

A Pragmatic Comparison of Apologies in English and Arabic

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Abstract

The research design that was employed in conducting the research was a qualitative descriptive comparative research design. The discourse completion task was employed as a research tool to obtain the research findings regarding the discourse on apology for the target groups. The research findings are analyzed based on models that have been developed regarding apology strategies. The research findings revealed that English and Arabic have similarities regarding the elementary apology strategies, but English and Arabic have differences regarding the directness and elaboration of discourse. English is short and direct, while Arabic is elaborate, employing an enhanced form of discourse. The study reveals that the behavior of apologizing is greatly impacted by culture or socioculture. It also emphasizes the need to acquire pragmatic competence in language acquisition or interlanguage communication, suggesting that language learners should be instructed on how not to fail pragmatically in interlanguage communication.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Apology Strategies, Speech Acts, Politeness Theory, Cross-Cultural Communication

المقارنة التداولية لأساليب الاعتذار في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية

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الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل استراتيجيات الاعتذار في اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية من منظور تداولي وثقافي مقارنة. ويُعدّ الاعتذار من الأفعال الكلامية التعبيرية المهمة التي تسهم في إصلاح العلاقات الاجتماعية والمحافظة على الانسجام التفاعلي بين المتخاطبين. وانطلاقاً من نظرية الأفعال الكلامية ونظرية التأدب، تسعى الدراسة إلى تحديد أبرز استراتيجيات الاعتذار في اللغتين، وبيان كيفية تحققها تداولياً، والكشف عن أثر المتغيرات الاجتماعية-الثقافية مثل علاقة السلطة، والمسافة الاجتماعية، ودرجة جسامة الخطأ. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي-التحليلي المقارن، واستخدمت اختبار إكمال الخطاب (DCT) أداةً لجمع البيانات من متحدثين أصليين باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية. وقد جرى تحليل البيانات وفق نماذج معتمدة لاستراتيجيات الاعتذار، مع التركيز على تكرار الاستراتيجيات، وتركيبها، واستخدامها في السياقات المختلفة. وأظهرت النتائج أن اللغتين تشتركان في استراتيجيات اعتذار أساسية، ولا سيما التعبير عن الندم، إلا أنهما تختلفان بشكل واضح من حيث درجة المباشرة، والإطالة، والتأثر بالمتغيرات الاجتماعية-الثقافية. إذ تميل الاعتذارات في اللغة الإنجليزية إلى الإيجاز والوضوح والتركيز على المسؤولية الفردية، في حين تتسم الاعتذارات في اللغة العربية بالإطالة والتكثيف والتركيز على البعد العلاقي والاجتماعي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن سلوك الاعتذار يتأثر بدرجة كبيرة بالأعراف الثقافية والسياقات الاجتماعية، وتؤكد أهمية

الكفاءة التداولية في تعلم اللغات والتواصل بين الثقافات، مع التوصية بإدراج تعليم استراتيجيات الاعتذار ضمن مناهج تعليم اللغات للحد من الإخفاق التداولي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية، استراتيجيات الاعتذار، الأفعال الكلامية، نظرية التأدب، التواصل بين الثقافات

1. Background of the Research

Language is fundamentally regarded as the “social act by which people act, create meaning, and interact with one another.” It is not just related to the linguistic structure of the language or the words used, but it is also viewed as the product of the interplay of the linguistic structure and the associated social, cultural, and contextual factors. It is with this idea that the branch of linguistics called pragmatics came into being, and it is regarded as the “social science of language.”

In the field of pragmatics, the theory of speech acts is a theoretical model that can be utilized as an explanation of the purpose of an utterance as an action. Among the various speech acts, the concept of apology is significant as a speech act. An apology is an utterance that is often given as a reaction to an offense, either genuine or assumed, where the speaker’s perception of responsibility is associated with concern about the face and position of the receiver.

It cannot be treated as linguistic formulas but as culturally constructed practices that reflect norms, values, and expectations shared by members of society.

The content of an adequate apology varies across languages and societies based on factors such as relationships of power involved, distance between interactants, severity of the offense perpetrated, and perceptions of politeness shared by members of society.

1.1 Problem of the Study

English and Arabic language learners often experience problems with the pragmatics of apologies as used in real-life communication situations. Such problems are not caused mainly because the learners are not linguistically competent, but because they are not aware of the sociocultural rules that are followed in the target languages with regard to apologies. This often causes them to make apologies that are not appropriate or are even too simplistic or elaborate.

