



Leech's Politeness Maxims in Iraqi Male/Female EFL Learners' Apologies

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Abstract

Language users need pragmatic competence to communicate successfully, which is the language knowledge of the speaker and the use of appropriateness and politeness rules. Politeness is a pattern of language use defined by culture, it enables the speaker to formulate appropriate speech acts, thus Politeness is considered to make the interaction between people more effective. Therefore, this study used the speech act of apology to examine the use of the politeness principle by Iraqi Male/Female EFL learners at the University of Anbar specifically. This study investigates the types of politeness principle that are frequently used by male and female students in some social contexts. Furthermore, it aims to investigate the effects of gender and other social factors on participants' choice of politeness strategies. In collecting the data, the researcher used an oral Discourse Completion Task supported by a semi-structured interview. The collected data has been analysed using the descriptive analysis method. The findings revealed 8 out of 10 types of Leech's politeness principles: tact, generosity, approbation, sympathy, feeling reticence, opinion reticence, and obligation of S to O. 'Silence' was used by the participants as a new maxim of politeness. In conclusion, the majority of the participants used most of the politeness strategies suitably regardless of their gender. This indicates that the gender of the participants has a slight effect on the choice of politeness



strategies. Moreover, social status and age were the most effective social factors as compared to the others.

Keywords: Politeness, Leech's politeness maxims, Gender, Apology.

قواعد ليتش ٢٠١٤ للتأدب في اعتذارات متعلمي ومتعلمات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية العراقيين

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الخلاصة

يحتاج مستخدمو اللغة كفاءة تداولية للتواصل بشكل ناجح، والكفاءة البراغماوية او (التداولية) هي المعرفة اللغوية للمتحدث واستخدام قواعد اللباقة والتأدب. التأدب هو نمط محدد ثقافياً لاستخدام اللغة يُمكن المتحدث من صياغة أفعال الكلام المناسبة. بذلك يعزز التأدب التواصل الفعال بين الناس. لذلك تناولت هذه الدراسة الأعتذار لإختبار استخدام قواعد التأدب من قبل متعلمي ومتعلمات اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة أجنبية من الذكور والإناث في جامعة الأنبار تحديداً. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة استراتيجيات التأدب التي يستخدمها الطلاب والطالبات في بعض المواقف الاجتماعية. وكذلك تهدف الدراسة للتحري في تأثير النوع الاجتماعي والعوامل الاجتماعية الأخرى على استخدام الطلبة لإستراتيجيات التأدب. لجمع البيانات استخدمت الباحثة أختبار إكمال الخطاب شفوياً مدعماً بمقابلة شبه مهيكلة. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها بإستخدام الأساليب النوعية للتحليل الوصفي. وأظهرت النتائج أن ٨ من أصل ١٠ قواعد للتأدب قد استخدمها المشاركون. وقد استخدم المشاركون "الصمت" كقاعدة جديدة للتأدب. وتوصلت النتائج إلى أن معظم افراد العينة قد استخدموا أغلب الاستراتيجيات المهذبة في المواقف المناسبة لها بغض النظر عن نوعهم الاجتماعي مما يدل ان نوع المشاركين الاجتماعي كان له تأثير طفيف على اختيار نوعية الاستراتيجيات المهذبة. علاوة على أن الوضع الاجتماعي (القوة) والعمر كانت أكثر العوامل تأثيراً مقارنة بالعوامل الاجتماعية الأخرى .

الكلمات المفتاحية : التأدب، قواعد ليتش ٢٠١٤ للتأدب، النوع الاجتماعي، الإعتذار



Introduction

To avoid any communication breakdowns, proper and successful communication in English involves years of practise and knowledge of the suitable expressions to be used with speakers of the target language (Altakhaineh & Rahrouh, 2015). Learning a language requires developing pragmatic competence, which refers to a speaker's understanding and application of appropriateness and politeness rules, which govern how the speaker understands and formulates speech acts. Thus, pragmatic competence governs how to communicate communicative intent in various settings. In a variety of settings, social differences influence interlocutors' speech events choices, allowing them to adopt acceptable utterances or principles (Thijittang, 2010). Speech acts are defined as utterances that are accompanied by an actual action. Searle (1969) and Yule (1996) stated that the role of utterances, which is, according to Levinson (1983), a kind of communication between the speaker and the listener, is not limited to the indication of diverse patterns of grammatical structures and varied uses of words, but also the indication of actions that people may perform. Expressions of condolence, invitations, refusals, requests, and apologies are all examples of speech acts. The implementation of polite strategies in expressing any speech act may be influenced by social characteristics such as social distance, age, or gender. Mills (2003) views that linguistic politeness is the core of gender; scholars and researchers have addressed language and gender during the previous two decades. According to Mills (2003:169), "Gender has begun to be theorised in more productive ways, moving away from a reliance on binary oppositions and global statements about the behaviour of all men and all women, to more nuanced and mitigated statements about certain groups." On the other hand, a number of studies on EFL learners in general, and Arabic-speaking EFL learners in particular, have shown that these learners face many challenges in communicating effectively with native English speakers (Al-Sobh, 2013). Therefore, one of the most crucial components of learning the target language is to understand how to employ speech acts correctly (Alsulayyi, 2016). In fact, most studies, to the present researcher's simple knowledge, seem to be more concerned with the overall nature of some kinds of speech act as a linguistic/pragmatic phenomenon in relation to politeness and gender as social factors, based on different models of politeness; but there is a shortage of studies using such aspects based on Leech's 2014. This study aims to fill the gap by using this model to investigate the effect of gender on the choice of appropriate



