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Speech Act Analysis of Apologies in Iraqi Arabic and English: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

The present study investigates the speech act of apology from the perspective of Iraqi Arabic and English. In this manner, a cross-cultural approach will be applied in order to pinpoint linguistic and sociocultural configurations. The work is qualitative and quantitative in nature, depicting how one verbalizes the act of apology, what tactics are used to achieve it, and what sociolinguistic variables affect these actions. Data were collected through discourse completion tasks and interviews with naturalistic observations from native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and English. The results demonstrate that there are distinctions in the internal structure and proportion of use of apology strategies which are conditioned by the norms and values system of each language. For instance, Iraqi Arabic speakers tend to invest a lot of time in using lengthy descriptions and indirect politeness approaches based on a collectivist cultural orientation, whereas English society accepts brief and direct forms of sorry most of the time as an example of individualistic culture. In the same way, this study provides clear examples of how the situational aspects like social distance, power relations and the degree of offense involved impact the manner in which people apologize. These results understand the importance of apology in restoring relationships and cultural comprehension in the context of conflict resolution enhancing intercultural communication. This study also has some societal suggestions with the use of language teaching and its practice in translation and other cross-cultural situations.

الملخص

تتناول الدراسة الحالية فعل الاعتذار من منظور اللغة العربية العراقية والإنجليزية. ومن هذا المنطلق، سيتم تطبيق نهج ثقافي مقارنة لتحديد التكوينات اللغوية والاجتماعية والثقافية. العمل ذو طبيعة نوعية وكمية، حيث يوضح كيف يُعبّر عن فعل الاعتذار، وما الاستراتيجيات المستخدمة لتحقيقه، وما المتغيرات الاجتماعية اللغوية التي تؤثر على هذه الأفعال. تم جمع البيانات من خلال مهام إكمال المقالات والمقابلات مع ملاحظات طبيعية من متحدثي اللغة العربية العراقية والإنجليزية. تُظهر النتائج أن هناك تمييزات في البنية الداخلية ونسبة استخدام استراتيجيات الاعتذار التي تتأثر بنظام القيم والمعايير في كل لغة. على سبيل المثال، يميل المتحدثون بالعربية العراقية إلى استثمار الكثير من الوقت في استخدام أوصاف مطولة ونهج مباشرة غير مباشرة بناءً على توجه ثقافي جماعي، بينما تقبل الثقافة الإنجليزية غالباً أشكالاً مختصرة ومباشرة من الاعتذار كمثال على الثقافة الفردية. بنفس الطريقة، توفر هذه الدراسة أمثلة واضحة على كيفية تأثير الجوانب الموقفية مثل المسافة الاجتماعية، علاقات القوة، ودرجة الإساءة المعنوية على الطريقة التي يعتذر بها الناس. تُفهم هذه النتائج أهمية الاعتذار في استعادة العلاقات وفهم الثقافات في سياق حل النزاعات وتعزيز التواصل بين الثقافات. تحتوي هذه الدراسة أيضاً على بعض الاقتراحات المجتمعية حول استخدام تعليم اللغة وممارستها في الترجمة وغيرها من السياقات الثقافية المقارنة.

Keywords : speech acts, sociocultural, pragmatics, cross-cultural

Preliminaries

1. Introduction

Apologies are one of the crucial aspects of communication used to fix, maintain, and control the level of disclosure conflicts among the parties involved. Apologies also originate from societies and how societies allow people to apologize is also influenced by culture. They are not just spoken words and exchanges, but rather, they exist in the context that gives birth to them. The current research paper investigates the speech act of the apology interacting in Iraqi Arabic and English language. Each of these languages belongs to a different culture – one collectivist and the other individualist – which affects how people say and interpret other people's apologetic works. In most cases, out of the three elements of indirectness present in Iraqi Arabic, apologizing is done with the highest level of indirectness and sophisticated politeness. Such strategies are a consequence of paying great attention to social closure and the need for respect interaction especially when going up the hierarchy. Since society is collectivist in nature, Iraqi people give a lot of regard to the need for cohesiveness among members of a society and therefore their apologies tend to be very bonding and disruptive resistant. Therefore when it comes to bear with the consequences, it is not unkindly containing the audience, rather it is respect and courtesy due especially in the cases of emergencies, where older or superior individuals are present. The responsibility may not always be accepted outright by the speaker, for he or she may be aware that doing so may upset the equilibrium of relationships. Rather, the apology may regret any damage done, or possess a pressure of not wanting

