

## تأثير بعض العوامل الاجتماعية على الاعتذارات في اللغة الإنكليزية البريطانية واللغة العربية السورية

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### الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في استراتيجيات الاعتذار باللغتين الإنكليزية البريطانية والعربية السورية الغير رسمية في ضوء عدة عوامل اجتماعية وهي: مكانة الأفراد الاجتماعية، مدى العلاقة بينهم، شدة الإساءة المعنية وعمر الأشخاص. تم تبني نموذج تحليل استراتيجيات الاعتذار من بني خلف ومارلينا (2013b). وأما المنهج المستخدم في جمع البيانات لهذه الدراسة فهو اختبار تكلمة الحوار والمقابلات شبه المنظمة. وكان عدد المشاركين هو 32 وينقسمون إلى 20 مشاركا من مدينة حلب السورية و12 مشاركا من مدينة بيرمنغهام البريطانية بنسبة متساوية بين الذكور والإناث. وقد كان معيار اختيار المشاركين هو العينة المتاحة. وكشفت النتائج الرئيسية أن البريطانيين أكثر اعتذارا من السوريين وأن الاختلافات في اختيار الاستراتيجيات يعزز الحقيقة أن المجتمعين لديهما أساليب اعتذار مختلفة ثقافيا. حيث تبين أن مكانة الأشخاص الاجتماعية ومدى العلاقة بينهم يلعبان الدور الأكبر من بين العوامل الأخرى في تشكل الاعتذارات لدى السوريين. أما بالنسبة للبريطانيين لم تكشف الدراسة أي عامل متفوق على العوامل الأخرى لأن البريطانيين كثيرو الاعتذار وينسب مقاربة في أغلب الحالات، لذلك أمكن القول أن العامل الحاسم وجود إساءة ما بغض النظر عن حجمها.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** استراتيجيات الاعتذار، العربية السورية، الإنكليزية البريطانية، العوامل الاجتماعية.

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## **The Influence of Some Social Variables on Apologies in British English and Syrian Arabic**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines differences in apology strategies in both British English and non-standard Syrian Arabic in the light of four social variables (social power, social distance, age, and severity of offence). The model of apology strategies of this study was adopted from Banikalef and Marlyna (2013b). The data was collected by using written discourse completion task (DCT) and semi-structured interviews. The sample of the research consists of 32 individuals divided into: 20 from Aleppo, and 12 from Birmingham with equal percentage between males and females. The selection criterion was the convenient sampling. The results revealed the British were more apologetic than Syrians and differences regarding strategy selection which support the claim that the two languages have different politeness orientation. The formulation of apologies was largely affected by the socio-religious nature of the Syrian culture. Apologies of the Syrian people were dominated by social distance and social power more than other social variables. As for the British, no decisive factor was detected since the British respondents were quite apologetic almost equally across all contexts. However, it could be argued that the decisive variable is the existence of offence rather than the severity of offence.

**Keywords:** apology strategies, Syrian Arabic, British English, social variables.

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## 1- Introduction

Speech acts have become one of the most interesting areas in sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies. Apology could be defined as a linguistic socio-cultural phenomenon because of the effect of sociolinguistic and cultural issues<sup>1</sup>. The applicability of the speech act of apology to human languages made it a universal issue. In the last forty years, apology has received high attention in politeness studies. It has been explored and contrasted among various languages and cultures, especially between the western cultures and eastern ones. The thematic foundation of such studies was Brown and Levinson' (1983, 1987) theory of politeness. The compulsion to apologize is different from one context to another because what is considered an offence in a certain culture or context might not be regarded as an offence in another. Moreover, the forms and functions of apologies have proved to be highly influenced by social variables such as social status, social distance, age, gender, and the severity of offence. By noticing that Syrians are inclined to apologize much, the researcher was encouraged to carry out this study in order to explore the effect of various social factors (social status, social distance, age, gender, and the severity of offence) on formation of apologies in both Syrian and British cultures.

## 2-The Significance of the Study

The study is very important in the light socio-linguistic and pragmatic studies for it explores a new area of research that has not been investigated previously. The study aims at comparing and contrasting the forms of apologies by the English speakers in Birmingham and the Arabic speakers in Aleppo to discover differences and similarities. It examines the effect of some social variables on apologies between the two cultures. These social variables include social position, social distance, age, and the severity of offence. This study would add a further evidence on the importance of the role of pragmatics in teaching and learning languages. Last but not least, this study will encourage other researchers to conduct more or less similar studies on other speech acts and other speech communities.

