
The Gender of the Apologiser as a Social Factor in the Selection of Apology Strategies (A Socio-pragmatic Study)**Sahar Wathiq Yaseen Omran****E-mail: Sah20h1008@uoanbar.edu.iq****The Department of English/College of Education
for Humanities-University of Anbar****Prof. Dr. Muslih Shwaysh Ahmed****E-mail: ed.musleh.shweesh@uoanbar.edu.iq****Al-Maarif University College****DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31973/aj.v2i145.4182>****ABSTRACT:**

"Politeness" is a culturally defined pattern of language use that enables the speaker to formulate appropriate speech acts like an apology. The speech act of apology is a part of pragmatics study and belongs to expressive speech acts. However, it cannot be separated from sociolinguistics because social factors such as social context, gender, and the participants' relationship can all have an impact on how apologizers make their apologies. The selection of the appropriate formulas of apology strategies to pay off violations of social norms is considered a hard task since it is based on some cultural and social norms. Thus, the present study aims to study the apology strategies used by Iraqi male/female postgraduate students at the University of Anbar, in addition to investigating the effect of gender on the use of polite apology strategies. An oral Discourse Completion Task was used as a data collection instrument, supported by a semi-structured interview. The data has been analysed using the descriptive analysis method, based on Leech's (2014) classification of apology. The findings revealed that "expressing regret" was the most frequently used apology strategy. Furthermore, both genders used different indirect strategies to support their apologies. Both genders used a new supporting move, which is "admitting responsibility for in-group member's fault." In conclusion, the gender of the participants has a slight effect on the choice of polite apology strategies. Moreover, social status and age were the most effective social factors as compared to the others.

Keywords: Apology strategy, Gender, Oral DCT

Introduction

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

theoretical aspects need to be discussed in this paper; as pragmatics, sociolinguistics, socio-pragmatics, politeness, speech acts, apology, gender.

Sociolinguistics

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

Pragmatics

In the 1930s, pragmatics was originally employed as a subfield of semiotics. It was then used in linguistics as a branch that investigates language usage. Morris, Carnap, and Peirce developed a language framework called pragmatics. In his famous trichotomy of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, Charles Morris defined pragmatics as "the study of the relation of signs to interpreters" (Kharboot & Nima, 2020). Pragmatics has emerged as a result of seminal ideas, views and arguments about the function and the use of language by philosophers such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969, 1979) through their 'speech act theory' and Grice (1975) through his 'cooperative principle'. Crystal (2008:379) defines pragmatics as: "the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication". Thus, pragmatics extends beyond dictionary definitions to consider the actual meaning of a given utterance in light of the context or norms of the culture in which it occurs (Yule, 1996). Furthermore, according to O'Keeffe, et al (2011), several methods can be used to create a thorough pragmatic knowledge of language, spanning from text analysis to context awareness. Furthermore, in their conceptions of pragmatics, Leech (1983) and Levinson (1983) emphasized the role of context in comprehending and making meaning. Producing meaning is thus a dynamic and interactive process that includes the association of meaning between speakers and hearers, as well as the

linguistic, social, and cultural contexts of utterances. So, generating meaning is a dynamic and interactive process that includes the association of meaning between speakers and listeners, as well as the linguistic, social, and cultural contexts of utterances (Ahmed, 2017).

Socio-Pragmatics

The term "socio-pragmatics" may appear redundant from a Continental European viewpoint on pragmatics, because pragmatics is considered as a general cognitive, social, and cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena in connection to their use in forms of action (Verschueren, 1999). Socio-pragmatics, on the other hand, has a more defined heritage in the Anglo-American understanding of pragmatics, because pragmatics is considered a separate component from the other components in linguistic theory (Horn & Ward, 2004). As a result, socio-pragmatics combines sociolinguistics and pragmatics. According to Nurjamily (2015), socio-pragmatics is a combination of sociology and pragmatics. Sociology is the study of societies and how people interact in groupings. Pragmatics, on the other hand, considers what people say in a certain situation and how it impacts others, and it refers to the social perspective that supports the understanding and performance of communicative activities by participants (Mujiono, 2020). Moreover, socio-pragmatics is a pragmatics study that follows a set of guidelines (Manurung, 2010). More recently, Leech (2014:14), in reference to the pragmatics of politeness, describes socio-pragmatics as involving "the various scales of value that make a particular degree of politeness seem appropriate or normal in a given social setting". Leech's earlier statement (Leech, 1983) on "language use reflects the pragmatics of the period, which was highly concerned with a speaker-oriented perspective of pragmatics, that is, the speaker making choices in their use of language" Leech (2014:14). Of course, Leech is considering socio-pragmatics in the context of politeness, not contradicting his earlier concept of socio-pragmatics. Nonetheless, the fact that he is now doing so shows that he is aware of alterations in pragmatics that have lessened the speaker's dominance in the meaning-making process. On the other hand, pragma-linguistics is concerned with "such phenomena as the range of the lexico-grammatical resources of the language, their meanings, the degree of pragmaticalization, their frequency, and how they are deployed as linguistic strategies of politeness" (Leech 2014:14).

