

**Linguistic Differences between Men
and Women in Terms of Apology:
A Case Study of Iraqi EFL Learners**

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Abstract :

The present study focuses on the speech act of apologizing among Iraqi advanced learners of English. Within the investigation of the apologetic expressions provided by the subjects, the researcher will mainly study if any differences between males and females exist. The responses of the subjects will be further analyzed according to the following variables: type of apology, type of offence, and sex relationship between hearer and speaker.

**الفروق اللغوية بين الرجل والمرأة فيما يخص الاعتذار
دراسة حالة لمتعلمي اللغة الانكليزية**

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المخلص:

تركز الدراسة الحالية على فعل كلام الاعتذار بين المتعلمين المتقدمين العراقيين للغة الانكليزية من خلال دراسة تعابير الاعتذار التي تبديها العينة، سيدرس الباحث بصورة رئيسة ما اذا كانت هناك اختلافات تذكر بين الذكور والاناث. سيتم كذلك تحليل استجابات العينة وفقا للمتغيرات الاتية: نوع الاعتذار ونوع العنف وعلاقة الجنسين بين المتلقي و المتكلم.

1. Introduction to the Speech Act of Apologizing

Speech act theory, developed by Searle's following Austin's work, is based on the idea that language is a form of behaviour, and it is governed by rules (1969:22). The idea that language is behaviour is the key to understand how language functions in a social context. As Trosborg (1987:147) notes, "appropriate social behaviour patterns are built on the norms which constitute polite behaviour." It is clear that what is considered as polite behaviour varies among different socio-cultural groups. Hence, those norms which constitute polite behaviour will be different in different societies. However, in all social groups, an apology is called for when social norms have been violated, whether the offence is real or potential (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983:20).

In any speech community people typically use apologies for a variety of reasons such as to say that they are sorry, to explain why the offence happened, and to make a repair for the offence and maintain a good relationship with the addressee. An apology is made in a simple recognition that someone is hurt, wronged and in some other way damaged. Tipping (2001:1) indicates that in the act of apologizing someone is hurt, disadvantaged or damaged because of something done, and that what the offender does is wrong. Moreover, Olshtain and Cohen (1983:19-20) state that a person would need to apologize when he hurts another person unintentionally. In this case two parties are involved; an apologizer and recipient. And the act of apologizing will not occur only if the person who causes the infraction considers himself as an apologizer.

The making of an apology is a linguistic act and people cannot do without it in their daily interpersonal and social dealings. The act of apologizing requires an action or an utterance which is intended to set things right. Cohen (1996:17) manifests that an apology is called for when there is some behaviour that violates social norms, so apology is used to maintain the relationships between others. Furthermore, Leech (1983:125) views apology as ‘remedial interchange.’ This term clarifies the central function of apology which is to provide a remedy for an offence and restore social equilibrium or harmony. As cited in Hou (2006:17), Holmes (1995:155) supports what Leech points out. According to her an apology is defined as “a polite speech act used to restore social relations following an offence” and thus “restore equilibrium” between A and V (Where A is the apologizer and V is the victim or person offended), (Holmes, 1990, 1995, 1998). Actually, many scholars seem to emphasize the responsibility for the offence on the part of the person who causes the infraction. For instance, Hauss (2003:1) shows that the offenders who have committed social norm violations and other wrongdoings have to take responsibility for their actions and apologize. On the other hand, Leape (2006:16) asserts that for an apology to be more effective it must be true apology in which the apologizer takes responsibility for the event and shows remorse and readiness to make amends. Robinson (2004:3) demonstrates that apologizing is an essential component to maintain social harmony since it communicates awareness and acceptance of moral responsibility for offensive behaviour and initiates the process of negotiation absolution.