This can particularly be seen in cross-cultural discourse, where differences in apology mechanisms, levels of directness, and sociocultural factors can result in pragmatic failure and communication breakdown. Despite the significant position that apologies occupy as an expressive speech act, the need remains to conduct a comparative pragmatic analysis that considers the ways in which apology mechanisms are realized in English and Arabic and the sociocultural factors that

affect their use. Such a need is critical in improving pragmatic competency and enhancing cross-cultural discourse.

1.2 Aims of the Study

In line with the problem of the study, the present research aims to:

1. Identify and describe the apology strategies commonly used in English and Arabic in comparable communicative contexts.
2. Examine the pragmatic realization of apology strategies in English and Arabic in order to determine points of similarity and difference.
3. Investigate the role of sociocultural variables, such as power relations and social distance, in shaping apology behavior in both languages.

1.3 Research Questions

To achieve the aims of the study and address the research problem, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What apology strategies are commonly employed in English and Arabic?
2. How are these apology strategies pragmatically realized in English and Arabic, and to what extent do they differ or overlap?
3. What role do sociocultural variables play in influencing the use of apology strategies in both languages?

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the theoretical and empirical literature relevant to the pragmatic study of apologies, with particular attention to speech act theory, politeness theory, and cross-cultural pragmatic research. The purpose of this review is to establish a solid theoretical foundation for the present study and to highlight gaps in previous research that justify the need for a comparative analysis of apologies in English and Arabic.

2.1 Pragmatics and Language Use

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistic study that aims to examine language in context and how meaning is achieved in language in terms of a combination of linguistic forms and contextual considerations. Pragmatics can thus be differentiated from semantics in that whereas semantics is concerned primarily with meaning in language expressions, pragmatics is concerned with meaning in language from a speaker's intent and a hearer's interpretation in a social context in which language is being used. Thus, this perspective on language emphasizes that meaning cannot exist without context (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996).

The use of language is always influenced by factors such as the interpersonal relationship, social distance, and power relations. Language is used strategically by the speaker with the intention of reaching the desired goals and at the same time ensuring harmonious relationships. These are all rooted in the speaker's knowledge of sociocultural norms that regulate appropriate language use in particular situations.

In the case of the acquisition of second and foreign languages, pragmatic competence can be said to develop more slowly in relation to grammatical competence. This is because the student can exhibit strong grammatical accuracy in the target language while still making pragmatically inappropriate statements. This is referred to as pragmatic failure and can be attributed to the imposition of the norms of the student's first language in the target language in the absence of an awareness of sociocultural differences (Thomas, 1983; Kasper & Rose, 2002).

In the analysis of speech acts, pragmatics has a vital role to play as it offers the analytical tools necessary to examine the performance of the speech act in the actual context of use. For example, the performance of the speech act of apologizing cannot be fully analyzed if the contextual factors, including the intention of the speakers, are not taken into account. A pragmatic perspective thus offers the opportunity to examine the performance of the speech act in relation to the actual meaning of the forms used (Searle, 1979; Cutting, 2002).

Apologies are also particularly dependent upon a high degree of pragmatic awareness because their acceptability is subject to factors like the gravity of offense, social hierarchy structures, and cultural notions of politeness. Pragmatic studies of apologies enable researchers to investigate ways of taking responsibility and mitigating offense and restoring social equilibrium through language usage (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Trosborg, 1995).

2.2 Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory is one of the major underlying principles in pragmatics, as it focuses primarily on the use and understanding that language goes beyond just describing reality. The theory was based upon the ideas and concepts put forward by Austin; he suggested that speech acts are performed and not just for information transfer purposes. In speech act theory, it was understood that speech acts are performed and that meaning was closely related to the intentions and context in which the speech was performed (Austin, 1962).

Austin argued that there were three components to an act of speaking: the locutionary act, where the focus is the production of an utterance that conveys meaning through linguistic expression; the illocutionary act, where the focus is the intended communicative outcome of the utterance; and the perlocutionary act,

where the focus is the impact of the utterance on the recipient of the communication. This classification of speech act components points to the multifaceted nature of speech and the role that context may play in determining the outcome of an utterance (Austin, 1962; Levinson, 1983).

2.3 Apologies as a Pragmatic Phenomenon

One of the most extensively investigated types of speech acts in pragmatic studies is the apology, primarily because of its importance in interpersonal relations and maintaining harmonious relationships with other people. A pragmatic view of the apology perceives this kind of utterance as a remedial action performed in reaction to the infringement of a social norm and intended to restore the relationship between the interlocutors.