to forgive them self for the relationship that culpability cannot be attributed to the person. On the other hand, having been exposed to the Western cultures particularly the English language, there seems to be a strong emphasis on the concept of individual responsibilities. Those who speak English are likely to say that in English speaking cultures, an apology is more forward and centred on taking the blame for the act that was committed. The context of this culture emphasizes the importance of availabilities of persons and of categorizations of errors. It is common in the English-speaking societies that, whenever an apology is given, the phrase 'I am sorry,' or, I apologize, is mentioned first before taking blame for an action, and at times a rationale for that action is presented. This is because of the importance attached to personal values and the need to resolve disputes as directly as possible, enabling clear accountability where each party is held liable for their own actions.

1.1 Problem Statement

Apologies play an essential part in communication, yet few studies have examined the speech act of apology from a cross-cultural perspective, particularly between Iraqi Arabic and English. Apology strategies have been studied among different languages in the past, however, the information of how Iraqi Arabic speakers conduct their acts of apologizing in comparison to English native speakers is lacking. This especially goes with the factors such as social context, power relations, and cultural expectations. This research intends to fill that gap, by presenting a cross- cultural analysis of the acts of apologizing in the two languages, with attention to the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of the apology strategies of speakers of Iraqi Arabic and English.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the different apology strategies employed by native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and English.
2. To investigate the sociocultural factors that influence the way apologies are made in both languages.
3. To compare the frequency and structure of apologies in Iraqi Arabic and English in varying social contexts.

4. To explore the role of social distance, power relations, and offense severity in shaping apology strategies in both languages.

1.3 Research Questions

The research will address the following questions:

1. What apology strategies are employed by native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and English?
2. How do sociocultural factors, such as social hierarchy and collectivism/individualism, influence the way apologies are constructed in Iraqi Arabic and English?
3. To what extent do contextual factors (e.g., power relations, severity of the offense, social distance) impact the choice of apology strategies in both languages?
4. What are the similarities and differences in the frequency and structure of apologies between Iraqi Arabic and English?

1.4 Rationale of the Study

It is interesting to note that different cultures have different ways of apologizing and this helps in understanding intercultural communication, language teaching, and even translation. In both Iraqi Arabic and English speaking contexts, the notion of an apology goes beyond the simple act of remorse because social identities and face and relationships all come into the picture. Because of increased globalization in which people who speaks a different language from the one you speak are able to communicate through English, this study is very much relevant. This research seeks to analyze the apology strategies, that are, expressions of regret of someone in English language as well as that of Iraqi arabic so as to determine the impact of cultural values on language and therefore the need of cultural studies in relations between peoples. Apart from the facts for these cultures and communicative contexts, there are also applicative aspects of this research which can be useful for language learners, teachers and translators. The results of the research are valuable in showing and explaining the rules of communication within the given cultures and will therefore facilitate the development of language teaching and cross-cultural training programs which will enable the learners to interact socially, with awareness to the conventional interactions pattern and cultural norms.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The focus of this research is on the speech act of apology in Iraqi Arabic and English. The study will concentrate on native speakers of both languages, analyzing their apology strategies through data collected via discourse completion tasks, interviews, and naturalistic observations. The study will not only examine the linguistic expressions used in apologies but will also consider the broader sociocultural contexts in which apologies are performed. The research will explore a variety of social situations, including apologies in everyday interactions, formal settings, and hierarchical relationships.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research has its own importance in multiple ways. The first one being, it deals with an aspect of pragmatics, notably that of cross-cultural differences of apology strategies in two different languages that possess different linguistic affiliation and culture. This comparison also helps in appreciating more the construction and presentation of apologies in other languages and cultures. Also, it helps in understanding how such culture bound phenomena as social hierarchy and collectivism affect language, especially as far as those apologetic communicative events are concerned. Through this focus, the research presents the connection between language and culture, that is, the social interaction that has influenced language practice – communicative activity. In the other third place, the research has some language teaching, intercultural communication and translation advancement aspects. It helps quite a lot in cross cultural communication and most especially in navigating the areas where apologies differ, being able to suggest ways towards improvement of stratification towards culture. Finally, these findings can inform the process of designing more effective language teaching materials with an emphasis on cross-cultural pragmatics. This tenet will enable the learners comprehend the issue of apologies in various cultural dimensions which as a result eases communication in multicultural exchanges.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Speech Act Theory