The speech act of apologizing is very important in daily communication. As cited in Yi Shih (2002:2), Chen (2001) affirms that apology is among the speech acts that are the most self – face threatening which means it causes a loss of the face to the speaker himself. Therefore, inappropriate apology can cause embarrassment to both the speaker and the hearer, causing miscommunication and misunderstanding. Okumura and Wei (2000:11) describe apologies as negative politeness strategies depending on the Brown and Levinson (1987) approach. Apologies are generally aimed at face – redress associated with face – threatening acts. They (2000:11) suggest that most of the existing studies of apology in different languages and cultures follow the Brown and Levinson (1987) approach and describe apology as a ‘negative politeness’ strategy.

Apologies transmitted by the speaker and received by the hearer must include specific items. These items make the act of apology understood and somehow accepted. Lee (2006: 11) manifests that the definitional elements of apology (identification of the wrongful act, remorse, promise to forbear, and offer to repair) seem to require low – context communication, that is, specific items that must be included in the transmitted message. Thus, in order to satisfy the elements of a full apology, the apologizer must transmit, and the person offended must receive certain expression and content: “I am sorry [remorse] that I hit you with my bicycle [identification of the wrongful act]. I would like to help you with your medical bills [offer to repair]. I will be more careful next time [promise to forbear].”

There are certain cases in which apologies are rejected by the recipient due to the high damage caused. Vines (2007:27) states that the credibility of an apology is very often considered in terms of the cost to the apologizer. If the cost is not sufficient, the apology may be rejected. Thus, when the apologizer feels that the recipient is not fully satisfied with the specific kind of apology offered, he may resort to justification. Al – Khatib (2006:14) assures that justification, as an apologizing strategy, is resorted to by the apologizer when he feels that the offended person appears to be not convinced by his apology, hence, the situation requires a higher level of mitigation to soften the force inherent in refusing the kind of apology. In other cases, when the offender feels that the recipient is greatly offended, he may resort to intensifiers to soften or intensify his apology to be, at least, more acceptable. As manifested by Sachie (1998:27), in addition to the main five strategies that make up the speech act set of apology, apologizers can modify their apologies by using intensifiers such as “very” and “really”.

2. Semantic Formulas of Apology

In discussing the semantic formulas of the apology speech act set, we need to distinguish between the case in which the offender perceives the need to apologize as opposed to the case where he denies all responsibility. When the offender is inclined to apologize, five potential semantic formulas seem to emerge (See Cohen and Olshtain, 1981: 119-125; Cohen and Weaver, 2005: 77-78; Blum – Kulka,S., House, J. and Kasper, G., 1989: 289-294).



Following Cohen and Olshtain, 1981: 119-125 classification, there are five possible strategies for making an apology.

- 1- An Expression of an Apology. Recognizing the need for apology, the speaker uses a word, an expression, or a sentence containing a verb such as “sorry”, “excuse”, “forgive”, “apologize”.
- 2- An Explanation or account of the situation. Depending on the degree of the offence the speaker tries to describe the situation which causes him to commit the offence and which is used by this speaker as indirect way of apologizing. The explanation is intended to set things right. For example, being late to attend a lecture timely, the apologizer may explain that the bus was late or there was a traffic jam.
- 3- An Acknowledgement of responsibility. Here the offender recognizes his fault in causing the infraction. There are four subformulas in this case, and they are described as follows:
 - a. Accepting the Blame. The speaker recognizes the fact that he has been at fault, e.g., “It is my fault”.
 - b. Expressing self – deficiency. The speaker does not deny his involvement in the offensive act but abstains from openly accepting responsibility, e.g., “I was confused”, “I didn’t see you”.
 - c. Recognizing the other person as deserving apology. The speaker communicates to the offended that he fully understands the latter’s reaction to the offense inflicted upon him, e.g., “You are right to be angry”.



- d. Expressing lack of intent. The speaker explicitly states that he has not intended to hurt the hearer through his offence, e.g., “I didn’t mean to”.

Among these four semantic subformulas only the first one is a direct acknowledgement of responsibility while the other three are indirect expressions of responsibility.