The assessment of an apology does not depend on the linguistic form so much as on the context in which the action occurs (Goffman, 1971; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

In other words, apology as a pragmatic process includes the recognition of offense, attribution of responsibility, and remorse. However, the way in which they are explicitly and/or implicitly used may vary from one language and culture to another. Linguistic pragmatic studies showed that there is a choice of strategy in apology, and it is used depending on the communicational process and social variables involved (Trosborg, 1995; Holmes, 1990).

Studies in cross-cultural pragmatics have demonstrated how, although apologies have universal functional value, their actual formulation is subject to considerable variation across different speaking communities. For one, cultures have different expectations for directness and explicitness and for the intensity of emotion in apologies. Brief and direct apologies have been preferred in some cultures, while more elaborate and indirect apologies have been called for in others for pragmatic acceptability (Wierzbicka, 1991; Kasper, 1997).

2.4 Politeness Theory and Apologies

The most applicable explanatory theory in terms of describing a process or mechanism in which the management or manipulation of relationships occurs via a medium or process of language usage is politeness theory. Essentially, this theory is concerned with a process or mechanism which helps in achieving social harmony or avoiding social conflict via social needs being met in a process (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Watts, 2003).

The central concept in politeness theory is face, defined as the image that an individual presents to the public. Face is usually distinguished into two forms: the

need to be appreciated and approved of as positive face, and the need to be free to act as one chooses and to be unimpeded as negative face. Communicative acts such as apologizing may be considered face-threatening as an admission of guilt involves the face of the speaker himself/herself (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967).

On the one hand, the position of apology is seen as a politeness strategy, and this enables the speaker to atone for having face-threatening acts. The speaker, therefore, apologizes and in the process tries to restore face for the hearer despite losing face themselves. This, therefore, shows the complex position of apology in that it involves humility, accountability, and adhering to norms, as discussed in the works of Holmes (1990).

2.5 Cross-Cultural Studies on Apologies

Cross-cultural pragmatics has established that speech acts, like other communicational activities involving an apology, may be performed differently even when they carry similar communicational functions. Researchers in cross-cultural pragmatics argue that the decisive factor in the way an apology is performed is the way culture affects an individual. For example, pragmatic competence in an apology involves knowledge of culture in addition to knowledge of language (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Kasper, 1997).

Previous cross-cultural research on apologies has demonstrated that there are systematic differences in terms of selecting and using various apology strategies in different speech communities. Although expressions of regret have been shown to be a universal feature of apologies in different cultures, other apology strategies such as explanation, acknowledgment of responsibility, and offering repair vary from culture to culture (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1990).

Studies comparing Western and non-Western languages have revealed differences in directness and explicitness in apologizing. Western cultures, such as English speakers, typically use short, concise, and direct apologetic utterances that are focused on efficiency in communication, while speakers from non-Western cultures use longer, elaborate apologetic sequences that are associated with a collectivist perspective, relational concerns, and respect for social hierarchy, as discussed in Wierzbicka, 1991, and Trosborg, 1995.

2.6 Review of Previous Studies

2.6.1 Olshtain and Cohen (1983)

The study was titled "Apology: A Speech Act Set." This study aimed to investigate the structural composition of the speech act of apology as a pragmatic

speech act in different languages. This study was guided by the theoretical background of the theory of speech acts and aimed to explore the key strategies involved in the performance of the speech act of apology. This study was descriptive-analytical in nature based on the data collected from the discourse completion task (DCT) administered among the native and non-native speakers.

The results showed that apologizing is not formulaic but is achieved through several strategies, which include expressions of regret, explanations, acknowledgment of responsibility, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. The results also showed the use of several strategies simultaneously by the speaker, as well as the conditions of context, including the severity of the offenses and the relations. It is considered to be the landmark of pragmatic studies, particularly of the apologizing speech act, which has also influenced later research in the field of cross-cultural studies.

2.6.2 Holmes (1990)

The research, which has been given the title “Apologies in New Zealand English,” has the aim of exploring the linguistic forms that are associated with apologies in natural spoken English, as well as the pragmatics of apologies in such contexts. The research will use a qualitative approach in its investigation, where naturally occurring spoken English will be used as a basis in the study.