politeness strategies in some social apologetic contexts based on the socio-pragmatic scale to determine the degree of participants' politeness. Moreover, this study investigates whether there are any other effective social factors that influence participants' politeness. The present study is essential to find the answers to the following questions: "What kinds of politeness strategies are frequently used by Iraqi male/ female postgraduate students in the academic setting?" and "What other social factors (if any) can be more effective than the gender of the participants in using politeness strategies?"

Sociolinguistics

Linguists such as De Saussure (1916) and Chomsky (1965) studied language before sociolinguistics emerged in "abstraction from society in which it operates" (Lyons, 1995:221). Kharboot & Nima (2020) states that according to Hymes (1974) the complexity and difficulty of language can be linked not only to the linguistic system, but also to the fact that language can be utilized differently depending on social settings. It is so in order to transmit the speaker's social and geographical background, as well as thoughts, knowledge, feelings, and emotions. As a result of these factors, sociolinguistics is an important area of linguistic studies. Hudson (1996: 4) defines sociolinguistics simply as "the study of language in relation to society". Wardhaugh (2006: 12) gives a more detailed definition: "sociolinguistics is concerned with investigating the relationship between language and society with the goal being a better understanding of the structure of language and how languages function in communication". Based on Hudson's illustration, that studying speech without considering the society in which it is used implies that the social explanations for utilizing such patterns are lost (Hudson, 1996), it can be said that Sociolinguists were interested in investigating why people communicate in different ways in different social circumstances, as well as to determine how language is used to convey particular social meanings.

Pragmatics

In the 1930s, pragmatics was originally employed as a subfield of semiotics. It was then used in linguistics as a branch that investigates language usage. Morris, Carnap, and Peirce developed a language framework called pragmatics. In his famous trichotomy of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, Charles Morris defined pragmatics as "the study of the relation



of signs to interpreters” (Kharboot & Nima, 2020). Pragmatics has emerged as a result of seminal ideas, views, and arguments about the function and the use of language by philosophers such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1979) through their ‘speech act theory’ and Grice (1975) through his ‘cooperative principle’. Mey (2001) demonstrated that the pragmatic turn in linguistics can thus be described as a shift from the paradigm of theoretical grammar in particular, syntax to the paradigm of the language user, which is of particular importance for defining pragmatics. Thus, a truly pragmatic consideration has to deal with the users in their social context; it cannot limit itself to the grammatically encoded aspects of contexts. Furthermore, according to O’Keeffe, et al (2011), several methods can be used to create a thorough pragmatic knowledge of language, spanning from text analysis to context awareness. So, generating meaning is a dynamic and interactive process that includes the association of meaning between speakers and listeners, as well as the linguistic, social, and cultural contexts of utterances (Ahmed, 2017).

Socio-Pragmatics

The term "socio-pragmatics" may appear redundant from a Continental European viewpoint on pragmatics, because pragmatics is considered as a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in connection to their use in forms of action (Verschuere, 1999). Socio-pragmatics, on the other hand, has a more defined heritage in the Anglo-American understanding of pragmatics, because pragmatics is considered a separate component from the other components in linguistic theory (Horn & Ward, 2004). As a result, socio-pragmatics combines sociolinguistics and pragmatics. According to Nurjamily (2015), socio-pragmatics is a combination of sociology and pragmatics. Sociology is the study of societies and how people interact in groupings. Pragmatics, on the other hand, considers what people say in a certain situation and how it impacts others, and it refers to the social perspective that supports the understanding and performance of communicative activities by participants (Mujiono, 2020). Moreover, socio-pragmatics is a pragmatics study that follows a set of guidelines (Manurung, 2010). Leech (1983) was one of the first linguists to recognize the importance of socio-pragmatics in general pragmatics. He divides general pragmatics into pragma-linguistics, which is concerned with the general conditions of the communicative use of language, and is divided



into pragma-linguistics, which is concerned with "the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions"; and socio-pragmatics, which focuses on "specific local conditions on language use" (1983: 10-11).

Linguistics Politeness

Politeness is an expression of concern for the feelings of others. Following Goffman 1967 and Brown and Levinson 1987, 'Politeness' will be used to describe non-obtrusive distancing behavior as well as behavior that actively expresses positive concern for others. In other words, politeness can be shown as a gesture of goodwill or solidarity, as well as the more common non-intrusive behavior that is referred to as 'nice' in ordinary conversation. The term politeness means "to take hearers' feelings and desires into consideration when speaking and acting. This means that politeness could be expressed verbally and non-verbally in actions" (Leech, 1983: 140).