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<sup>1</sup> HASSAN F. A., 2014 - **Apology Strategies in Central Kurdish with Reference to English: An Empirical Study In Socio-Pragmatics**. University of Wales Bangor, UK.

### 3-1 Previous Studies

The study <sup>1</sup> compared apology forms between the Jordanian Arabic and American English. Data collection was by two **DCT**s based on Sugimoto (1997). The number of participants was two hundred. Her results revealed that Jordanians employed more apology strategies than Americans such as expressing remorse, promising not to repeat the offence, and swearing by God's name. Americans were more inclined to employ compensation, or blame themselves or the hearer when apologizing. Her study revealed that there were more differences between Jordanian males' and females' responses than the American males' and females' which reflects difference in the way in which boys and girls are raised in both cultures <sup>2</sup>.

The research <sup>3</sup> explored the effect of social factors on the apology strategies realized by Sudanese learners of English. He investigated apologies between learners of English and learners of other specialties. He collected data via **DCT**. He found that the realization of apologies reflected the Sudanese culture and language and was affected by social status more than other variables. Moreover, the respondents utilized direct and concise apologies with older people or individuals of high social position. They resorted to relaxed and prolonged apologies with friends or individuals of similar social status (Muhammed, 2006).

The Study <sup>4</sup> investigated apologies in British English and Jordanian Arabic with special focus on politeness strategies. He employed an open-type questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to collect data. The researcher analyzed data in terms of positive politeness and negative politeness according to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model of politeness. His findings showed that Jordanian subjects never utilized illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) as much as the

<sup>1</sup> BATAINEHA R. F., 2004 - **A Cross-Cultural Study of the Speech Act of Apology in American English and Jordanian Arabic**. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA.

<sup>2</sup> BANKIKALEF A. A. A.; MAROS M.; ALADDIN A.; AL-NATOUR M., 2015 - **Apology Strategies in Jordanian Arabic**. *Journal of Language Studies*, 15(2), 83-99.

<sup>3</sup> MUHAMMED H. I., 2006 - **The Influence of Some Social Variables on the Choice of Apology Strategies By Sudanese Learners of English**. University of Khartoum, Sudan.

<sup>4</sup> AL ADAILEH B. A., 2007 - **The Speech Act of Apology: A Linguistic Exploration of Politeness Orientation in British and Jordanian Culture**. University of Leeds, UK.

British respondents did. Both groups used approximately an equal percentage of "expression of regret", and the British respondents showed a higher tendency to employ intensifiers like (very, so, really, terribly). The apologies in British culture were determined largely by the seriousness of offense and social power, while the seriousness of offense and social distance were the most influential on the formulation of apologies by Jordanians. Determinism, proverbs, and self-punishment were utilized by the Jordanian speakers only, which means that they are language-specific strategies.

The researcher<sup>1</sup> examined the apology strategies by the Sudanese in English and in colloquial Arabic under the influence of three social factors (social distance, severity of offence and social status). The data was elicited through the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The results revealed that the Sudanese speakers of English employed the same set of strategies that were utilized by native speakers of English and Sudanese speakers of Arabic. This supported the idea that apology is a universal speech act. The formulation of apology was determined by the type of offence more than other variables. The influence of social distance on the realization of apologies was insignificant, whereas the influence of social status was very crucial. The Sudanese learners of English were more apologetic and polite than the Sudanese speakers of Arabic.

The scholar<sup>2</sup> conducted an inter-language and cross cultural study to explore apologies in English and Arabic. He examined the use of apology strategies by Arab learners of English studying in India. The Arab subjects were from five Arab countries: Yemen (38), Palestine (8), Jordan (7), Sudan (9) and Oman (8), and they were studying different majors at Indian universities. Data collection was conducted via a written **DCT**. Data analysis was based on Cohen and Olshtain's (1981, 1983) model. His findings showed that the apologies of the Arab respondents were influenced by their first language, religious beliefs, and social conceptions; and they tended to take responsibility. For instance, "It is my fault and I wish you forgive me." On the other

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<sup>1</sup> ABDURAHMAN F., 2001 - **Intercultural Communication: Apology Strategies in Sudanese Arabic and Sudanese English**. University of Khartoum, Sudan, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis.