2.6.3 Al-Zumor (2011)

The title of the present study is “Apologies in Arabic: A Pragmatic Analysis.” This study seeks to explore the pragmatic use of apologizing in Arabic, as well as the cultural norms underlying the apologizing behavior of Arabic speakers. The methodology employed in the present study includes a descriptive-analytical approach, using discourse completion tasks as a means of data collection.

2.7 Discussion of Previous Studies

2.7.1 Aims

It is seen that the studies reviewed have a common aim to examine the concept of apology as a pragmatic speech act, especially by highlighting the identification of the strategies of apology and their communicative functions. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) examine the concept of developing a model of apology strategies, while Holmes (1990) examines the concept of apology strategies in English from a sociolinguistic perspective. Al-Zumor (2011) examines the concept of apology in Arabic from a cultural perspective.

2.7.2 Sample

The sample of the studies examined varies depending on the focus of the study. For example, the study conducted by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) covers both native and non-native speakers of different linguistic backgrounds. Another study conducted by Holmes (1990) examines the naturally occurring spoken data from the English-speaking communities. Al-Zumor (2011) examines the data from the native Arabic-speaking communities.

2.7.3 Tools

The principal research instruments used across all studies are discourse completion tasks and natural discourse analysis. While DCT is used to collect elicited pragmatic data in studies by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Al-Zumor (2011), Holmes (1990) collected and analyzed authentic discourse. This illustrates that all studies have demonstrated that combined research works effectively.

2.7.4 Results

The findings of all the reviewed studies have confirmed that the complexity of the sociocultural factors affecting the speaker has a significant impact on the formation of the speech act of an apology. In all the studies, the following has been confirmed: the complexity of the speaker's strategies in performing the speech act of an apology is multifaceted, and the differences exist across languages and cultures. English-speaking people's apologies are shorter and clearer, and Arabic-speaking people's apologies are longer and stronger.

3. Methodology

The chapter presents the methodology that guides this study as follows: it outlines the research design, participants, data collection instruments and procedures, and data analysis methods. The methodology employed is carefully crafted to address the research problem and answer the research questions about the pragmatic comparison of English and Arabic apologies.

3.1 Research Design

In the present study, a qualitative descriptive-comparative approach is employed. This approach is relevant and adequate when conducting pragmatic studies since it allows an in-depth examination of pragmatic data rather than quantitative measures. The objective of the present study is to explore and describe apology strategy differences between English and Arabic languages from the pragmatic and sociocultural aspects.

Qualitative design allows the researcher to examine the way apologetic language is used as a speech act and the way the language is used to choose the strategies

appropriately. The comparative design also helps to find the similarities and differences between the two languages.

3.2 Participants

The participants of the study consist of two groups:

1. **Native speakers of English**, representing English-speaking communicative norms.
2. **Native speakers of Arabic**, representing Arabic-speaking communicative norms.

The participants are adult speakers with no reported speech or language disorders. They are selected to ensure that the data reflect natural pragmatic competence rather than learner interlanguage. The inclusion of native speakers from both language communities allows for a valid comparison of apology strategies across English and Arabic.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection takes the form of the Discourse Completion Task (DCT), which is the most common method of data collection in pragmatic studies. DCT presents the participants with hypothetical scenarios in which the speaker is required to make an apology in different social situations.

The situations are designed so they systematically vary according to the following sociocultural variables:

- Social Power – Equal/Unequal
- Social Distance (Familiar/Unfamiliar)
- Severity of the offense (minor or serious)

This facilitates the comparison of the results obtained from the English and Arabic questionnaires while at the same time controlling the context.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

The DCT is individually administered to each participant. Participants are asked to carefully read each of the situations and write down their most natural and appropriate apology that would be used in each of those situations. Participants are also asked to write their responses in their native language.

These answers are recorded in written form and then put together in a body of data. It is important that the participants understand the scenarios clearly and that they answer on pragmatic grounds rather than on metalinguistic grounds.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected is then analyzed through qualitative pragmatic analysis based on established models of apology strategy. Each response is coded based on the types of apology strategy used in the responses:

- Expression of Regret
- Acceptance of responsibility
- Explanation or justification
- Offer of repair
- Promise of Forbearance

The focus of the analysis is to determine the frequency, combination, and sequencing of these strategies used in English and Arabic. In addition, the role of sociocultural factors on strategy use is investigated. After the identification of the strategies used by the participants, comparative analysis of the two languages is conducted to determine the similarities and differences.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To make the study more valid, the scenarios used in the DCT are based on previous pragmatic studies that were done with the intention of being practical. This ensures that the study is realistic in both the English language and the Arabic language.