Theories of Politeness:

Some traditional theories of politeness were based on Grice's theory of cooperative maxims and the theory of speech acts, such as Brown and Levinson (1987), Lakoff (1973), and Leech (1983). This group of theories dealt with politeness as a social phenomenon that focused on the speaker's intention as abstracted from the actual performance. This means that the theories advocated the speaker's face orientation. Those theories proposed that since they agreed with the claim that politeness is a general social phenomenon; cultures are internally homogenous, though they are different. Consequently, those scholars claimed that face and the principles of politeness are universal. However, the second group of scholars reacted against this claim and focused on the structure and nature of politeness norms across different cultures (Al-Duleimi *et. al.*, 2016). The most prominent work in the context of inter-language pragmatic research, which was widely used, was the theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). The theory mainly focused on how politeness is expressed to protect participants' face. Brown and Levinson (1987) based their theory on Goffman (1955, 1967), who was the first to introduce positive face and indicated its importance and necessity in any particular social



interaction However, Brown and Levinson (1987) emphasised two ways of portraying the concept of face. Among these theories and frameworks is Leech's (2005) newly proposed Grand Politeness framework which focuses on the "East-West cultural divide" (Leech, 2005:1) of politeness. In this regard, the debate on the East-West politeness as a social phenomenon does not stop at the point of showing the differences and similarities in pragmatics between Western and Eastern cultures and languages, so, it is necessary to conduct studies on the appropriateness of these new underlying theories in different cultures (Al-Duleimi *et. al.*, 2016). The maxims that Leech (1983) proposed were affected by the distinction between negative and positive politeness. Negative politeness means to minimize impoliteness while positive politeness intends to maximize politeness. This leads to a dual vision for the six maxims. Moreover, he stated that speech acts can be either *other*-centered or *self*-centered, and are thus bilateral, which is seen in the tact and generosity maxims, and the case of approbation and modesty as well (Leech, 1983). This model of politeness is based on the claim that interlocutors tend to minimize the impoliteness and maximize politeness via some maxims of politeness. It was categorized and introduced in the form of six maxims but, later on in 2014, Leech published his work entitled "The Pragmatics of Politeness" in which he updated the politeness maxims and reformulated them into ten maxims, which include the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, sympathy maxim, obligation of speaker S to other O) maxim, obligation of O to S maxim, opinion reticence maxim, and feeling reticence maxim. Leech defines politeness as forms of behavior that establish and maintain feelings of comity within a social group; that is, the ability of the participants in a social interaction to engage in an atmosphere of relative harmony. It can be expressed by certain polite formulaic utterances such as *please, thank you, excuse me, sorry*, etc. According to Leech, the politeness principle involves two participants in conversation, which are *self* and *other*. The *self* conventionally represents the speaker, whereas *other* refers to the hearer or the addressee. The concept of *other* also refers to a third party. The speaker must also show his or her politeness to a third party, whether present or not.

Methodology

In the current study, the researcher applied a qualitative research method. Therefore, this study was designed in a way in which qualitative data are selected and then analysed qualitatively based on Leech's (2014) model of



politeness. What makes this paper different from others is that it measured the Iraqi male/ female EFL learners' attitudes toward the politeness principle in expressing apologies in different social contexts according to the General Strategies of Politeness proposed by Leech, which involves 10 politeness maxims. The present study utilised a qualitative method for three main reasons: to get in-depth information about the aspects under study; to get a clear and sufficient analysis of the data; and to investigate the aspects in their real context.

Instruments

The Oral Discourse Completion Task (DCT) was used as a research instrument in this study. Based on this instrument, fourteen real-life situations are chosen by the researcher and included in the DCT in order to investigate aspects of the study. An online situation-based oral DCT is sent to the participants for the purpose of examining the role of gender in using polite strategies. Then, the recorded responses are transcribed and analysed qualitatively based on Leech's (2014) model of politeness. Although written tasks were used to indicate the students' ability to select words stored in their minds for the purpose of exploring certain aspects studied throughout the course of their studies, the participants will be required to complete their tasks orally for the sake of achieving the requirements of the current study. Then semi-structured interviews were conducted to get more understanding about the participants' choice of the strategies and it was important in eliciting information about conceptualising apology, obligation to apologise, and the role of social factors (i.e. gender, age, social status/power, and social distance/relationship). The oral DCT was piloted by 4 participants to ensure the face validity.

The Sample

Purposive sampling was used in the current study based on the research design chosen and the study's objectives and research questions. The selection of the sample in any study is not an easy task as it depends on certain criteria. However, the criteria for selecting purposive sampling in the current study are: background knowledge and gender. Based on the criterion of background experiences, the researcher of the current study selected purposefully forty postgraduate EFL students of MA programmes in the



academic years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 at the University of Anbar- College of Education for Humanities and College of Arts–English Departments. Furthermore, based on the criterion of gender, the sample of this study involved 40 students (20 males and 20 females).