- 4- An Offer of Repair. This semantic formula is situation – specific in which case the apologizer makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage resulting from his infraction, e.g., “I’ll pay for the broken vase” or “I’ll help you get up”.
- 5- A promise of Forbearance. This last semantic formula is also situation – specific. Whenever the speaker’s sense of guilt is strong enough, he may feel the need to promise that the offensive act will never happen again. This implicates that the offender could have avoided the offence but did not do so, perhaps repeatedly, e.g., when someone has forgotten a meeting with a friend more than once, the person might want to say something like “It won’t happen again”.

It should be mentioned that the five major strategies that make up the apology speech act are non – language specific. The number of subformulas and their appropriateness to certain situations would vary from language to language. In all the aforementioned cases the offender recognizes the need to apologize.

But there are other cases where the need to apologize is rejected.



1. A denial of the need to apologize, e.g., “There was no need for you to get insulted”.
2. A denial of responsibility:
 - a. Not accepting the blame, e.g., “It was not my fault”.
 - b. Blaming the other participant for bringing the offence upon himself, e.g., “It was your own fault”.

The above description of the semantic formulas comprising the apology speech act set will serve as a framework in this study for discussing the differences between men and women in using apology.

3. The Study

3.1 Hypotheses

The present study aims at proving that:

1. Women use apologies more than men overall.
2. Women apologize to other women more than they do to men.
3. Men apologize to women more than they do to other men.

3.2 Subjects

The subjects are 90 college students around 20 years of age. The number is proportionate; forty five are males and forty five are females. All of them are non – native speakers of English. They study English as a foreign language.

3.3 Questionnaire

The subjects are assumed to put themselves in eight different situations and are supposed to respond accordingly. The situations contain options from which the respondents will choose their answers appropriately.



3.4 Methodology

The limitations regarding the study of speech acts in general, and in particular the study of the speech act of apologizing, refer principally to the method of gathering significant data. Among the methods have been used to elicit relevant data in the field of pragmatics and intercultural communication are the following: discourse completion tasks and questionnaire, role – plays, field observations and recording of naturally occurring talk in interaction. All of these methods have their advantages and disadvantages. The ideal method for this study, the researcher feels, is the discourse completion tasks and questionnaire (DCTs). Nevertheless, one of the disadvantages of the use of this method is the gathering of sufficient data of a specific speech act that the researcher wants to investigate. Another disadvantage is the difficulty in controlling variables such as power, status, and age differences between the participants. One of the advantages of (DCTs) is the use of options that facilitate and enable the subjects to obtain the appropriate kind of apology according to the situation they are put in. Another advantage is the level of education of the subjects who are college students.

Cross – cultural differences between Arabic and English language are neglected since the target groups are Iraqis’

learners of English. Hence, the situations and options are chosen carefully to fit Arabic culture although the subjects are addressed in English language.

For this study, the answers of the participants that contain the speech act of apologizing will be isolated and

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then analyzed according to Cohen and Olshtain (1981) Framework. These apologies are also analyzed and compared according to the following variables: type of apology, type of offence, and sex relationship between hearer and speaker.

3.5 Analysis of Results and Discussion

In this part of the study, the researcher, to reveal whether or not the results support the hypotheses, will first present the males' responses and apologies, followed by those of females, and then the researcher will discuss the apology strategies, denial of apology, and the apologies reported by the subjects according to the offence type.