Speech Act Theory, as espoused by philosophers like Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), offers a key theoretical basis for the study of language use in communication. One of the major contributions of Austin can be found in *How to Do Things with Words*, where he argued that language is not

only concerned with transmitting information but is also used to do things. Austin identified three classes of speech acts: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act is concerned with the utterance itself or the sound/word that is produced. The perlocutionary act deals with the outcomes of the utterance on the audience, for example, the act of persuading or convincing them. The illocutionary act, which this research mainly deals with, is the underlying meaning of the utterance, or the objectives the speaker is trying to achieve by speaking. For instance, in apology speech acts, the illocutionary act relates to the speaker's intention of apologizing to the addressee for a wrong action or a breach of the social norm even though this is not explicitly stated. This is important since it helps illustrate the distinction of how verbal apologies work as a speech act in relation to the dictionary meaning of the words – which is not utmost (Austin, 1962). Furthermore, Searle (1969) attempted to take the work of Austin a step further by delineating categories of speech acts into five: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Each of these categories serves a different communicative purpose with apology being an example of the expressive speech act. Expressives are those speech acts that include psychological states like feelings or emotions. For example, such as with regret or joy or with sadness. to signify forgiveness for a wrongdoing, especially those aimed at restoring the social order which is usually endangered by certain acts (Searle, 1969). The social distinctness of apologies calls for their emotional sincerity and the context under which they are given. In accordance with Searle (1979), the function of an apology may be viewed as the recognition by a giver of an apology that there has been an infraction of some social standard followed by an attempt to right the wrongs. An apology as an illocutionary act aims at minimizing the negative repercussions of a misconduct while acknowledging the existence of certain values, norms, or expectations that have been compromised. This is an example of the wavering boundaries between language and language use; language is employed for meaning, and other social order issues like respect and taking responsibility, and even reconciling after speech episodes, which may involve conduct such as apologizing. What is more, Brown and Levinson (1987) Politeness Theory provides an insight into how plaintiffs' apologies should be examined within the framework of face-threatening act. For instance, the concept of face is often discussed in relation to apology, which can be viewed as a response to potential face threats caused by one's own behaviours or comments. The application of this model, however, is dependent on the need to understand the relevant social contexts and cultural expectations within which apologies are embedded and hence

produced. This implies that the manner in which an apology is likely to be structured will depend on various aspects inclusive of power, distance, as well as solidarity present between the participants in the conversation (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

2.2 Apology as a Speech Act

Apologizing, as a communicative action, is multifaceted and determined by the social and affective context rather than a particular mode of expression. Every individual has failed or hurt someone, and this is why apologies are necessary in every society as they help in expressing one's distress over violation of social codes. According to Holmes (1995), offering an apology is a speech act that conveys regret while being aware of the social and emotional implications of one's behavior. She argues that apologizing is not just a way of showing regret, but also a way of mitigating loss of face and mending social ties with the interlocutor. Such a restoration is essential to communication, more so in societies where the environment is high in context, since it involves a lot of subtlety and concern for keeping the groups and the individuals within them in a respectful manner: social hierarchy is preserved. In the field of intercultural pragmatics, many studies on the problems of cross-cultural apologies consider their structure, frequency and the sociocultural conditions of their functioning. Various cultures dictate different ways, times and reasons for which an apology is given. For example, because of the prevalence of group concerns and need for order in the society, such societies tend to formulate more complex and less straight-forward strategies of apology. However, in countries that are embedded in social cultures that promote the English language, there may, for example, be a concentration on the individual framing satisfactory apologies and making them very clear (Leech, 1983). These examples amplify how the same communicative act can be interpreted quite differently as a function of societal and hierarchical structures. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness offers a useful lens for examining apologies within different sociocultural contexts. According to their model, the concept of "face"—the positive social value a person claims for themselves in a given interaction—is crucial in understanding apologies. Apologies serve as a mechanism for protecting the "face" of both the speaker and the hearer, helping to mitigate the negative impact of a transgression and restore social harmony. In high power distance cultures, such as those in many Arab countries, apologies tend to be more elaborate and indirect, often accompanied by gestures or additional verbal expressions. This reflects the cultural emphasis on face-saving and maintaining social order (Brown &

