study is to shed light into the issue of pragmatic transfer that the Jordanian EFL learners might be exposed to. The researcher compares between the performance of the JEFL learners with the Jordanian Arabic respondents and American English respondents. The reason behind such comparison is to find out to what extent the performance of those learners' is similar to the other groups' performance, and to what degree the mother tongue influences their performance of apology.

It is shown that JEFL learners employ the two-strategy combination as the first most frequent strategy with a percentage of 35.2%. However, Americans use it with a percentage of 33.4, then Jordanians employ it with a percentage of 19.8%. The high percentage of this strategy usage by the JEFL learners denotes that the JEFL learners are still building up their interlanguage system to develop the pragmatic competence of English.

All respondents of all groups have shown the employment of the "None" strategy. This means that they avoid to show the offended person any sort of guilt or regret. This strategy is used mostly by the JEFL learners with a percentage of 12.7%, followed by the Jordanian respondents by 8.8% and the Americans with a percentage of 3.1%. These findings indicate that the JEFL learners have deviated from the English pragmatics norms. Also, they have deviated to some extent form the Jordanian Arabic norms as shown throughout the percentage above, which indicates the tendency of those learners towards developing their own interlanguage.

It is obvious that the strategy of regret is one of the mostly used strategies by all groups. Native Americans use it mostly with a percentage of 28.4%. The Jordanian respondents employ it with a percentage of 16.6%. By similar ratios, JEFL learners use it with a percentage of 16.3%, the matter which reflects the influence of Arabic on the JEFL respondents' apology competence.

The strategy of apology is used mostly by the Jordanian respondents with a percentage of 18.8%. The Americans' use of such strategy is with a percentage of 4.6% while the JEFL learners with a percentage of 3.4%. It is obvious that JEFL learners have deviated from the norms employed by Jordanians; the matter of fact that shows that there is no direct influence of the Arabic language on the JEFL learners' English pragmatics. As for the strategy of forgiveness, Americans use it mostly with a percentage of 4.9%. Followed by the Jordanians, they use it with a percentage of 2.6% whereas the JEFL learners employ it by 1.3%.

Among the three groups of respondents, the Jordanian respondents show high percentage of employing the strategy of excuse with a percentage of 11.2%. However, the Jordanian respondents use it with a percentage of 14.2%, and JEFL learners use it with a percentage of 11.7%. This provide a piece of evidence for the interlanguage system that JEFL learners are still developing.

All respondents selected the strategy of acknowledgement of responsibility as one of the least frequently used strategies. Jordanians are the first group to use it mostly with a percentage of 5.2%, followed by the JEFL learners with a percentage of 2.9%, and American respondents

with a percentage of 1.9%. It was, thus, obvious that as to the strategy of repair, it is preferred mostly by the JEFL learners with a percentage of 13.8%. The Jordanians use it with a percentage of 11.3%. Nonetheless, the Americans employ it less than the other groups with and a percentage of 8.7%.

Lastly, the use of promise of forbearance strategy is obvious to be similarly lastly preferred among the three groups. The Jordanian respondents use it with a percentage of 2.7%, JEFL learners with a percentage of 2.6%, and Americans with a percentage of 2.0%. The use of this strategy by the JEFL respondents with a percentage of 2.6%.

4. Discussion

In the light of the communicative competence concept, language becomes understood as a function-oriented system governed by sociocultural and contextual rules in addition to the grammatical tacit ones. Consequently, a speaker, i.e. interlocutor of any language acquires institutionalized rules guiding him/her "when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what matter" (Hymes, 1972: 277). The capacity of considering all these contextual maxims in social interaction is what is meant by pragmatic competence. Throughout the data analysis, it appears that all groups' respondents have performed all sorts of apology strategies including the indirect and the direct ones. The use of strategies, like apology, regret and some combination of two strategies, reflects their use of direct apologizing. However, their use of strategies like excuse, offer of repair, and forgiveness reflects a sort of using indirect apologizing. In addition, the preference towards using some strategies over others is governed by the social practices.

The act of apologizing is regarded as a face-saving act; it is a very complex speech act. Through analyzing the data, the researcher has emphasized that apologizing is not confined to -a verbal manner, but it is a psychological state the apologizer passes through. Citing Goffman definition on apology: "a process through which a person symbolically splits into two parts, the part that shows guilt of an offensive and the part that dissociates itself from the defect and affirms a belief in the offended rule" (Goffman, 1971: 113). What affirms this supposition is that some respondents of all groups have avoided to respond to the apology-warrant act not because they ignored it or out of impoliteness but because they want to save their face by keeping silent in front of the offended.

4.1 The Role of Gender on Apologizing Performance

4.1.1 Performance of Jordanian Arabic Respondents

Generally speaking, it is found that all respondents of this sample have used mostly the two-strategy or multi strategy combination. This ties with line with Hussein and Hammouri's study (1998) results where the most frequently used strategy by Jordanians is the combination of two apology strategies. However, according to the least frequently used strategies, the Jordanian Arabic respondents have chosen forgiveness and promise of forbearance, the result which is also noticed by Hussein and Hammouri (1998) and Bataineh (2004).

Male and female respondents have utilized the combination of two strategies like regret and repair more frequently than using three-strategy combination. However, male respondents tend to combine mostly different apology expressions together. In contrast, female respondents incline to combine mostly excuses with regret or expressions of forgiveness with promising of forbearance. Furthermore, males show more inclination to use one sort of strategy rather than females. Female respondents, on the other hand, incline more to use not only two strategies but more. This is perhaps justified by that males usually are more practical and hold different culture of talking from females.