<sup>2</sup> AL-ZUMOR A. Q. G., 2011 - **Apologies in Arabic and English: An Inter-Language and Cross-Cultural Study**. *Journal of King Saud University – Languages and Translation*, **23**, 19-28.

hand, the English native speakers showed a higher tendency to employ offers of repair (for example, do not worry, I will pay for the damage) or illocutionary force indicating devices. Furthermore, a large rate of resemblance was recorded between the Arab learners' data and the Indian English speakers' data.

The study <sup>1</sup> investigated the apologies of Iraqi Kurdistan. The data was elicited by using the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), Interviews, and Real-Life Observed Situations. The findings revealed that the forms of apologies reflected enormously the collectivistic nature of the Kurdish culture. Men were more apologetic than women. The respondents showed more politeness and expressed more apologies to old people than young ones. In addition, they hardly apologize to children. Individuals of high social status were less apologetic to those of low social position. This was evidenced by low percentage of offering apology by university professors and school teachers towards students. This fact is the opposite of what is popular in Western cultures, especially British culture where university lecturers more often present apologies to students. Men offered more apologies to socially-distant people, whereas women expressed more apologies to socially-close people. Men apologized more to females than males. However, women were more apologetic to women than men.

The paper <sup>2</sup> compared and contrasted apologies between Iraqi Arabic and English. The elicitation of data was done by the Discourse Completing Task, a Scale Response, Open Role Play, and Semi-Structured Interviews. The findings showed that apology strategies were affected by the collective nature of the Iraqi culture and the social and religious conceptions. The study revealed some differences between the functions of apologies in Iraqi Arabic and English. A transfer of Iraqi Arabic was present through the apologies produced by the Iraqi EFL learners. Apologies in Iraqi Arabic were affected by social status, social distance, and the obligation to offer an apology (the severity of offence). The individuals with low social status expressed largely more apologies than people with high social position who were less apologetic. There was a gap between the pragmatic competence

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<sup>1</sup> HASSAN F. A., 2014 - **Apology Strategies in Central Kurdish with Reference to English: An Empirical Study In Socio-Pragmatics**. University of Wales Bangor, UK.

<sup>2</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.

and grammatical competence in the apologies realized by the Iraqi EFL learners.

## **4-Methodology**

### **4-1 Subjects**

The total number of participants is 32 divided into two groups, 20 Syrian Arab Speakers from Aleppo, and 12 British English speakers from Birmingham with an equal number of males and females in each group (with ages ranging between 20 and 35). The subjects belong to the educated class since some of them are still completing their study at university, others are graduates and employed. Some of the subjects who responded to the **DCT** were interviewed. The full number of participants in the semi-structured interviews is 10: five Syrians, and five British with an equally divided rate of males and females. The selection criterion was the convenient sampling method through acquaintances and availability of participants.

### **4-2 Instruments**

The study employed the Written Discourse Completion Task and Semi-Structured Interviews in order to investigate the issue quantitatively and qualitatively. The questionnaire guarantees suitable contexts for most types of apology strategies to be realized in the light of different social variables. Generalizing knowledge through statistical proofs is the rationale of utilizing the quantitative method (DCT). In addition, obtaining and exploring the participants' internal views and motives is the purpose of the qualitative procedure (semi-structured interviews) <sup>1</sup>.

### **4-3 Procedures**

The information about the content and purpose of the written questionnaire (**DCT**) was presented to the participants, and they were told to imagine themselves in these virtual scenarios and write down what they would often say. The questionnaire questions were adopted and adapted from other studies made on different Arab and eastern communities. The questionnaire was taken home by the participants who handed it over completed in a few days because of the preventive measures of the Corona Virus. The interviewees were recruited from the same respondents who answered the **DCT**. They were instructed about the rationale of the interview, the method of the interview, and

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<sup>1</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.

the secrecy of their names. The interviews were conducted in a place and time that suit the participants. As for the British subjects, it was done online. The interviews were recorded by a mobile phone and a digital voice recorder simultaneously. By the time, the interview was finished, the researcher transferred the files to his laptop in order not to miss any part of them, and he transcribed them as soon as possible for analysis.

## 5- Research Results

**Situation 1** (apologizing to your little son or brother for forgetting to take him shopping).

The strategy of highest occurrence by both groups was offer of repair which indicates that both groups care for the feelings of the child and the need to fix the situation by offering repair. The Syrian subjects utilized offering an apology (once), expressing regret (twice), and asking for forgiveness (3). These three formulas are direct apologies. The total of direct apologies by the Syrian subjects was (10%), while the total of direct apologies by the British subjects was (27.77%) by one formula which is expression of regret. This implies that Syrians hardly offer apologies to younger family members especially children, whereas the British are highly apologetic to children.