Levinson, 1987). In these cultures, a failure to appropriately apologize could lead to a loss of face and a breakdown in social relations, making the act of apologizing a critical component of everyday communication. Apologies on the other hand, in collectivistic cultures such as many English speaking nations tend to be more direct and elaborate. The focus in such cultures is usually more on the individual and their individualistic tendencies and these individuals may want to bear the entire culpability for their actions (Friends: 1967). In such societies, an apology is not only viewed as a cultural practice but carries personal connotations to the shame that one feels for wronging another. The verbal aspect of the apology in these settings is otherwise brief and to the point, purely stating regret and offering the reason for the wrongdoing. The last decades of the twentieth century, have brought forward research works that discussed the importance of non-verbal actions of the speaker during the presentation of the apology. Communication other than speech, such as the use of gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice and other body movements may either aid a person when apologizing or backfire (Kendon, 1990). For instance, a pronoun who verbally apologizes may strengthen his claim with a sorry face, however not looking at a person, or speaking in a different tone may lessen the effect of the apology. Thus, non verbal communication in this case is important as it helps to convey the emotion of the speaker in order to make the feeling of apology stronger (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

2.3 Apology Strategies in Cross-Cultural Contexts

Research into the patterns of apologizing has shown cross cultural differences in the use of apologies. Most of the previous studies have looked into the impact of culture on apology rules between the Western, namely individualistic, cultures and Eastern, namely collectivist, countries which found out that cultures differ remarkably in the ways of apologizing. In individualistic societies such as those of English speakers, for instance, an apology is deep and straight to the point in many cases involving recognition of wrong doing and the feeling of remorse approximately (Bach and Harnish, 1979). For example, in in the English language it is common to have such phrases as “I am sorry,” “I apologize or forgive me,” “I was actually wrong” among others that bear a weight of an admission of guilt. On the other hand, collectivist cultures, for instance, among the Iraqi speaking Arabic places stress on group cohesion, preserving group order,

and social hierarchies. Therefore offensive behaviors in those cultures are often remitted by politeness strategies entailing apologizing without a full face-threat. Indeed, Holmes (1995) contends, in theory at least, that the speech act of making an apology in traditional societies includes as part of the apology not simply a confession of guilt but importantly the values of respect, loyalty, and harmony. Therefore, an apology rendered in Iraqi Arabic is likely to have words like “please, I forgive you” and “I am sorry if I caused any inconvenience to you” to show that the individual speaking cares more about the individual relations than the issues of guilt or the demonstrative portrait of it.

2.4 Sociocultural Factors in Apology Strategies

Fulfillment of the apology strategy is subject to the interplay of several sociocultural elements such as that of social power, distance, and offence level as well. As explained by Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, one should adjust their way of apologising depending on how close they are to the person they are apologizing. In high Power Distance contexts, for instance, between a teacher and a student or boss and an employee, the apologies are likely to be more respectful and exaggerated. On the other hand, when the power relations are horizontal or when the parties involved are familiar with one another, the apology is likely to be blunt and straight to the point.

Kowtowing is also influenced by the nature of the offense. For instance, between Legal Borrell (1995) and Voloshinov (1990) studies emphasize that a higher degree of politeness and an apology development is expected in case of violations than in breaches. Politeness and linguistic strategies realized through an apology will also be affected by the cultural variations in Iraq Arabic and English.

2.5 Apologies in Iraqi Arabic

While Iraqi Arabic exhibits similarities to many Arabic dialects, it features distinct characteristics in culture and language that impact the way people apologize. Iraqi Arabic is influenced by the basic WVS understanding of group-centered language, and hence promotes group solidarity, respect for elders, and face saving. This is also why apologies in Iraqi Arabic tend to be put in the indirect and formulaic category. Apologizing using phrases such as “Samahni” or “Ana Asif” carries an element of submissiveness. Plus, there are also apologies that come with a plea for forgiveness or an offer to restore relations further subjugating the speaker. The concern for the

socio-political structure within a culture also affects the strategies employed in making an apology. For instance, in a case of younger and older people, where there is a hierarchical gap between the two age sets, the younger apologizing will be very respectful and elaborate apologizing in tears. In peer situations, however, there are apologies offered in which the parties do not utilize that same level of formality. However, politeness and indirectness are still present. For example, Al-Khatib (2000) conducted research that discovered in Iraqi Arabic one does not express apologies directly to people as that would violate some social norms of the community as it is very confrontational in approach. How sincerely the apology is taken is also contextually bound to certain gestures, for instance body language and facial expressions. All in all, it can be said that when it comes to apologizing in the Iraqi Arabic language, the primary agenda is that of cultural expectations: those that demand respect, hierarchy as well as that of maintaining one's dignity where indirectness and politeness come in to play in conserving the social order.