The following table presents the male apologies to the 8 situations:

Table 1: The Male Apologies

Situation	Male –Female			Male – Male		
	Total No.	No.	%	Total No.	No.	%
1. A. I am sorry. B. I didn't see you.	45	34 11	75.55 24.44	45	13 32	28.88 71.11
2. A. I apologize. B. You will lower your voice without being sorry.	45	30 15	66.66 33.33	45	16 29	35.55 64.44
3. A. Sorry about that. B. It is not me.	45	21 24	46.66 53.33	45	2 43	4.44 95.55
4. A. I didn't mean to. B. I'm terribly sorry, I'll pay for that.	45	13 32	28.88 71.11	45	31 14	68.88 31.11
5. A. It will not happen again. B. You are right to be angry.	45	9 36	20 80	45	27 18	60 40
6. A. There was no need for you to get insulted. B. I didn't mean to.	45	20 25	44.44 55.55	45	41 4	91.11 8.88
7. A. There was a traffic jam. B. Excuse me.	45	14 31	31.11 68.88	45	38 7	84.44 15.55
8. A. It was not my fault. B. It was your own fault.	45	35 10	77.77 22.22	45	19 26	42.22 57.77

The table above shows that in the first situation, where the respondent accidentally pumps into someone, males tend to use more apologetic expressions when the receiver of the apology is a female, in that 34 of them (75.55%) use the expression “I am sorry” to apologize to females, whereas only 13 of them (28.88%) use the same expression to apologize to males. On the other hand, males, in apologizing to males, use the other expression, “I didn’t see you”, which is of a low degree of apology. The analysis uncovers that 32 of the males (71.11%) use this expression with males, but only 11 (24.44%) with females. The reason behind the high percentage of apologizing to females can be attributed to either a social tradition, as pumping into a female in the subjects’ culture is more offensive than into a male or to a biological nature that women being physically weak .

In the second situation, when a male subject is asked in the library to lower his voice, the results indicate that the males behave in approximately the same way as in the first situation. This is to say that males apologize to females more than to males. The results explain that 30 males (66.66%) use the expression “I apologize” when responding to females and only 13 (28.88%) use the same statement with males. Also, it is shown that 29 of the males (64.44%) prefer to use the second option, lower their voice without apologizing, when responding to males, and 15 of them (33.33) with females. Once again this can be socially justified, as women are widely recognized as sensitive to the importance of providing apologies.

When the teacher asks a student to stop talking and that student was not the one who talked, Situation 3, 21 of the males (46.66%) use the expression “ Sorry about that” when the teacher is a female, and only 2 (4.44%) use this statement with males. The males in responding to a male would deny the action more than they do with females, 43 (95.55%) and 24 (53.33%) respectively. The low percentages in both male-to-male and male-to-female apologies in this situation are because the subject is not himself the person who talked inside the class. So they tend to deny the action and defend themselves. However, males try to be more polite with females, and that is why the percentage of using the first expression, “Sorry about that”, with females is higher than that used with males.

In the fourth situation, where the subject spoiled coffee on a friend’s laptop, the analysis reveals that males tend to use “I’m terribly sorry, I’ll pay for that”, which is an offer to repair with females more than with males, 32 (71.11%) and 14 (31.11%) respectively. Males are also found to express their apology without offering to repair, “I didn’t mean to”, with a higher percentage with males, in that 31 of them (68.88%) use this statement with males and only 13 (28.88%) with females. Why males offer to repair the laptop for females more than for males might be because males are financially more able than females to repair it themselves, i.e. males at this age are usually employed and have some income whereas females are family- dependent in their income.



The analysis of the responses to the fifth situation, where a male subject has a date with someone and arrives late more than once, shows that males use the expression “It will not happen again” with males more than females, 27 (60%) and 9 (20%) respectively. Conversely, males use the second expression denoting direct apology “You are right to be angry” with females more than males, 36 (80%) and 18 (40%) respectively. In terms of social traditions and relationships, male-to-male relationship is said to be stronger and closer than male-to-female relationship, as the latter tends to be superficial. So, when an offence is made against females, males tend to use a more direct apology.