**Situation 2** ( forgetting to bring your mum a scarf)

The British respondents used expressing regret (10 times) and once non-apology strategy, while the total of direct apologies by the Syrian subjects was (4 times) with 14 times of void of apology strategy). The British were more apologetic to their mothers than Syrians who hardly apologized to their mothers. The utilization of swearing (13 times) is a proof that it is a language-specific strategy which means that Syrians tend to swear and invoke God's name (Allah) in their daily speech. The Syrians employed explanations (11 times) and the British employed them once. This large gap implies that the Syrians may tend to utilize accounts alongside other strategies thinking that this may help them avoid losing face.

**Situation 3** (being late for your friend)

The percentage of direct apologies was (23.33%) and non-apology strategies (30%) by the Syrian respondents, whereas the percentage of direct apologies by the British group was (33.33%) with non-existence of any non-apology strategy. Accounts and blaming something else were the most mutual strategies between the two groups. These statistics imply that Syrians tend to provide explanations



and blame something else rather than to offer any form of direct apologies when they are late for a friend. On the other hand, it is true that the British employed a high rate of accounts and blaming something but accompanied by 12 out of 12 expressions of regret. It is clear that the British were more apologetic than Syrians.

**Situation 4** (failing to return borrowed money)

Accounts and offers of repair were the most common between the two groups. The Syrians showed more concern towards repairing the situation, while the British expressed higher tendency to give accounts. The British respondents utilized expression of regret (11 times) with the absence of any non-apology strategies, whereas the Syrian participants employed four direct apologies [offer of apology (twice), an expression of regret (once), and asking for forgiveness (once) alongside (12 times) void of apology strategy]. This denotes that the Syrians were less apologetic than the British. Swearing occurred (7 times) by the Syrians which indicates that it is a language-specific strategy, like in situation number 2.

**Situation 5** (apologizing to an old lady for crashing into her and shaking her a bit).

Expressions of regret were utilized by both groups. Lack of intent was also employed largely by both teams, but the Syrian percentage was higher. The Syrians utilized lots of strategies and essentially they accompanied lack of intent with a high rate of direct apologies, mainly offering apology, and asking for forgiveness, whereas the British resorted highly to expressions of regret and showing concern to the addressee. The percentages of direct apologies and non-apology strategies between the two groups denotes that the Syrian group was more apologetic than the British one for the first time across the ten situations. The big use of asking for forgiveness by the Syrian subjects (10 times) might refer to the existence a language-specific strategy.

**Situation 6** (denting the side door of someone else's car)

The high use of offers of repair and explicit self-blame indicates that both teams take on full responsibility for accidents involving physical damage because they feel they are responsible and realize the need to offer repair. The moderate occurrence of concern to the hearer and other apology strategy by both groups refers to the significance of showing concern to the hearer after physical damage and the probability of emerging other-apology strategies not included in many apology models such as proverbial expressions and minimizing the offence and the situation. Expression of regret was utilized 10 times by the British

VS twice by the Syrians in addition to 5 times of non-apology strategy of Syrians VS once by the British. The numbers confirm again that the British were more apologetic than the Syrians.

**Situation 7** (forgetting to bring the professor's book)

The highest occurring strategies of both teams were lack of intent followed by offer of repair. This denotes that both groups were more inclined to claim that the action happened by accident via using lack of intent expressions, and they felt the need to fix the situation as soon as possible due to the hearer's higher social status. Moreover, the participants of both teams revealed high necessity to apologize to the people with high social status. This tendency was clear by the big percentage of direct apologies especially by the Syrian group. The Syrians were more apologetic than the British for the second time across the ten situations. The use of accounts (9) and non-apology (6) by the Syrian subjects VS accounts (1) and non-apology (1) by the British ones. This refers to the fact that Syrians tend to employ more explanations in their apologies than the British. Furthermore, swearing occurred (6) in the Syrian data which insures it is a language-specific strategy, like in situations 2 and 4.