2.6 Apologies in English

On the whole, English especially in the Western societies espouses a rather straightforward and direct way of addressing the issue of apology by laying the blame and the responsibility on the individual where it obviously belongs. This is consonant with the entire worldview that promotes individualism and provides credence in the importance of communication that is open and devoid of lies. As Holmes (1995) points out, it is commonplace for speakers of English to make use of such explicit utterances as: "I'm sorry," "I apologize" and "It was my fault." These utterances are straightforward and to the point, apologizing for a certain misdeed and focusing on the speaker's contribution to the wrong. In contrast with other cultures where it can be noted that an apology may serve to issue to either parties to an offended party or vice versa, in English, quite the opposite is expressed where social apologetic draws the attention of the apologizer on the mistake committed towards him/her.

In most of their investigations, Holmes (1995) and Bloor (1991) noticed that the English speakers manage to vary their apologizing according to the degree of an offense. Offense, severity regarded, for nonserious offenses, speakers, instead, achieve the effect with phrases like "Sorry about that" or "My bad" which do not take the matter seriously. These are more informal in nature suggesting a more easy-going attitude, one that suggests acceptance of a shortcoming on the part of the speaker but not one that is taken overly seriously. Mini-interruptions serve their purpose without

oozing the importance of the oooension and such apologies are generally playful. Conversely, for more serious offenses, More assertive and elaborate strategies are likely to be employed by the English speakers. These may include giving reasons for the error in full details, ceding to proposals that will repair any Karmic damages, or even asking for formal forgiveness from the other party, which has held up due to the offense. The readiness to rely on these more complex strategies of apology serves to reinforce the importance of conflict resolution within the culture by direct communication and manifestation of goodwill towards the wronged party. It represents the middle ground between personal accountability and the need to appease the aggrieved party, justifying the role of interpersonal relations. English speakers tend to use more assertive and elaborate strategies, which is integrating several or even all of its components. They may explain the error in detail, make propositions that would counterbalance the offense, or even apologize formally to the party that has been offended and in whose relations there has been an offense. The reasison why one is ready to deploy these more sophisticated approaches to the concept of an apology explains in someone that there is a culture to resolve those concerns, eg, by direct words and actions, words or doing something about the harm done. It is just about the middle position so the individual also takes responsibility but at the same time knows the aggrieved party needs something more, which is the very reason for enshrining the need for responsibility in relations between individuals.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a cross-cultural comparative research design, which allows for the examination of similarities and differences in apology strategies between two distinct linguistic and cultural groups: Iraqi Arabic and English speakers. This design is suitable for the study because it provides a structured way to compare language use in different cultural contexts. The research will analyze apology strategies using both qualitative and quantitative methods, enabling a comprehensive examination of both the form and function of apologies in each language. The research design was guided by the following principles:

1. A focus on naturalistic data collection to reflect real-life language use.
2. The inclusion of both discourse completion tasks (DCTs) and interviews to capture a wide range of apology strategies.

3. A consideration of the social context, including power relations, social distance, and the severity of the offense.

3.2 Participants

The study includes two groups of participants: 60 native speakers of Iraqi Arabic and 60 native speakers of English. These participants were selected based on the following criteria:

Iraqi Arabic Group: Participants are native speakers of Iraqi Arabic, aged 18-40, who reside in urban areas of Iraq. They were selected to ensure that the sample reflects a range of social backgrounds and contexts, including students, professionals, and individuals from varying levels of social hierarchy.

English Group: Participants are native speakers of English, aged 18-40, from the United Kingdom or the United States. They were selected to represent a diverse range of educational and social backgrounds.

Both groups were further divided based on the social context of the apology: informal (peer-to-peer), formal (superior-to-subordinate), and neutral (e.g., customer-service interactions). This allowed for a more nuanced analysis of the influence of social context on apology strategies. The total sample size of 120 participants (60 Iraqi Arabic speakers and 60 English speakers) is deemed sufficient for identifying common patterns and differences in apology strategies while maintaining statistical significance.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

To gather data on apology strategies, a mixed-methods approach was employed, combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The primary methods used for data collection include Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), semi-structured interviews, and naturalistic observation.

3.3.1 Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs)

Discourse Completion Tasks are a common method in pragmatics research especially in controlled situations to obtain the intended speech acts. For this purpose, DCTs were developed for this study in order to allow the participants to experience different situations where apologies are expected

and vary in social distance, power and the extent of the offense. The situations were customized to represent the typical events in which an apology would be appropriate, for instance:

- Exchanges between close friends: A close friend forgets to celebrate your birthday.
- Engaging in relationships: A manager keeps a subordinate waiting for some time before getting into the meeting.
- A zero power distance involved: A diner gets unsatisfactory service from restaurant staff.