Data Analysis Procedures

Based on the nature of the objectives of the study and its research questions, the analysis of the data in the present study was conducted qualitatively. Qualitative content analysis procedure will be used for answering the third question of the current study which is about investigating the effect of gender and any other social factors on the use of politeness strategies. The researcher used the relational way of analysis instead of the conceptual way of analysis for two basic reasons. The first reason is that the conceptual analysis focuses on the concepts or words themselves neglecting their relation to the context in which they occur. In turn, the relational analysis deals with the relationships that exist among words in their real context. The second reason is that the conceptual analysis focuses on the inherent meanings of words neglecting the idea that the meaning of words is dependent on the context in which they are used. In contrast, the relational analysis emphasizes the meaning obtained by words' relation within the same context (Al-Heety, 2021). Besides, to answer the first question of the current study, that is, "What type of politeness strategies are most frequently used by Iraqi male/female students?" A quantifying of qualitative analysis procedure is used. Regarding the analysis of interview, the thematic analysis helped in analysing the data supporting the findings of the research questions three.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Concerning Leech's ten maxims of politeness, in this study, only eight types of Leech's politeness principle maxims were found as used by Iraqi male/female EFL postgraduate students in their apologies, which are: Tact maxim, Generosity maxim, Approbation maxim, Modesty maxim, Sympathy maxim, Feeling-reticence maxim, Opinion-reticence maxim, and Obligation of S to O. In addition to the eight mentioned above maxims, the findings revealed an additional strategy used by several participants, which is the strategy of "Silence". Based on this method of analysis, regarding politeness strategies, the findings revealed that the frequency of Obligation of S to O and Generosity maxims were of the highest occurrences. See Table (1) which



shows the frequency and percentages of the nine types of politeness strategies used by the participants.

Table (1) The overall frequency of the politeness strategies used by the participants

No.	Politeness Strategy	Freq.	Percent.
1	Obligation of <i>S</i> to <i>O</i>	488	53%
2	Generosity	169	18%
3	Sympathy	81	9%
4	Tact	80	9%
5	Modesty	64	7%
6	feeling reticence	20	2%
7	opinion reticence	10	1%
8	Approbation	3	0%
The new strategy			
9	Silence	13	1%
Total		928	100%

It was also revealed in the findings of the current study, that females used (468) strategies of politeness while males used (460) strategies. The results that were presented in Table (2) showed that there was a significant difference in the use of the obligation maxim between males and females. This maxim was used in terms of making an apology by the speaker. That is, most of the females in this study found themselves obliged to make an apology for the hearer; in other words, to give value to the hearer. This obligation might be due to some external social factors or internal social factors such the type of offense in the context of the situation. By contrast, this maxim was violated in some situations by some males. Most of the females supported their apology by using Modesty maxim in terms of self-criticism and accepting blame more than males did. On the other hand, it was found that males showed that they were more likely to offer help and repair than females as an image of generosity maxim. The total used strategies and their frequencies are illustrated in the following table:

Table (2) The frequency of politeness strategies used by male/female participants

No.	Politeness strategy	Males		Females	
		Freq.	Percent.	Freq.	Percent.
1	Obligation of <i>S</i> to <i>O</i>	236	51%	252	54%
2	Generosity	94	20%	75	16%
3	Sympathy	34	7%	47	10%



4	Tact	37	8%	43	9%
5	Modesty	31	7%	33	7%
6	feeling reticence	13	3%	7	1%
7	opinion reticence	6	1%	4	1%
8	Approbation	1	0%	2	0%
The new strategy					
9	Silence	8	2%	5	1%
	Total	460	100%	468	100%

(1) **Obligation of S to O Maxim** (Give a high value to S's obligation to O)

Apologies for some offense by S to H are examples of polite speech acts giving high prominence to S's fault and obligation to O. As shown in the table above, Obligation of S to O was the most frequently used by both males and females. Politeness principle in this maxim means "giving a high value to S's obligation to O". Participants' apologies for some offence committed by S to H are examples of polite speech acts giving high prominence to S's fault and the obligation of apology to O. The apologies that were mentioned by Ss are an expression of respect for the interlocutor. Thus, in the conversation between S and O, there has been a maxim of the speaker's obligation to apologize. Here are some typical examples found in the data of the current study, with the overtly apologetic forms:

M6: "Dear student I'm terribly sorry ...I had to meet with the dean sorry again"

F7: "I'm so sorry I didn't mean to step on your foot ..."

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed some violations of some maxims of politeness, such as Obligation of S to O, Approbation and Feeling-reticence maxims. Regarding the maxim of Obligation of S to O, it was violated by (4) participants in this situation:

M4: "I'll say nothing regarding this situation I will carry on running to my class and I just ignored him."

M5: "I'm sorry because I made a big mistake."