**Situation 8** (failing to deliver the student' term paper by the professor)

Both groups utilized common accounts and offers of repair. The respondents of both teams used accounts more than all other strategies, and offers of repair occupied the third rank for both of them. Initially, these percentages indicate that individuals of high social status of both communities tended to give explanations and offers of repair rather than to offer an apology. The rate of non-apology strategy (85%) by the Syrians and (25%) by the British clearly shows that the Syrians were less apologetic than the British. Moreover, the rate of direct apologies by the Syrian respondents was (0.03%), and the rate of direct apologies by the British respondents was (27.77%),. These statistical numbers tell us that that the British were more apologetic than the Syrians. Now, we modify what is said initially, people of high social power of the Syrian society have a tendency to give explanations and offers of repair rather than offering apology or expressing regret, while the people of high social position of the British society tend also to give accounts and offers of repair combined with expressions of regret or offers of apology.

**Situation 9** (losing important documents of the company)

The highest mutual strategies between both groups were offers of repair and offers and accounts. For the British group, the percentage of explanations was higher than offers of repair in one time. As for the Syrian group, it was like the British group but vice versa. These numbers imply that both groups understand the significance of repairing the situation due to the severity of mistake, and they realize the need to provide acceptable explanations for losing documents. The total of the direct apologies (27.77%) and non-apology strategy (10%) by the British subjects compared to the percentage of direct apologies, and (13.33%) non-apology strategy (35%) by the Syrian subjects indicates again the Syrian subjects were less apologetic than the British ones despite their utilization of multiple strategies.

**Situation 10** (apologizing for being late to a candidate’s interview)

Blaming something else and explanations were the most frequent by the two groups which may indicate that the people of high position (in companies) like to introduce accounts and blame something else than to offer apology. The people of high status have the inclination to accompany their big use of explanations and offers of repair by offers of apology or expressions of regret because both groups displayed a good rate of them (apology and regret). The percentage of direct apologies (36.11%) and non-apology strategies (0%) by the British subjects and the rate of direct apologies (25%) and non-apology strategies (30%) by the Syrian respondents entail the British are more apologetic than the Syrians.

**Table 1. The total number of apology strategies used in the study**

Apology Strategy	Syrian Arabic	British English
A1. Offer an apology	40	8
A2. Expressing regret	36	99
A3. Asking for forgiveness	29	2
B. Explanations	114	55
C1 Explicit self-blame	38	13
C2 Lack of intent	48	25
C3 Expression of self-deficiency	26	7
C4 Expression of embarrassment	6	(1)
C5 Self- dispraise	(1)	(1)
C6 Justifying the hearer	0	0
C7.1 Denial of responsibility	(1)	0
C7.2 Blame the hearer	3	0

C7.3 Pretend to be offended	2	0
D. Concern for the hearer	12	10
E. Offer of repair.	113	66
F. Promise for forbearance.	3	3
G. Arrogance and ignorance	0	0
H. Blame something else	40	18
J. Swearing	46	0
O. Other apology strategies	22	7
S. Strange (Answers) Strategies	7	2
X. Non-apology strategies	85	9

According to the statistics revealed in table 1 above, accounts (57%), offers of repair (56.5%), void of apology (42.5%), and lack of intent were the highest utilized strategies in the Syrian data. The British most frequently used expression of regrets (82.5%), offers of repair (55%), explanations (45.83%), and lack of intent (20.83%). The British share with Syrians the same high inclination of utilizing explanations, lack of intent, and an offer of repair (in case it was possible in the given situation). The statistics also indicate that the Syrians tend to avoid offering direct apologies, and they are inclined to utilize explanations and lack of intent formulas, and offers of repair (if it was available in the given situation). On the other hand, the British utilize highly direct apologies. These differences regarding strategy-selection support the fact that the two cultures have different politeness orientation.

## 6- Discussions of the Results

Illocutionary force indicating-devices were the most utilized by the British subjects, especially expressions of regret (99 times), and this agrees with all previous studies. On the other hand, illocutionary indicating devices were employed lesser by the Syrians with comparatively equal percentage of their three formulas. These results resemble the findings of <sup>1</sup> who found that Jordanians did not utilize illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) as repeatedly as the British did.

Age and social distance showed a significant influence on the realization of apologies. The Syrians do not generally offer apology to family members. This was evident by the low rate of direct apologies in situation 1 (apologizing to your little son or brother for forgetting to

<sup>1</sup> AL ADAILEH B. A., 2007 - **The Speech Act of Apology: A Linguistic Exploration of Politeness Orientation in British and Jordanian Culture**. University of Leeds, UK.

take him shopping), and in situation 2 (forgetting to bring your mum a scarf). On the other hand, the British offer apologies and expressions of regret to their family members irrespective of age differences.