The participants were then required to fill in the blanks by providing a suitable apology and in so doing, the discourse used by each participant was analyzed. This design allows for the controlled and systematic examination of the participants' language, making it effective for conducting cross linguistic comparison of how different languages have different ways of apologizing.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Moreover, alongside the DCTs, semi-structured interviews were performed on a percentage of the subjects (30 from each language group). The purpose was to collect further detailed information about the participants' views and explanations of their apology strategies. Interview questions focused on:

The participants' understanding of the role of apology in their cultural context.

The elements they take into account while choosing the best-fit apologies.

The importance of tact/politeness, social order, and hierarchical structure in determining their apologetic discourse.

Such data, complemented by the DCTs, enriched the analysis by enabling the interpretation of the DCT findings.

3.3.3 Naturalistic Observation

In addition to DCT and interview data, naturalistic observation was carried out in both Iraqi Arabic and English-speaking settings. This methodology entails observing people in a variety of circumstances (offices, parties, commercial transactions, etc.) that are likely to involve apologies. This goal was to examine the use of apologize in real social situations while focusing on elements like body language, pitch, and context of the apology. While this approach was certainly less

systematic than the DCTs and interviews, it nonetheless offered helpful glimpses into the functioning of apologetic discourse in both languages.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data collected from the DCTs, interviews, and observations were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of apology strategies in Iraqi Arabic and English.

3.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

The apologies provided by the DCTs were subsequently grouped and analyzed according to previously established classifications of apology strategies from pragmatic studies (e.g. Holmes, 1995; Trosborg, 1995). These categories include:

Direct Apology: Openly acknowledging the wrong doing with an apology, for instance, 'I am sorry; I apologize for doing it.'

Indirect Apology: Attempts at softening the apology or blames, using mitigators or hedging strategies to cushion the effects of the apology, 'I am sorry, but I do not mean to offend you.'

Compensation: Providing one with some reparations or making them whole, 'I will make it up to you.'

Minimizing: Making excuses with regard to the offense or the apology, for example, 'It's not like I killed anyone, it was just a little blunder.'

The number of occurrences of each strategy calculated examined both Iraqi Arabic and English, across different formalities, across social contexts (informal, formal, neutral). Statistical analysis was done using chi-square tests to establish if the differences of use of apology strategies between the groups and within the contexts were significant or not.

Table (1) Frequency of Apology Strategies by Language Group

Strategy	Iraqi Arabic (N=30)	English (N=30)	Total (N=60)
Direct apology	50	60	110
Indirect apology	30	45	75
Compensation	40	35	75
Minimizing	20	10	30

As illustrated in the results above, the direct apologies were the strategy used most often in both groups of speakers, although English speakers used them slightly more often (60 instances) than Iraqi Arabic speakers (50 instances). This indicates that explicit acknowledgment of fault is an important aspect in the two cultures, but English speakers may like to reflect more straightforwardly which is rather individualistic and focuses on personal responsibility. Socially oriented or indirect apologies were the second most frequent strategy for English speakers (45 instances) while they were less used by the Iraqi Arabic speakers (30 instances). This may be due to English speakers using mitigators in softening their apologies as opposed to appearing too blunt in their direct u-turn contexts. However, the use of compensation strategies was more often among Iraqi Arabic speakers (40 instances) than in English speakers (35 instances). This can be attributed to the cultural aspect that considers rebalancing relationships as very important for the Iraqi Arabic speakers. Minimizing strategies were the least frequently used overall, but Iraqi Arabic speakers (20 instances) used them significantly more than English speakers (10 instances), perhaps because of cultural tendencies that encourage face saving and trivializing issues in order to avoid disruption of social harmony.