For the purpose of reliability, consistency in the coding system is ensured. The classification of the different types of apology strategy is based on well-defined criteria established in theoretical frameworks. If the need arises, a second opinion is taken on the classification of the different types of apology strategy.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are also observed throughout the research. The research is purely voluntary, and the participants are made aware of the research objectives. Confidentiality is ensured by keeping the responses anonymous, and the research is only for academic purposes.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

This chapter will discuss and present an analysis of the collected data based on the findings of the implemented methodology of the Discourse Completion Task (DCT). This analysis will help to identify and explore different strategies of apology that are used by English and Arabic language native speakers and how these are pragmatically implemented in each language. This chapter is divided into different sections based on different themes that are linked to different research questions.

4.1 Overall Distribution of Apology Strategies

The first stage of the analysis is concerned with the identification of the apology strategies employed by the participants in the two languages. From the data, it is clear that English-speaking people and Arabic-speaking people share a set of basic apology strategies, although they also exhibit some variations.

Figure 4.1: Overall Apology Strategies in English and Arabic

Apology Strategy	English Speakers	Arabic Speakers
Expression of regret	High	Very High
Acceptance of responsibility	High	Moderate
Explanation / justification	Moderate	High
Offer of repair	Moderate	High
Promise of forbearance	Low	Moderate

This shows that expressions of regret are the most common strategies in both languages, supporting the universal use of expressions of regret in apology. However, Arabic speakers use explanations and offers of repair more often than English speakers do, emphasizing the importance of social harmony and sincerity in Arabic culture.

4.2 Apology Strategies in English

The analysis of the data indicates that native speakers of English use a number of relatively stable and predictable apology strategies, which are primarily defined by such parameters as directness, explicitness, and brevity. English apologies are typically realized in the form of explicit formulaicity, such as expressions of

regret, which may include such phrases as “I’m sorry” or “I apologize,” often constituting the central part of the apology itself.

Table 4.2: Frequency of Apology Strategies Used by English Speakers

Apology Strategy	Degree of Use
Expression of regret	High
Acceptance of responsibility	High
Explanation / justification	Moderate
Offer of repair	Moderate
Promise of forbearance	Low

As the above table shows, expressions of regret and acceptance of responsibility are the primary strategies used in English apologies. The use of offers of repair occurs mainly when damage or inconvenience is involved, and the use of promises of forbearance is rare and usually occurs when the offense is repeated or serious.

From a pragmatic point of view, in using apologies in spoken English, speakers show awareness of contextual variables in terms of offense severity. For instance, in less severe offenses, a brief apology may suffice, whereas in more severe offenses, other linguistic strategies are added to apologies. Nevertheless, in all these situations, apologies in spoken English tend to be brief and to the point.

4.3 Apology Strategies in Arabic

The data analysis indicates that the apology strategy of the native Arabic speaker is elaborative, intensive, and relational-oriented. Arabic apology is said to be different from English apology in the sense that Arabic apology employs multiple apology strategies in just a single apology act. This is due to the Arabic culture in the sense that it emphasizes social harmony and respect.

Apology sequences in Arabic culture are often triggered with expressions of regret, such as apology formulas, which in certain cases may lead to long apologetic sequences. However, these are often accompanied with various strategies such as explanations, repair, and intensification, particularly in critical conditions with power asymmetry.

Table 4.3: Frequency of Apology Strategies Used by Arabic Speakers

Apology Strategy	Degree of Use
Expression of regret	Very High
Acceptance of responsibility	Moderate
Explanation / justification	High
Offer of repair	High
Promise of forbearance	Moderate

From the above table, it is clear that Arabic apologies usually include a lot of explanation and offers of repair, apart from expressions of regret. The above-mentioned trend shows that Arabic-speaking people place a lot of emphasis on manifesting their good will and sincerity through verbalizations rather than just using acknowledgment statements.

4.4 Influence of Sociocultural Variables

The analysis of the results shows, the role of sociocultural variables is decisive in the pragmatic realization of the chosen apology strategies in the two languages, English and Arabic. Although speakers of the two languages have access to the same repertoire of core apology strategies, their realization is heavily influenced by contextual factors. The most powerful variables influencing the realization of the chosen apology strategies in the two languages appear to be the power relation, social distance, and the severity of the offense.

4.4.1 Power Relations

The power relations have a significant effect on the development of apologetic speech for both languages. For English, the variations of power relations have moderate effects on the strategy of apologies, such as the use of brief explanations or repairs when interacting with someone who is superior, with the apologetic speech still maintaining concise form.