Regarding family situations, most of the participants were affected by the factor of age more than gender. Thus, most of them felt that it was not necessary to apologise to younger family members:

M2: "... I may angrily tell or command him or her to find another place..."

F17: "Ok you can find another place to study in"

Although males showed some less polite responses to their younger hearers, it cannot be considered a kind of impoliteness or a violation of the Obligation



of S to O maxim. As mentioned previously, the theory did not apply because the offence was from higher to lower rank, so these less polite expressions are socially acceptable:

M2: *"In this situation, I may angrily tell or command him or her to find another place so he/she can study in"*

(2) **Generosity Maxim** (Give a high value to O's wants)

The intent of this maxim of generosity is making the advantages of you as small as possible; make oneself loss as big as possible. For example, offers and promises are "generous" and imposing. In this study, this maxim was appeared in the form of an offer of repair for an offensive physical loss or even a promise of repair. The second used strategy of politeness in the first situation was (Generosity maxim). This maxim means the speaker is offering means of assistance that the hearer needs, such as kinds of help, some time, things, money, information, knowledge, reward, etc., and by his/her utterances he/she is minimising benefit to him/herself and maximising it for the O. Here are some typical examples found in the data of the current study in the form of (Generosity maxim):

M3: *"I apologize and if there is a plenty of time and if there is any chance I can revise it"*.

F11: *"I'm sorry ... I will try to help you recovering the data"*

(3) **Sympathy Maxim** (Give a high value on O's feelings)

In this maxim, the speakers give a high value to other people's feelings in such speech acts as congratulations and condolences. It is courteous to demonstrate to people that you understand their emotions by expressing sadness when they have experienced grief and pleasure when they have an occasion to celebrate. Congratulations, blessings, and expressions of condolence are all naturally polite (Leech, 2014). In the scope of the study; Sympathy maxim can be shown in the participants' apologies in the form of paying a concern to the hearer:

F14: *"My apologies...don't worry."*

M15: *"I'm terribly sorry I didn't notice..."*

F11: *"... I wish the pain was mine, not yours ..."*

Additionally, Sympathy maxim also included well wishes for the listener. For instance:

F1: *"I'm sorry ... and good luck"*

M19: *"...good night and have a nice dream."*

(4) **Tact Maxim** (Give a low value to S's wants)



Tact maxim is meant that the speaker tries to be tactful in communication by minimizing the cost to other and maximizing the benefit to others. For example, polite requests and polite reply. Based on (Leech 2014), Tact maxim means giving low value to S's wants. For example, requests are often indirect and tentative, giving an opportunity to refuse and also softening or mitigating S's imposition on H. Considering the data of the study and the context of the situations, the speakers used Tact maxim in their apologies because they intended to reduce or minimise their benefit and maximise the benefit to others. The participants used Tact maxim when asking for forgiveness, asking for acceptance of the apology,

F6: *"I'm sorry for ... please accept my apology and give me another chance."*

M6: *"Oh, Please mum don't blame me..."*

(5) Modesty Maxim (Give a low value to S's qualities) Self-deprecation (if sincere, even if exaggerated) is often felt to be polite. This maxim requires each participant to maximize dispraise of self and minimize praise of self. This maxim requires the speaker to be modest by giving low value to his/her qualities. This is achieved through dispraising self. To be modest is to behave in a humble way in communication with others. Because the scope of this study is apology, the Modesty maxim mostly appeared in the form of self-criticism:

M6: *"Please accept my apology...that was very clumsy of me"*

F4: *"I am terribly sorry it was thoughtless of me."*

Males tend to be more humble to admit the responsibility of deleting the saved data than females. In the following examples, there are expressions of accepting blame and taking responsibility:

M15: *"I'm really sorry... I had to check my laptop before using your USP."*

F17: *"... but I apologize of being such a jerk..."*

(6) Feeling - Reticence Maxim (Give a low value to S's feelings)

It is when placing a low value on one's own feelings. In other words, when the speakers do not show their real bad feelings. That is to say, by meeting the negative-politeness criteria, one's own feelings are devalued. Accordingly, this maxim calls for someone to hide his/her true feelings. For example:

M4: *"I'll try to say I'm sorry for what's happened and I will try to be patient because of course he will be angry for that."*

This maxim was violated by some participants, this violation occurred when the participant grumbled because of the hearer's anger:



M4: "I will close the phone directly and switch it off"

F15: "Sorry about the mistake but there is no need to answer me in this angry way. Everyone can make a mistake."

Females demonstrated the feeling-reticence maxim when they overcame their shyness, acted positively, and apologised to their professor, as shown in the examples below:

F9: "The most embarrassing moment. Without thinking I will say I apologize immediately and try to avoid any justification and admit my mistake"

(7) Opinion - Reticence Maxim (Give a low value to S's opinions)

This is when people frequently soften the force of their own opinions, by using propositional hedges such as *I think, I guess, I don't suppose*.

F13: "...we need to go to the doctor instead."

M6: "...why don't you try something else such as having rest or sleep?"