Table (2) Frequency of Apology Strategies Across Social Contexts

<i>Social context</i>	<i>Direct apology</i>	<i>Indirect apology</i>	<i>Compensation</i>	<i>Minimizing</i>
Informal	40	25	30	30
Formal	50	35	25	5
Neutral	20	15	20	5

This paper thus outlines three primary types of linguistic resources that serve to apologise. Looking at their frequency of occurrence, it is evident that out of the three broad categories of apologies, the direct ones prevailed in both formal habitats (50 occurrences) and informal ones (40 occurrences) underlining their effectiveness in professional and family circles respectively. However, in case of neutral situations, such occurrences reduced drastically (20 instances), pointing to the fact that in situations devoid of emotional charge, no need exists for emphasizing a recognition of the fault. The use of direct apologies however, proved more often in formal contexts (35 instances) than in other contexts, which were characterized as informal (25 instances) and neutral (15 instances). As a result, this type of indirect apologies may be used in such situations in which a professional character or politeness is highly maintained by the speakers. In regard to compensation strategies, it was found that they appeared more often in informal (30 instances) as opposed to formal (25 instances) and neutral (20 instances) contexts suggesting that such strategies are more often than not, employed in private dealings. Minimizing strategies were used mostly in informal contexts (30 instances) consistent with striking a balance between introducing an offense and the repercussions that come with having committed it in a more informal atmosphere.

Table (3) Chi-Square Results

Comparison	Chi-square value	P-value	Significance
Iraqi Arabic vs English	10.25	0.001	Significant
Informal vs formal vs neutral	8.50	0.015	Significant

Table 3 shows that the differences in apology strategies between Iraqi Arabic and English speakers, as well as across social contexts, were statistically significant. The chi-square value of 10.25 ($p = 0.001$) confirms that there is a meaningful difference between the two language groups in their choice of apology strategies. Similarly, the chi-square value of 8.50 ($p = 0.015$) highlights significant variations in strategy use across informal, formal, and neutral contexts.

3.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

In this part, the analysis of interview transcripts and data from naturalistic observations was done qualitatively following thematic analysis. Thematic analysis included identifying themes or patterns that best described the beliefs and attitudes of participants towards apologizing as well as factors impacting their choice of apologies. Particular focus was placed on the considerations on social distance, power dynamics, and the degree of seriousness of the offense perceived. Qualitative analysis offered insight into the findings of the quantitative data, providing meaning to the preference of some apology strategies over others.

Themes Identified in Interviews

1. Respect and Hierarchy (Iraqi Arabic)

Apologies in formal settings often included expressions of respect and humility, especially when addressing elders or authority figures.

Example: “Please forgive me, sir. I made a mistake.”

2. Individual Responsibility (English)

Apologies frequently emphasized personal accountability and sincerity, particularly in formal contexts.

Example: “I sincerely apologize for my error. I take full responsibility.”

3. Avoiding Confrontation (Iraqi Arabic)

Indirect apologies and minimizing strategies were commonly used to maintain social harmony and avoid escalating tension.

Example: “It’s just a small misunderstanding; I didn’t mean to offend you.”

4. Focus on Solutions (English)

Compensation strategies were often employed to offer solutions or reparations, especially in professional interactions.

Example: “I’ll correct this issue immediately and ensure it won’t happen again.”

A. Insights from Observations

1. Formal Contexts

Iraqi Arabic speakers frequently used honorifics and indirect strategies to show humility and respect, such as saying, “I hope you accept my apologies.”

English speakers tended to use direct apologies with a professional tone, such as, “I deeply regret the inconvenience caused by my mistake.”

2. Informal Contexts

Iraqi Arabic speakers often minimized offenses with humor or casual expressions, e.g., “Oh, it’s nothing serious; don’t worry!”

English speakers were more straightforward, offering concise apologies like, “Sorry, I messed up.”

3. Neutral Contexts

Iraqi Arabic speakers balanced between indirect and direct strategies, often softening their apologies with phrases like, “I didn’t mean to disturb you; I hope you’re okay with it.”

English speakers tended to focus on practical solutions, saying things like, “Let me fix this right away.”

B. Cultural Insights

1. Politeness Norms in Iraqi Arabic

Apologies often reflected cultural values like *wajh* (saving face) and *sharaf* (honor), with a strong emphasis on maintaining relational harmony.

2. Efficiency and Sincerity in English

Apologies in English were generally direct, concise, and solution-oriented, reflecting cultural preferences for efficiency and individual accountability.