The Syrians apologize moderately to their friends for being late, while the British apologize highly. This is elicited from the numbers of situation 3 (being late for your friend). Both groups tended to show a large rate of politeness and deference with strangers, mainly old people, but the Syrians have the bigger tendency. This was can be inferred from the enormous rate of direct apologies by the respondents of both groups in situation 5 (apologizing to an old lady for shaking her a bit). These findings are in accordance with <sup>1</sup> who discovered that Sudanese people tend to employ direct apologies with the old people or individuals of higher social position. On the contrary, they utilized prolonged and relaxed apologies with their mates or individuals of equal social status.

The results of this study are in agreement with <sup>2</sup>, <sup>3</sup>, <sup>4</sup>, and <sup>5</sup> who stated that the differences in interacting with old people could be because of cultural variations. They found out that young people in Eastern societies must show politeness and deference (respect) to older people. Eastern cultures, like the Japanese, the Chinese, the Islamic, urge young people to act so politely and respectfully with old people out of respect and religious principles. This study also agrees somehow

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<sup>1</sup> MUHAMMED H. I., 2006 - **The Influence of Some Social Variables on the Choice of Apology Strategies By Sudanese Learners of English**. University of Khartoum ,Sudan.

<sup>2</sup> GALLOIS, C.; GILES, H.; OTA, H.; PIERSON, H. D.; NG, S.-H.; LIM, T.-S.; MAHER, J.; SOMERA, L.; RYAN, E. B.; HARWOOD, J. 1999 - **Intergenerational communication across the Pacific Rim: The impact of filial piety**. In J.-C. Lasry, J. Adair, & K. Dion (Eds.), *Latest Contributions To Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Swets & Zeitlinger, Lisse, the Netherlands.

<sup>3</sup> HARRIS, P. B.; LONG, S. O., 2000 - **Recognizing the need for gender-responsive family caregiving policy: Lessons from male caregivers**. In S. O. Long (Ed.), *Caring for the Elderly in Japan and the U.S.: Practices And Policies*. Routledge, London, pp: 248–272.

<sup>4</sup> OTA, H.; GILES, H.; HARWOOD, J.; PIERSON, H. D.; GALLOIS C.; NG et al, 1996 - **A Neglected Dimension of Communication and Aging: Filial Piety Across Eight Nations**. Speech Communication Association, San Diego.

<sup>5</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.

with <sup>1</sup> who claimed that showing respect and deference are obligatory in the Eastern communities, whereas they are a matter of personal choice in the Western ones.

Social power is an influential variable on apology strategies. Both teams displayed a high amount of politeness and deference to their professors, but the Syrian respondents showed a higher percentage. This was evident by the enormous rate of direct apologies combined with offers of repair by university students of both teams towards their professors in Situation 7 (forgetting to bring the professor's book). Moreover, in situation 8 (failing to deliver the student' term paper by the professor), the professors in the Syrian data hardly offered apologies to their students. Instead, they resorted to accounts and offers of repair. On the other hand, the British professors were more apologetic to students than the Syrian ones which was evident by the big rate of direct apologies by the British respondents in situation 8.

The people of high social status (not at university but in companies and institutions) have the tendency to combine their large use of explanations, blaming something else, and offers of repair (if it is available ) with direct apologies (offers of apology, expressions of regret, and asking for forgiveness) because the participants of both groups displayed a high rate of them, especially offering apology and expressing regret in situation 10 (apologizing for being late to a candidate's interview). It can be concluded that the Syrians of high social position at institutions are generally more apologetic than those at universities (professors). In terms of the British data, they are quite apologetic whether they are university lecturers or institution managers. These findings are similar to those of Kiger (2004) and Aquino (2006) who found that it is difficult and hard for people of high social status to apologize. Moreover, these results totally correspond with <sup>2</sup> study which revealed that the respondents were more polite and apologetic to the old than the young. In addition, they hardly offered apology to children. Individuals of high social position rarely present any apology to people of low social status. The university lecturers and school teachers escaped apologizing to their students. This contradicts with

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<sup>1</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.

<sup>2</sup> HASSAN F. A., 2014 - **Apology Strategies in Central Kurdish with Reference to English: An Empirical Study In Socio-Pragmatics**. University of Wales Bangor, UK.

what is common in Western cultures, essentially British culture in which university lecturers often present apologies to their students.