F9: "... the painkillers might be harmful sometimes; I will take you to the doctor instead"

M17: "... we might have to reschedule this presentation sorry again"

(8) Approbation Maxim (Give a high value to O's qualities)

This approbation maxim is expressed by expressive sentence by minimizing the dispraise of other; maximize the praise of other. For example, to pay and be paid compliments. In some activity types, complimentary language is necessary, as when guests praise a host's hospitality or professor praises the student. The use of this maxim indicates that the speaker values the hearer's qualities and praises him/her when saying such things or doing an activity. Regarding the contexts of the study, this maxim was in the form of encouragement as a means of apology to relieve the offence.

F14: "My apologies... you can do right and you will be great in your discussion or conference and you will show your strength and weakness points..."

(9) Silence Maxim

This strategy was investigated previously by a number of studies as a positive non-verbal, face-saving strategy. Leech (2014: 157) stated that "... one politeness strategy not particularly notable in English... but is to allow one's utterance to peter out into silence, letting the implied face-threatening aspects of one's utterance remain unspoken." some participants chose to be



polite in terms of saying nothing. This represented the maxim of politeness to avoid face threatening act (FTA), since they might not have expected how the professor would react towards them if they made an apology or justified their behaviour, especially since they were not alone in the situation of the offence, that is to say, being reproached in front of their other colleagues. So some of them tried to keep silent, waiting for the end of the lecture, and then went to make an apology to the professor, like M7, M11, and F18. Others preferred to remain silent out of politeness and to save face: M14, M17, M19, and F20.

M7: “... I will not say anything but I will say I apologize to the professor after the lecture.”

F17: “I will say nothing as I’m so embarrassed”

Semi-Structured Interview Analysis

Gender factor was noted in the participants’ responses as having an impact on their perceptions of apology. Nearly all of the participants revealed that they behave more polite with the opposite gender even if they were their sisters or brothers:

MIn1: “Of course I will apologize to women in different way that of men because women have special status in our culture and that is why I use some words that I will not use when apologizing to men.” Then he continued “Even when I apologize to my sisters I will be more polite than to my brothers”

FIn3: “... my apology for man differs from that for a woman coz with men I will be more formal and more polite.”

In terms of social distance and power, all participants stressed the significance of apologizing for a person of high social status and power. For example:

MIn1: “... I will not apologize to my friends the same way I apologize to someone I don’t know. Also, I won’t apologize to my colleague at work the same way to the boss.”



MIn2: “ *Apologizing for my professor requires large amount of respect and formality but of course with my friends or relatives I will be less formal*”

FIIn1: “... *it depends when I apologize to my professor in the college is quietly different to apologize to my brother or my sister so it isn't the same for all*”

Regarding the social distance between the speaker who is the (apologizer) and the hearer who is the (apology-recipient), the interviews demonstrated same results between male and female groups. It was found that socially distant victims usually receive more apology than socially close ones. The following are some of the responses:

MIn1: “... *I will not apologize to my friends the same way I apologize to someone I don't know him*”

MIn3: “*Of course I apologize more politely for strangers. I usually don't apologize for my brothers and sisters. But for my dad and mum it's ok in case I do something wrong.*”

In considering the age of the offended person, the interview data revealed that both gender groups, regardless of their age and social status, showed more politeness to the older hearers than younger ones due to the position of age. These are some of their quoted responses:

MIn1: “*Sure, I will be more polite in apologizing to my older brothers ... I can't give them the same place of the younger ones.*”

MIn3: “*I rarely apologize to someone who is younger than me. But if I terribly offend him of course I will apologize even if he was younger*”

Thus the gender of the participants did not affect the participants' choice of politeness strategies as compared with social status and age. Other social factors can affect the degree of politeness, such as the factor of "obligations and rights". This factor was effective in the academic and family domains. "Hearer's offensive reaction toward the speaker" can be regarded as an effective factor that caused some participants to violate certain maxims, particularly Feeling-reticence and Approbation maxims. The participants



showed that there is no need to make an apology to close friends, and the opposite when there is no solidarity. The effect of "the value of what was transacted", for example, the participants tried to mix their apologies with some justifications as offers for repairs, expressions of lack of intent to be more polite and soften the offence. Regarding "age", most of the participants made fewer apologies for younger hearers. Moreover, both genders showed an obligation to apologise and admitted responsibility equally for people of higher status, such as the professor. This is the effect of "power," which appeared to be the most effective factor that governed participants' being polite.

Summary of Findings

1- The findings related to the first research question:

With reference to the principles of politeness, which are stated by Leech (2014), 8 out of 10 maxims, are used by the participants in different situations depending on the context of the situation, which are: Obligation of S to O, Generosity, Tact, Modesty, Sympathy, Feeling-reticence, Opinion-reticence, and Approbation maxim. Far from the 10 maxims that are included in the model adopted in the study, a new type of politeness principle was used by the participants to enhance their faces, which is the "Silence" maxim. The most frequently used maxim was "Obligation of S to O," which appeared in the forms of apologies and thanks in participants' responses, and the least used maxim was "Approbation maxim." Females used the Obligation of S to O, Modesty, Approbation, Sympathy, and Tact more than males while males used Generosity, Feeling-reticence, Opinion-reticence, and Silence more than females.