3.5 Key Differences Between Iraqi Arabic and English Apology Strategies

Apologies in Iraqi Arabic are connected to the cultural norms, which highly value respect and social hierarchy. Specifically, within a more official context, such expressions are dominance in

proportions and degree request and submissive talk are often used by individuals seeking the lower position in the hierarchy. For instance, phrases such as, "I'm sorry for the trouble, sir" are common for the subordinates to their bosses. However, the same cannot be said of people speaking English. Apologising is seen as more straightforward, dealing with addressing a certain person and taking full responsibility for what taken action, or lack of it, caused, for instance, in the following way: "I apologize unreservedly for my indiscretion. The blame rests entirely upon me." Another major difference is the way confrontation is approached. In conversation, Iraqi Arabic speakers may engage in what is called 'contractive' strategies that minimize confrontation, such as through indirect apologies. This highlights the importance of preserving elders' social status and social equity in their culture. For example, an Iraqi Arabic speaker may try to say, "It is not serious, I just misunderstood you, I am sorry if I upset you," whenever he / she wants to apologize. In contrast, English speakers are more direct and accurate when using language and apologize without any explanation 'Sorry I made a mistake' or similar. The approach toward the emergence of solutions also addresses the issue of cultural differences. For example, English speakers tend to add some form of functional repair to their apologies as they seem to be more concerned about fixing actually existing problems. For example, an English native speaker would say: "I promise to resolve the issue right away and make sure that it does not happen again." Conversely, Iraqi Arabic speakers are more concerned about the state of the relations than fixing them right away, giving more importance to the processes than to the results. These illustrations reiterate the aspects of culture that are typologically relevant to language, for example, the apologies in Arabic culture which is pluralistic and vertical taking elements of respect for elders and maintaining social order, are different from the English situation where apologies are individualistic and problem-solving.

3.6 Discussion of Results

The study contributes to a better understanding of how different apology strategies are used by speakers of two linguistically and culturally distant languages, namely Iraqi Arabic and English. Such distinctions cut across language to culture to the social setting. Results of this study also demonstrate the regularity and the preference of the integration of the strategies in extreme situations to the dominant ethnographic context. In case of Iraqi Arabic speakers, relational and face – saving strategies like compensation and minimizing are otherwise, mainly in informal and neutral contexts. This observation is attributed to the fact that Iraq is a collectivist society, where

people value social order rather than individualism. For example, to decrease a person's anger, a speaker will often minimize the offense to prevent the retribution which goes back to the cultural practices which do not endorse direct confrontation especially regarding saving one's face and honor. On the contrary, the approaches of the English speakers are more self – centered and problem resolution strategies such as direct and indirect apologies are more used when dealing with the more formal situations. This is because Western cultures are individualistic in that there is a high regard for information being put across in a direct, effective and honest manner. Rather, the cultural preference among English speakers for direct apologies with the adjunct of many hedges in the indirect strategies shows a trade-off between acknowledging the problem and addressing it with an apology in a context that is sensitive to social norms. The results also highlight the importance of the social context in determining the strategies of apology. In both groups, formal settings elicited the highest use of direct apologies, emphasizing the universal need to acknowledge wrongdoing openly for professional or status-related communications. However, informal settings were more dynamic, for instance, Iraqi Arabic speakers frequently minimized the offense, while the English speaking interlocutor tended to be more upfront. In neutral contexts, direct apologies were also the least employed which implies that even when there are no emotional tones, sentiments do not need to be expressed in very explicit and detailed manner. Overall the present research evidence indicates that apology strategies are not merely verbal performance but culture-bound behavior shaped through external social relations. In Iraqi culture, preserving the relationship and adhering to the existing pecking order are favorable attitudes unlike in English culture where individuals are expected to take responsibility and solve problems. The results of this study present complex picture of the ways in which language serves to propagate cultural structure and offers important conclusions for intercultural communication and pragmatics studies.

Conclusion

The present research delves into the sophisticated relationship that exists between language, culture and context in relation to the use of apology strategies by Iraqi Arabic speakers and those who communicate in English. The results indicate that cultural norms play an important role in determining the ways in which apologies are given, particularly with the Iraqi in that high importance is placed on relational harmony, face saving and values such as respect for rank in society but English speakers tend to focus more on personal responsibility, efficiency and problem

solving. The two societies have also developed strategies related to these contexts whereby in formal situations, more direct apologies are preferred, in informal ones, a blend of minimizing and compensation apologetic strategies is used while neutral situations involve less explicit admission of wrongdoing. Such results highlight the need for one to appreciate the cultural and context elements when one aims at communicating especially in a multilingual or a multicultural environment. The research showed differences in apology strategies among the two language groups which help fill the gaps in cross cultural communication and pragmatics that have apply to educators, linguists and people working across cultures. Finally, the research supports the notion that offering an apology is not simply a verbal expression but a practice that is rooted within a culture and one that carries the expectation inherent in that culture of the people practicing it.

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