In the sixth situation, when the subject, at a meeting, says something and another person understands what he said as a personal insult, males are found to deny the need to apologize to males more than to females. The analysis shows that 41 of them (91.11%) use the expression of denial of the need to apologize “There was no need for you to get insulted” when responding to a male, and 20 (44.44%) with females. Other subjects have chosen the other expression, “I didn’t mean to”, with a higher percentage when replying to a female, in that 25 of the males (55.55%) use this statement with females and only 4 of them (8.88%) with males. In terms of politeness, the second statement is more polite, and is therefore used with females. In a male-to-male context, the majority of males use the first expression because males by nature seek power and never wish to look weaker.

In the seventh situation, where a male subject arrives late to a lecture, the majority males have shown to give a

justification rather than a direct apology when the teacher is a male but a direct apology when they apologize to a female teacher. 38 of the subjects (84.44%) use the first expression “There was a traffic jam” with males, and 14 (31.11%) with females. On the contrary, only 7 of the males (15.55%) use “Excuse me” with males and 31 (68.88%) with females. Here, the same interpretation given in the sixth situation can be applied.

In the last situation, where the subject is driving a car and has stopped suddenly and is crashed by another car from behind, most of the males use the first expression “It was not my fault” with females, in that 35 of them (77.77%) use this expression with females where as only 19 (42.22%) use it with males. Also, 26 (57.77%) use the second expression “It was your own fault” which is less polite with males and only 10 (22.22%) use it with females. The reason behind the higher use of the first expression with females and the second expression with males is that the second expression is a direct blame of the other person, something which males do not tend to use with females, who are socially seen as more sensitive and weaker.

On the other hand, females are found responding differently to the same 8 situations as shown in the following table:

Table 2: The Female Apology

The above table shows that in the first situation females use more apologetic expressions when they apologize to a male, in that 41 of them (91.11%) use the expression “I am sorry” to apologize to males, whereas 37 of them (82.22%) use



the same expression to apologize to females. The analysis also reveals that females use the other expression “I didn’t see you”

Situation	Female –Male			Female –Female		
	Total No.	No.	%	Total No.	No.	%
1. A. I am sorry. B. I didn't see you.	45	41 4	91.11 8.88	45	37 8	82.22 17.77
2. A. I apologize. B. You will lower your voice without being sorry.	45	29 16	64.44 35.55	45	36 9	80 20
3. A. Sorry about that. B. It is not me.	45	21 24	46.66 53.33	45	21 24	46.66 53.33
4. A. I didn't mean to. B. I'm terribly sorry, I'll pay for that.	45	13 32	28.88 71.11	45	7 38	15.55 84.44
5. A. It will not happen again. B. You are right to be angry.	45	37 8	82.22 17.77	45	43 2	95.55 4.44
6. A. There was no need for you to get insulted. B. I didn't mean to.	45	18 27	40 60	45	5 40	11.11 88.88
7. A. There was a traffic jam. B. Excuse me.	45	22 23	48.88 51.11	45	33 12	73.33 26.66
8. A. It was not my fault. B. It was your own fault.	45	15 30	33.33 66.66	45	27 18	60 40

in that 4 of the females (8.88%) use this expression with males and only 8 (17.77%) with females. The high percentages of apology, given by females to both sexes in this situation, indicate that females feel the need to apologize when physical violation is involved.

The analysis of the second situation shows that the females apologize to females more than to males. The results manifest females do apologize to other females more than they do to

males in that 29 females (64.44%) use the expression “I apologize” when apologizing to males and 36 (80%) use the same expression with females. This direct apology of females, although significantly varies from males to females, indicates their readiness to maintain equilibrium and social harmony. In addition, it is shown that 16 of the females (35.55%) use “I didn’t see you”, i.e. lowering their voice without being sorry, when responding to males, and 9 of them (20%) with females.

In the third situation the table shows that 21 of the females (46.66%) use the expression “Sorry about that” in both cases when the teacher is a male or female. And 24 of the females (53.33%) respond with “It is not me” to both male and female. It is surprising to see in this situation that females deny responsibility to both male and female teacher in their responses. One would expect negative politeness strategies to be used to the powerful and to those with status ‘the teacher’ in this case.