2- The findings related to second research question

The gender of the participants did not affect the participants' choice of politeness strategies as compared with social status and age. Other social factors can affect the degree of politeness, such as the factor of "obligations and rights". This factor was effective in the academic and family domains, such as situations 1, 4, 5, 10, and 14. "Hearer's offensive reaction toward the speaker" can be regarded as an effective factor that caused some participants to violate certain maxims, particularly Feeling-reticence and Approbation maxims, as in situations 2, 6, and 7. The participants showed that there is no



need to make an apology to close friends, and the opposite when there is no solidarity, as in situations 3, 9, and 12. The effect of “the value of what was transacted”, for example, in situation 3, 9, and 12, the participants tried to mix their apologies with some justifications as offers for repairs, expressions of lack of intent to be more polite and soften the offence. Regarding "age", most of the participants made fewer apologies for younger hearers in situations like 6. Moreover, both genders showed an obligation to apologise and admitted responsibility equally for people of higher status, such as the professor, as in situations 8, 13 and 14. This is the effect of "power," which appeared to be the most effective factor that governed participants' being polite.

Discussion

In relation to first research question, the analysis of the data collected in the current study was mainly based on Leech's (2014) model of politeness; whereas most of the past studies were based on other models in analysing their data in addition to Leech's (2014) model, such as Mohammed 2020; Fitriyah et al 2020; and Santoso et al 2020, which based on Leech's (2014) to investigate politeness strategies in teacher/student interaction in a general academic setting regardless of the gender as social effective factor, while the current study differed from those studies in addressing gender differences with regards to apology speech act in particular. Therefore, those three related studies revealed different findings from the findings obtained in this study, see (2.9). The difference between the results of the mentioned above past studies and the current study, despite being based on the same model, might be attributed to contextual factors. The findings of the current study revealed an additional strategy used by the participants in several responses which is not included in the model adopted, which is the strategy of "Silence." The participants used this strategy in situations (13 and 11) in terms of positive politeness as an attempt to avoid face threatening. This finding agrees with Qari (2019), who indicates that there are situations when the hesitation to apologise and the desire for "silence" may only be attributed to contextual differences. So, "silence" is not always indicative of strength or weakness, dominance or submission. This finding is not in accordance with



the studies of (Mohammed 2020; Fitriyah et al. 2020; and Santoso et al. 2020). The results showed that females surpassed the males in the use of five strategies; Obligation of S to O, Sympathy, Tact, Modesty, and Approbation; while male participants in four strategies which are; Generosity, Feeling-reticence, Opinion-reticence, and Silence maxims. This finding indicates that females felt the importance of making an apology for the hearer more than the males, and they attempted to soften and mitigate their apologies by using other strategies. While males tended to repair the offense more than females. However, the frequency and percentage of the revealed maxims may refer to participants' knowledge of such a type of strategies besides their awareness about their significance and usage. In contrast, the little use of some strategies in the students' apologies, in some situations, was due to the context of the situations, which may not require such a strategy. The present study is also different from the other past studies in terms of its methodology, objectives, participants, and the procedures used in its data collection. The present study is in agreement with some of the past studies; (Abu Humeid 2013; Hassan 2014; Harb 2016; Qari 2019; Aboud 2019; Al-Sallal and Ahmed 2020; and Al-Rawafi et al. 2021) in dealing with the role of gender in making polite apologies. In spite of this similarity, the current study is different from those past studies in the aspects under the study. The current study explored the effect of participants' gender as an independent social factor on the selection of appropriate maxims of politeness based on Leech's updated maxims of politeness in various social apologetic contexts, then analysed them socio-pragmatically. According to the researcher's preliminary knowledge, this aspect may not have been investigated previously by similar research. In terms of methodology, (Abu Humeid 2013; Hassan 2014; Harb 2016; Qari 2019; Aboud 2019; Al-Sallal and Ahmed 2020; and Al-Rawafi et al. 2021) used written (DCT) as data collection instrument. In comparison, in the current study, an online oral (DCT) was used, supported by semi-structured interviews. This type of methodology was proposed to gain a larger amount of semi-natural data, where the participants feel free to express what comes in their minds, as not everything can be expressed on the sheet. This method was also used in the



study of Hassan 2014, where oral DCT was used to get data from illiterate participants, which differed from the present study, as used for well-educated participants. With reference to the participants of the current study, they were chosen purposefully for this study as male and female postgraduate EFL students at University of Anbar. This sample based on the simple knowledge of the researcher hasn't been used in previous similar research.