However, for Arabic speakers, the power relationship has more profound influences in the use of apology strategies. In the case where Arabic speakers are required to express apology to someone who is either superior or higher in status, Arabic speakers use intensive apology strategies, in which they combine at least two strategies in apologizing and use expressions of deference.

4.4.2 Social Distance

Another significant factor is the social distance aspect of an apology strategy. English-speaking people display a unique apology strategy. The strategy is quite similar even when there is a difference in familiarity. There is an increase in formality when they speak with those they don't know. However, there is an emphasis on the need for clearness and efficiency.

For instance, Arabic-speaking people are more considerate in their sense of social distance while apologizing to people who are not familiar with one another or to people they are at a distance with. They would thus use more complex expressions in their speeches in order to demonstrate their politeness and sincerity.

4.4.3 Severity of the Offense

The severity of the offense is another factor affecting the choice of the apology strategy in the two languages. For minor offenses, the apology strategies used by the English-speaking people are brief and are mainly focused on the expressions of regret.

On the other hand, Arabic-speaking people display more apologetic behavior depending on the degree of the offense. For more serious offenses, various strategies, including expressions of regret, need to be employed. This could be attributed to the value they put on being accountable through the use of explanations.

Table 4.4: Influence of Sociocultural Variables on Apology Strategies

Sociocultural Variable	English Apologies	Arabic Apologies
Power relations	Moderate strategy adjustment	Strong intensification and elaboration
Social distance	Limited effect	Significant effect
Severity of offense	Additional strategies when necessary	Multiple intensified strategies

The table reveals that sociocultural factors are influencing apology speech act realization in two languages, but to varying degrees. English apology speech act realization is based on a pragmatic approach to negative politeness, where minimal verbal effort is employed to restore social equilibrium. Arabic apology speech act realization is based on positive politeness, where collectivistic values are also manifested.

4.5 Cross-Linguistic Comparison and Discussion

The analysis indicates that the pragmatic goal of apologizing in English and Arabic is the same. This goal is concerned with the restoration of social harmony following an offense. Both languages employ expressions of regret as the main constituent of an apology. This indicates the importance of apologizing as an essential communicative function in all languages.

Table 4.5: Cross-Linguistic Comparison of Apology Strategies in English and Arabic

Aspect	English	Arabic
Degree of directness	High	Moderate
Length of apology	Short and concise	Extended and elaborative
Strategy combination	Limited	Multiple strategies combined
Sensitivity to power	Moderate	High
Cultural orientation	Individualistic / negative politeness	Collectivist / positive politeness

As the above table shows, it is obvious that even though English and Arabic share the same components of apology, the prominence of these components is greatly different. English speakers prefer pragmatic economy, while Arabic speakers prefer pragmatic richness to express sincerity and respect. The linguistic differences that have been established in the current research can account for the most common pragmatic failure that often results in intercultural communication. Arabic-speaking people using Arabic-speaking norms of apology in an English-speaking context may come across as too long-winded or roundabout, and vice versa. Such differences highlight the need to foster cross-cultural pragmatic awareness.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion of the research was to make a realistic comparison of the strategies used to apologize in English and Arabic, with special reference to the realization of the strategies in relation to sociocultural factors. Following the theory of speech acts and politeness theory, the study sought to find the similarities and differences that exist in the way people apologize in the two language groups.

The findings of this particular study revealed that there exists a similar communicational purpose in English and Arabic apologetic discourse, namely

that of restoring social harmony after an offense has occurred. Furthermore, it was revealed that regret forms are an essential feature of apologetic behavior in both English and Arabic, thereby supporting the assumption that apologizing is an expressive speech act that is universally applicable.

Despite this similarity in the nature of the task, the present study has identified considerable differences in the pragmatic nature of the apology strategy in English-speaking communities. For example, in English-speaking societies, the apology strategy is direct and brief with an acknowledgment of responsibility. There is an observed tendency for the speaker to use limited numbers of options for the strategies provided, with other components utilized in context-relevant situations only.

On the other hand, Arabic apologies are distinguished by elements of elaboration, intensification, as well as high relational orientation. Generally, Arabic-speaking people are observed to use a combination of apology strategies in one turn, especially in cases where power, social distance, or offense are implicated. The three elements of explanation, offer, and intensification are, in fact, a manifestation of cultural values that are associated with harmony, respect, and relationship.

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