In the fourth situation the analysis uncovers that females use an offer to repair “I’m terribly sorry, I’ll pay for that”, with females more than with males, 38 (84.44%) and 32 (71.11%) respectively. Other females express their apology without offering to repair, “I didn’t mean to”, with a higher percentage with males, in that 13 of them (28.88%) use this statement with males and only 7 (15.55%) with females. The high percentage attributed to offer repair to other females, in this situation, could be justified in that females pay more concern for their possessions, and hence, feel that the other females are greatly damaged when losing something valuable and expensive.



Here in the fifth situation females use the expression “It will not happen again” with females more than males, 43 (95.55%) and 37 (82.22%) respectively. It seems here that missing a date with a female friend is recurrent and makes no harm in the social relationships among females lest the opposite should occur among them, that is, a direct apology such as “You are right to be angry”. On the other hand, females recognize the other person as deserving a direct apology “You are right to be angry” with males more than females, 8 (17.77%) and 2 (4.44%) respectively.

In the sixth situation females are inclined to deny the need to apologize to males more than to females. In their responses to a male, 18 of them (40%) use the expression of denial of the need to apologize “There was no need for you to get insulted”, and only 5 (11.11%) with females. While the majority have chosen the other expression, “I didn’t mean to”, with a remarkable higher percentage when replying to a female; 40 of the females (88.88%) use this statement with females and only 27 of them (60%) with males. Again, females tend to use the second option which is more polite expressing their lack of intent to hurt the other participants through their offence especially the other females.

In the seventh situation 22 of the females (48.88%) use the first expression “There was a traffic jam” with males, and 33 (73.33%) with females. In fact this is indirect way of apologizing and the explanation is intended to set things right. On the other hand, here power dominance prevails. In female – male interaction in our culture it is generally accepted that male are perceived as the dominant and powerful group, with



23 of the females (51.11%) use “Excuse me” with males and 12 (26.66%) with females.

The analysis of the eighth and last situation shows that most of the females do not accept the blame and use “It was not my fault” with females, in that 27 of them (60%) use this expression with females whereas only 15 (33.33%) use it with males. Also, 30 (66.66%) use the second expression “It was your own fault” which is less polite with males and only 18 (40%) use it with females. In fact both expressions used here are of the kind of denial of responsibility. The high percentage used by females to other females in the first expression (60%) could be interpreted in that females feel that since the offence happened accidentally and since they are of the same sex, so they wait for the other females to apologize or justify. Concerning the second expression, (66.66%) of the females blame the other participant for bringing the offence upon himself in female –male interaction. This could be interpreted as females think that male drivers ought to be more attentive and experienced so it would be their fault to crash a car from behind.

Table (3) Male and Female Apology

Situation	Male –Male		Male –Female		Female –Male		Female –Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	13	28.88	34	75.55	41	91.11	37	82.22
2	16	35.55	30	66.66	29	64.44	36	80
3	2	4.44	21	46.66	24	53.33	24	53.33
4	14	31.11	32	71.11	32	71.11	38	84.44
5	18	40	36	80	35	77.77	43	95.55
6	4	8.88	25	55.55	27	60	40	88.88
7	7	15.55	31	68.88	23	51.11	33	73.33
8	19	42.22	35	77.77	30	66.66	27	60

Table (3) summarizes males and females' use of apology strategies in the different 8 situations. The table demonstrates that females apologize more than males do, and they are apologized to more frequently than males are. The table also illustrates the fact that apologies are most frequent between females while apologies between males are relatively rare.

Actually, part of the answer may lie in the males and females' perceptions of the use of apologies. The contexts, types of relationships, and kinds of offence which elicit apologies may differ significantly between the sexes. Women may regard explicit apologies for offences as more important in maintaining relationships than men do. The very low frequency of apologies between males would support this hypothesis. In other words, apologies may function differently for males and females.