Regarding the severity of offence, the low rate of direct apologies in situation 4 (failing to return borrowed money), and the moderate occurrence of direct apologies in situations 6 (denting the side door of someone else's car), and situation 9 (losing important documents of the company) by the Syrian respondents in comparison to higher rates by the British subjects entail that the British participants are more apologetic in these three contexts in spite of the seriousness the offence. In return, the Syrians employed a large number of offers of repair in these three scenarios, which refers to their positive politeness culture.

The realizations of apologies by the Syrian group were determined by the social distance and the social power more than other variables (the role of the severity of offence was less significant). This is quite identical to <sup>1</sup> who found out that the apology strategies in Iraqi Arabic were mostly affected by social power, social distance, and the compulsion to offer apology (the severity of offence). As for the British data, no more obvious variable was detected since the British subjects were less or more apologetic equally across all the scenarios. However, it could be concluded that the most decisive variable is the existence of an offence and not the heaviness of offence. In other words, the British often present apology to the addressee for any type of offence irrespective of the addressee's social power, social distance, age, and gender.

Both teams tended to accompany apologies with intensifiers mainly with heavy offences by the Syrian subjects and highly despite the kind of offence by the British ones. Furthermore, the Syrian people with low social status highly intensified their apologies, whereas the Syrian people of high social status hardly apologized, so they rarely intensify their apologies. This confirms what <sup>2</sup> discovered that the Jordanians have good inclination to employ intensifiers, but the British incline more.

Some subjects especially from the Syrian group were inclined

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<sup>1</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.

<sup>2</sup> AL ADAILEH B. A., 2007 - **The Speech Act of Apology: A Linguistic Exploration of Politeness Orientation in British and Jordanian Culture**. University of Leeds, UK.

to lie in many contexts. Lying is employed as one of the avoidance strategies which are resorted to by the subjects to deny full responsibility, to shift the blame to something else, or to avoid offering apology. This kind of behavior by the Syrian people resemble what <sup>1</sup> found about Sudanese people.

The occurrence of swearing strategy (46 times) in the Syrian data to emphasize what they convey proves that it is a language specific strategy. This is in correspondence with <sup>2</sup>, <sup>3</sup>, <sup>4</sup>, <sup>5</sup>, <sup>6</sup>, and <sup>7</sup> who found out that Muslims have a tendency to make vows and insert God's name (Allah) in their social interchanges. The employment of asking for forgiveness (2 times) by the British respondents, and (29 times) by the Syrians respondents might denote that it is a language-specific strategy in the Syrian culture.

## 7- Implications and Recommendations

The findings of the study emphasized and reinforced the fact that the speech act of apology is a universal one since the data revealed that the participants of both groups used most kinds of apology strategies that are utilized very commonly in other languages. This confirms

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<sup>1</sup> MUHAMMED H. I., 2006 - **The Influence of Some Social Variables on the Choice of Apology Strategies By Sudanese Learners of English**. University of Khartoum, Sudan.

<sup>2</sup> BATAINEHA R. F., 2004 - **A Cross-Cultural Study of the Speech Act of Apology in American English and Jordanian Arabic**. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, USA.

<sup>3</sup> MUHAMMED H. I., 2006 - **The Influence of Some Social Variables on the Choice of Apology Strategies By Sudanese Learners of English**. University of Khartoum, Sudan.

<sup>4</sup> AL ADAILEH B. A., 2007 - **The Speech Act of Apology: A Linguistic Exploration of Politeness Orientation in British and Jordanian Culture**. University of Leeds, UK.

<sup>5</sup> AL-ZUMOR A. Q. G., 2011 - **Apologies in Arabic and English: An Inter- Language and Cross-Cultural Study**. *Journal of King Saud University – Languages and Translation*, **23**, 19-28.

<sup>6</sup> HASSAN F. A., 2014 - **Apology Strategies in Central Kurdish with Reference to English: An Empirical Study In Socio-Pragmatics**. University of Wales Bangor, UK.

<sup>7</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.



the results of <sup>1</sup>, <sup>2</sup>, <sup>3</sup>, <sup>4</sup>, and <sup>5</sup>.

The results revealed that apology strategies were highly affected by the socio-cultural and socio-religious nature of the Syrian community. This is identical to what <sup>6</sup>, <sup>7</sup>, <sup>8</sup>, and <sup>9</sup> found in studies conducted on different samples of the Arab countries, and similarly to what <sup>10</sup> discovered in his research on respondents of different Arab states.