Regarding the second research question, that was about investigating the effect of gender on the use of politeness strategies; and the effect of any other social factors. Concerning the five dimensions of the socio-pragmatic scale, other social factors can affect the degree of politeness, such as the factor of "obligations and rights". This factor was affective in the situations of academic and family domains. It falls within the dimension of Strength of socially defined rights and obligations. So, the degree of obligation S has towards O to perform the action and to give benefit to the O is what made most males and few females apologise and help the hearers in situations 1, 14. Regarding family domain, specially, in Eastern cultures, some families have a kind of solidarity between the parents and the sons, this was reflected in the responses of some participants in situation 4, 5 where those participants found it as an ordinary thing to forget a promise with the father or mother, as the parents did not expect such a verbal apology from them; but they cannot let it pass without achieving the promise at once, or even making a new promise to save the parents' face. This is the socially sanctioned obligation the speakers have to do what their parents want. That is to say, giving high value to their parents' wants as in situations 4, 5, and 10. This obligation falls within the scale of strength of socially defined rights and obligations. Hearer's offensive reaction toward the speaker, can be considered as an effective factor that made some participants violate some maxims especially Feeling-reticence maxim of politeness, the participants justified their non-apologetic behaviour or their being rude as being annoyed because of hearer's reaction of anger toward their unintentional behaviour. At the same time, it is the same factor that might lead some participants to offer apologies to the offended hearers with little sympathy in the above situations, specially. Male participants were more affected by this factor.



Concerning the factors of solidarity, these are sub-summed under the horizontal scale. In some situations like 3, 9 and 12, few speakers avoid using any direct strategy of expressing apology to their offended hearers, and they only expressed their lack of intent about the offence; as expressed by the participants that there is no need to make an apology to close friends and the opposite when there is no solidarity. Also males were more influenced by this factor. Hence, males mostly tended to be polite with socially distant people; while females prefer to keep their close relationships, this is in agreement with Qari 2019.

The factor of age as is related to the vertical distance scale, this factor plays an affective role in using politeness strategies. Most of the participants make fewer apologies for younger hearers in situations like 6. This finding is enhanced by the participants' replies in the conducted semi-structured interview. Other participants might make an apology to younger people if they were out-group members, where they perceive that the social distance between them is not close and they cannot communicate with less politeness with them. Such non-apologetic or less polite behaviour in this case cannot be considered impolite since the theory of politeness is not applied. Regarding age, females tended to apologise for their younger hearers more than males. This finding is consistent with Al-Rawafi et al 2021. In the context of the vertical distance scale, the factor of power appeared to be the most effective factor, as both genders showed obligation to apologise and admitted responsibility equally for people of higher status, such as the professor as in situations 8 and 14. Both genders used the strategy of explaining the situation with their professor. This strategy in the form of justification for people of higher power could be viewed in the participants' perception as only giving excuses as a way of escaping from responsibility. This finding agrees with Qari, 2017. Thus, using this linguistic expression serves as a pragmatic tool to moderate the severity of offence and to manage face-rapport. Both males and females gave a significant value to their professor which reflected the effect of the power that the professor has over the participants. To sum up, the findings revealed that the factor of social status and age were the most effective social factors over the gender of the



participants. This finding is in consistency with Muhammed 2006, Hassan 2014 and Qari 2019. Worthy mentioning, the gender of the addressee was more effective than the gender of the speaker to choose the degree of politeness as was proved by nearly all the participants in the supportive conducted interviews, which agrees Hassan 2014.

Conclusions

The analysis of data in the previous chapter leads to the following conclusions:

1-Regardless of any social factors, females tend to make apologies to the hearers more than males, and they always attempt to make their apologies more polite by using other supportive strategies. They also try to show concern towards the hearer's feelings and behave modestly in making such an apology to get the sympathy of the hearer and increase the chance of accepting the apology.

2-Males tend to repair the offence more than females to decrease the size of the offence and rebuild the relationship with the offended party. In addition, they mostly try to control their real bad feelings and overcome the negatives to save face in embarrassing situations.

3-The frequency of the revealed strategies implies that the participants of the study have positive attitude towards such a type of strategy besides an awareness of its significance and usage.

4-The use of the investigated strategies in the appropriate contexts and the little use of negative pragmatic transfer show that the participants are socio-pragmatically competent.

5-The maxims of Agreement and Obligation of O to S haven't been used by the participants due to the context of the situations, which may not require such a strategy.

6- "Silence" was used by the participants as new strategy of politeness that was not included in the model adopted to avoid face threatening act in terms of positive politeness.



7-The facets of Eastern culture are reflected clearly in the behaviours of most of the participants, particularly in their choice of strategies when apologising to their parents, family members, friends, and professors.

8-The gender of the participants as a social factor has a slight significant effect on the use of polite strategies. On the other hand, the gender of the addressee may have a greater effect on the degree of politeness.

9-Internal factors such as the type and degree of offence have a more significant effect than external factors like the gender of the participants and the horizontal distance between the interlocutors.

10-The offensive reaction of the offended party towards the offence also affects negatively the degree of politeness the speakers employ when apologising, which leads them to violate some maxims of politeness.

11-Social status and age are the most effective social factors that govern a speaker's degree of politeness; both factors are related to the vertical distance scale.

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