The study further uncovers that both males and females make use of the same apology strategies but perceive them as doing different functions. In analyzing the different 8 situations, it has been found that both males and females use the appropriate type of apology when apologizing depending on the situation and the type of offence. Table (4) demonstrates that there has been a preference of females more than males to use direct apology expression when apologizing, 220 (39.21%) and 154 (30.67%) respectively. It is possible that the overall lower numbers of apologies used by males reflect different assessment by females and males when an apology is required. In that case, even though females and males largely use the same strategy, they presumably carry different weight.

Table (4) Analysis of Apology Strategies According to Apologizer Sex

Type of Apology		Male		Female	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	An expression of an apology	154	30.67	220	39.21
2	Explanation or account	52	10.35	55	9.80
3	Acknowledgement of responsibility				
	a. Accepting the blame.	44	8.76	25	4.45
	b. Expressing self – deficiency.	43	8.56	12	2.13
	c. Recognizing the other person as deserving apology.	54	10.75	12	2.13
	d. Expressing lack of intent.	73	14.54	87	15.50
	Subtotal	214	42.62	136	24.24
4	An offer of repair	46	9.16	70	12.47
5	A promise of forbearance	36	7.17	80	14.26
Total		502		561	

Actually, the overall proportion of explanation or account included in the apologies is almost identical for the two sexes, in that males use 52 (10.35%) explanations and females use 55 (9.80%) ones, hence, the differences are too small to be significant.

The study reveals that there is a significant difference in the acknowledgement of responsibility when used by males and females. The table shows that males use 214 (42.62%) terms of acknowledgement of responsibility while females use only 136 (24.24%) terms. It is stated earlier that only accepting the blame is a direct acknowledgement of responsibility while the other three are indirect expressions

of responsibility. Males' inclinations to use such a high percentage over the other semantic formulas when apologizing indicate that males try to avoid as possible as they could to admit their faults. They don't want to appear inferior to their counterparts and thus they tend to use implicit terms of apologies such as 'I didn't mean to', 'I was confused', etc.

This study also reveals that females, in general, are inclined to offer repair when the damage is severe especially to a mate. They use 70 (12.47%) terms of offer of repair whereas males use only 46 (9.16%). Females' high percentage, here, is perhaps because they feel such cost damage may threaten their relationship with their friends.

The strategy of promise of forbearance is also evaluated and scored differently by males and females. The overall use of this strategy by females is 80 (14.26%) whereas is used 36 (7.17%) by males. The high tendency of females to use this strategy more than males could be justified that females motivation for apologies of this kind may be related to their perception of what is necessary to maintain the relationship with the person offended, especially when the offence happens more than once.

The study has also revealed that, in certain situations, the need to apologize is rejected and thus the participants deny being sorry or apologize. As shown in table (5), 61 of the males (25.63%) deny their need to apologize while only 23 of the males (14.28%) express their denial of the need to apologize.

Table (5) Type of Denial of Apology

The males refrain from expressing an apology, in certain situations, indicates that they resort to apology only in

Type of Denial of Apology		Male		Female	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	A denial of the need to apologize.	61	25.63	23	14.28
2	A denial of responsibility.				
	a. Not accepting the blame.	141	59.24	90	55.90
	b. Blaming the other participant for bringing the offence upon him/herself.	36	15.12	48	29.81
Total		238		161	

cases when it is very necessary to do that. That is, if the situation could be handled without being sorry they would express the opposite especially with strangers and not mates.

This is also the case in which males do not accept the blame. It has been found, in this study, that males more than females deny their responsibility and do not accept the blame, 141 (59.24%) and 90 (55.90%) respectively. Males do not admit their faults if they have the opportunity to find another way other than being sorry. This happens if we take into consideration that males try to look superior and dominant to their counterparts and to the other sex if we realize that our community is male-oriented.