The realizations of apologies in British English and Syrian Arabic were determined by social variables such as social distance, social power, and the severity of offence. The influence of these social factors results from the prevailing socio-religious and socio-cultural principles in the given cultures.

The study suggests that educational institutions and teachers should pay more attention to the role of “pragmatics” in language learning and teaching in order to raise the learners’ awareness about

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<sup>1</sup> MUHAMMED H. I., 2006 - **The Influence of Some Social Variables on the Choice of Apology Strategies By Sudanese Learners of English**. University of Khartoum, Sudan.

<sup>2</sup> AL ADAILEH B. A., 2007 - **The Speech Act of Apology: A Linguistic Exploration of Politeness Orientation in British and Jordanian Culture**. University of Leeds, UK.

<sup>3</sup> ABDURAHMAN F., 2001 - **Intercultural Communication: Apology Strategies in Sudanese Arabic and Sudanese English**. University of Khartoum, Sudan, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis.

<sup>4</sup> HASSAN F. A., 2014 - **Apology Strategies in Central Kurdish with Reference to English: An Empirical Study In Socio-Pragmatics**. University of Wales Bangor, UK.

<sup>5</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.

<sup>6</sup> MUHAMMED H. I., 2006 - **The Influence of Some Social Variables on the Choice of Apology Strategies By Sudanese Learners of English**. University of Khartoum, Sudan.

<sup>7</sup> AL ADAILEH B. A., 2007 - **The Speech Act of Apology: A Linguistic Exploration of Politeness Orientation in British and Jordanian Culture**. University of Leeds, UK.

<sup>8</sup> HASSAN F. A., 2014 - **Apology Strategies in Central Kurdish with Reference to English: An Empirical Study In Socio-Pragmatics**. University of Wales Bangor, UK

<sup>9</sup> AHMED A. H., 2017 - **The Pragmatics of Apology Speech Act Behaviour in Iraqi Arabic and English**. De Montfort University, UK.

<sup>10</sup> AL-ZUMOR A. Q. G., 2011 - **Apologies in Arabic and English: An Inter- Language and Cross-Cultural Study**. *Journal of King Saud University – Languages and Translation*, **23**, 19-28.

the most suitable strategies of apology regarding various cultural contexts.

### Appendix (1)

The apology strategies of this study are based on the model created by Olshtain (1989) and Cohen (1996) and then modified by Banikalef and Marlyna in (2013b). The model is presented below:

Apology Strategies and Their Codes with Examples:

A. Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)

A1. An offer of apology. I apologize.

A2. An expression of regret. I am sorry.

A3. A request for forgiveness and accepting apology. Please forgive me.

B. Explanation or account. I am sorry for this lateness, I got stuck in terrible traffic jam.

C. An acknowledgement of responsibility.

C1 Explicit self-blame. It is my fault.

C2 Lack of intent. It was unintentional.

C3 Expression of self-deficiency. I was blind.

C4 Expression of embarrassment. I do not know what I want to say.

C5 Self-dispraise. I'm such a dimwit brother!

C6 Justifying the hearer. You have the right to be angry.

C7.1 Denial of responsibility. It is not my guilt.

C7.2 Blame the hearer. It is your fault.

C7.3 Pretend to be offended. You have to say sorry for me.

D. Concern for the hearer. The most important thing is your health.

E. Offer of repair. By God, By my honor, I will take you when I am free.

F. Promise for forbearance. I am sorry. It won't happen again.

Strategies were added by Banikalef & Marlyna (2013b)

G. Arrogance and ignorance.

My speech is not with you. Where is the manager?

H. Blame something else. Could you forgive me bro, I had headache.

J. Swearing. By my honor, I forgot it. (cited in <sup>1</sup>). These strategies were added to cover the apology strategies by EFL Jordanian students.

O. Other apology strategies.

<sup>1</sup> BANKIKALEF A. A. A.; MAROS M.; ALADDIN A.; AL-NATOUR M., 2015 - **Apology Strategies in Jordanian Arabic**. *Journal of Language Studies*, **15(2)**, 83-99.

S. Strange (Answers) Strategies.

X. Non-apology strategies.

The last three strategies were added by the researcher in order to examine the number of new apology strategies, non-apology strategies (where they witness the absence of direct apologies). As for strange answers, they were like off-point responses.

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