It is obvious that there is a difference in apology performance between the Jordanian Arabic male respondents and female respondents. Such difference based on gender might be socio-linguistically justified in accordance to the Jordanians' cultural ideology. The respondents' preference to particular apology strategies reflects a sort of their patriarchal ideology as well as the Islamic ideology that establishes a space dichotomy. It was evident by the use of some strategies by males more frequently than other strategies that patriarchy prevails in the Jordanian community. Male respondents have implemented strategies like apology, repair, acknowledgment of responsibility, and forgiveness more frequently than female respondents, the fact which reflects the males' beliefs of superiority and power and indicates that men are in the outside space of the Jordanian community where their acts are not confined. On the other hand, female respondents have selected strategies like promise of forbearance, two-strategy combination, and the "none" strategy. This denotes that women are of less power than men in the Jordanian community; thus, they are still in the inside space in which their acts are controlled and observed by others.

4.1.2 Performance of American English Respondents

Results show that both male and female respondents have performed apology using all types of its strategies. They tend to use mostly the combination of two strategies, particularly the use of offer of repair followed by apology for the sake of keeping up the rapport between the apologizer and the offended. They have also been inclined to use the strategy of regret most frequently. In contrast, they have used least frequently strategies like forgiveness, promise of forbearance, and "none" strategy.

Despite the fact that male and female Americans have employed all the apology strategies, there is a diversity in the frequency of use by both categories: male Americans and female Americans. This can be justified in terms of the American ideology. It is obvious that patriarchy prevails as a part of the American culture. This ideology is regarded as culture-specific; thus, its degrees of influence differs from culture and another. The American society is pre-programmed by patriarchy with a different extent form the Jordanian community. This is shown throughout the choice of apology strategies by male and female Americans. Male Americans tend to use the strategies of regret, apology repair, and excuse more frequently than females. However, female Americans incline to perform apology by using the two-strategy combination and promise of forbearance. It is evident that this is a reflection of patriarchy, as justified for the Jordanians' sample. This sheds the lights on the fact that women, either in the Eastern or Western world, still possess the stance of negative

politeness where their core concern is with the hearer's face rather than their own face. On the other hand, men obtain positive politeness in which they are concerned with their own faces.

4.2 The Mother Tongue Influence on JEFL Learners

The JEFL learners' performance of apology is compared to that of Jordanian respondents to that of American respondents. Throughout this comparison, it appears that male and female learners' deviations from the Arabic and English are similar as to the use of apology strategies. However, female learners show less deviation than the male learners. Surveying literature, previous studies on pragmatics refer to the cause of these deviations as resulting from the impact of native language. Corresponding to Cohen and Olshtain's perspective (1981), negative transfer of the mother tongue is not the sole source of pragmatic deviations, but other resources reside like linguistic deficiency and the lack of cultural norms knowledge. Therefore, the deviated patterns performed by the JEFL learners are not only caused by the impact of Arabic on the learners' English.

The findings showing that JEFL learners have deviated patterns of apology, evident in the use of strategies of excuse, apology, and repair, meet with other scholars in the field of EFL pragmatics. Though of the pronounced influence of the Arabic language on those learners' English pragmatics, it is important to cast this influence as a sort of negative transfer. Such categorization is not an easy task because negative transfer usually ends up with a pragmatic failure, i.e. breakdowns in communication. In this study, it is difficult to determine whether such influence is negative or positive since it is dealt with the performance of apology from a pragmalinguistic point of view. In other words, the study does not tackle such performance form a sociopragmatic aspect so that it focuses on the hearer's realization, reaction, and perception of the illocutionary act of apology. Therefore, identifying such an influence by being negative or positive is not objectively judged.

More significantly, the Arabic influence on the learners' performance can be defined as a "creative cognitive process, citing Kellerman's definition on transfer (1977: 338): "a cognitive process and that the use of native language by learners is creative… that a learner could make use of his native language in his target language production whenever he did not have the necessary knowledge of the relevant TL to be communicated". Hence, the produced deviations in the apology patterns might be a sort of gradually-examined hypotheses the JEFL learners develop while mastering the English language. This is clearly evident in the JEFL learners' use of strategies like apology and forgiveness.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Uttering a word or an expression has been a widely investigated topic for researchers. It is not merely a process of language production, but the issue goes beyond this limit to indulge in recognizing what is hidden beyond the enunciation of an utterance. Here, it becomes to realize the relationship between language and culture.

Throughout the study, it was emphasized that apology is not merely a verbal act but an act reflecting different sociocultural dimensions and a psychological state. Producing any speech act is governed by sociocultural norms and rules. The researcher's aspect is tied with the line of some previous studies as that gender plays a big role in the choice of appropriate strategies of apology. It was also evident that the preference to some strategies over others reflects the sociocultural practices of a society. Furthermore, it was concluded that the impact of Arabic language cannot be casted as a negative transfer resulting from pragmatic deviated patterns produced by JEAFL learners. However, the source of deviation can be considered as a phase on interlanguage those learners gradually build up.

Based on the research findings, there are still many questionable inquiries that might be answered in further studies. More research is needed to investigate the feasibility of the "Positive Correlation Hypothesis", particularly to the academic level of the EFL learners and the degree of their pragmatic competence. Also, it would be fruitful to tackle the EFL learners' pragmatic English performance based on their college major. It is commonly known that English involves several college majors; thus, it is worthy to examine the impact of these majors on the use of English for communication.

Acknowledgment

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