It is surprising and unexpected to find that females more than males blame the other participants for bringing the

offence upon him/herself, 48 (29.81%) and 36 (15.12%) respectively.

One of the most obvious relevant components of the situation in describing apologies is the type of offence which appears to require some kind of apology. Table (6) illustrates the differences in the type of offence which males and females apologize for.

Table (6) Male and Female Use of Apology According to Offence Type

Type of Offence		Male		Female	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Inconvenience	46	27.87	65	22.18
2	Time	36	21.81	80	27.30
3	Space	37	22.42	78	26.62
4	Possessions	46	27.87	70	23.89
Total		165		293	

As shown in table (6), males are found to apologize more than females to inconvenience and possessions offences, while females apologize more than males to time and space offences.

Concerning inconvenience offences, it seems that males realize that females are sensitive and tender and need to apologize to. As for possessions offences, males, too, are ready to apologize because they are financially able more than females who are occasionally family dependent.

As the table above shows, time offences are more frequent reasons for apologies among females than males, in that 80 of the females (27.30%) apologize more than males 36 (21.81%) for time offences. It may be that when we think of

time as very valuable commodity, we are reflecting females endeavor to be more attentive to preserve and maintain relationships with others. On the other hand, males do not feel that time offences affect their relationships with others.

As for space offences, females are found apologizing more than males do, 78 (26.62%) and 37 (22.42%) respectively. A predominance of apologies for accidental body contact, 'bumping into someone', is not surprising in a group who are the main victims of body harassment. It is very clear that women are more sensitive to such impositions and, as a result, readily apologize for space intrusions. Males, on the other hand, may not regard space impositions as offences at all, perhaps regarding bumping into others as inevitable and normal interaction.

4. Conclusions

The main finding of this study refers to differences between men and women regarding the preferred apology strategies. It has been found that both men and women make use of the same apology strategies but they perceive them differently. Men may perceive them as self-oriented FTAs, damaging the speaker's face and therefore to be avoided where possible. Women, by contrast, may perceive them as other-oriented speech acts and as a way of facilitating social harmony.

The study has also proved the following:

- 1- Women apologize more than men overall.
- 2- Apologies between men are relatively rare while apologies between women are most frequent.
- 3- Both men and women apologize more to other women.



- 4- Men apologize more often to inconvenience and possession offences while women apologize more to time and space offences.
- 5- Though the most frequent response for both sexes is to accept apologies, men reject apologies more than women do and women accept them proportionately more than men do.

All these facts are consistent with the interpretation of the data which proposes that women and men evaluate the need to apologize differently; an interpretation which suggests that men avoid apologies where possible, using them only in cases where they judge they are likely to cause greater offence by the omission of an apology. On the other hand, women are inclined to offer an apology in the sense that this may heal the infraction caused by the offence, and hence set things right with the person offended.

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Appendix Situations

- 1- Walking in the gallery, you accidentally bump into someone.
a. I am sorry b. I didn’t see you
- 2- At the library you read loudly and a student asked you to lower your voice.
a. I apologize b. You will lower your voice without being sorry
- 3- Your teacher ordered you to stop talking and you were not the person who talked.
a. Sorry about that b. It is not me
- 4- You accidentally spoiled a coffee on your friend’s laptop.
a. I didn’t mean to

- b. b. I'm terribly sorry, I'll pay for that**
- 5- You have forgotten a meeting with your friend more than once.
- a. It will not happen again**
- b. b. You are right to be angry**
- 6- You are at a meeting and you say something that one of the participants interprets as a personal insult to him/her.
- a. There was no need for you to get insulted**
- b. b. I didn't mean to**
- 7- You arrived late to attend the lecture.
- a. There was a traffic jam b. Excuse me**
- 8- Driving a car and you stopped suddenly, another car crushed you from behind.
- a. It was not my fault b. It was your own fault**