Linguistics Politeness

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

1983: 140). Naturally, the field has progressed in the last decade, and a contemporary definition would reflect this. Sara Mills (2003), on the other hand, has questioned politeness definitions that presuppose analysts can identify statements as distancing, “the notion that most people would agree about what constitutes a polite or impolite act” (2003: 6).

Speech Acts Classification

Speech acts are a popular topic in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. According to Gibbs (1999), Austin was the first to address the functions of utterances in interpersonal communication; hence it is often assumed that J. L. Austin is the founder of the Speech Acts Theory. According to Austin (1962), speech acts are actions carried out by utterances such as delivering commands or making promises. Speech acts entail real-life encounters that necessitate not only language knowledge, but also appropriate language use in a specific culture to avoid communication breakdown (Al Ali, 2012). According to Austin (1962), speech acts are divided into three categories: the locutionary act, which is defined as the act of uttering something. The illocutionary act, on the other hand, is linked to the force of a performative statement, such as "promising" or "apologizing." The third is the perlocutionary act, which focuses on how an illocutionary act affects the listener while attempting to determine the speaker's illocutionary intention. Searle's (1979) classification scheme presents a more thorough taxonomy of speech acts, listing five illocutionary roles that speech acts can perform: assertives, commissives, directives, declarations, and expressives. Assertives, also known as representatives according to Searle (1975), are speech acts in which the speaker represents or describes how things are in the world, i.e., he conveys his opinion by committing to "the truth of a proposition," such as describing or asserting facts and assertions. Commissives are speaking acts that obligate the speaker to take a future action, such as promising, threatening, or inviting. Directives are speech acts that are used to get the listener to do something, such as recommending, commanding, or ordering. Declarations are verbal acts that are used to change or affect the state of a situation or an item immediately, such as 'I pronounce you a husband and wife.' Finally, expressives are speech acts that are intended to communicate a speaker's feelings and emotions. They are not employed to exchange information, but rather to express likes, dislikes, pain, joy, admiration, or grief. There are multiple requirements for establishing different classes of speech acts, according to Searle (1979). The illocutionary act, the speaker's psychological condition, the utterance itself, and its usage in the real world are some of these requirements (Kharboot & Nima, 2020).

Speech Act of Apology

However, the researchers address apology phenomenon which considered one type of *speech events* (speech acts) that Leech (2014) called it “politeness-sensitive”. The researchers track Leech’s perspective that the utterance gives multifunction pragmatic use such as apology strategies as Leech (2014: 115) states:

“I refer to these as *speech events* rather than as *speech acts*, because the latter term has typically been used in the study of single utterances, a particular limitation of Searle’s speech act theory (1969, 1975a). However, when we study such phenomena as requests and apologies in context, we often find that they are more complex than this”

To express regret for offending someone, apologies are issued. When an offense has been committed, apologies are usually made to restore harmony. If someone hurts, inconveniences, or violates a person in any manner, his or her face must be restored, and an apology is required. Leech (1983) and Nureddeen (2008) explained that the apology is a remedy for an offense in order to keep the two parties in good terms. They believe that apologizing demonstrates the speaker's accountability and is done to maintain the balance between the speaker and the listener. As a result, apologies differ from other forms of speech such as thanking and complimenting (Abu Humeid, 2013).

Kinds of Offences

Holmes (1989) states that one of the most prominent components of the situation in describing apologies in a particular discourse is the type of offence which appears to require a kind of remedy, and the categorization of offence types provides a useful indication of the range of offences. In other words, an offense is considered as face threatening act toward the offended people, and apologies are intended to soften the offense. Holmes (1989: 201) suggests the following categories of offenses, namely:

- a. Space offenses; e.g. : bumping into someone, queue jumping, etc.
- b. Talk offenses; e.g. : interrupting, talking too much, etc.
- c. Time offenses; e.g. : keeping people waiting, taking too long, etc.
- d. Possession offenses; e.g. : damaging or losing someone’s personal property.
- e. Social gaffes; e.g. : burping, coughing, etc.
- f. Inconvenience offenses; e.g. : giving someone the wrong item, disturbing someone etc.

Classification of apology

Leech pointed out that there are three main semantic routine and formulaic apology strategies. Leech (2014: 125) points out that “a large majority of apologies are routine and formulaic, it can still be said that English uses three main (semantic) strategies of apology,” However, Leech maps out these three semantic strategies as showing speaker’s regret, asking hearer’s pardon or forgiveness and using a performative utterance:

- (a) Expression of speaker’s regret: e.g., (I’m) sorry, I regret..., I’m afraid
- (b) Asking hearer’s pardon (or forgiveness): e.g., excuse me, pardon (me)
- (c) Using a performative utterance: e.g., I apologize, I beg your *pardon*

Leech then (2014:116) classifies the potential components of an apology into five ones:

- (a) **Head act:** the apology itself (IFID), e.g.: (*I’m*) (*so*) *sorry*. . .
- (b) **A confession, or admission of responsibility** for the fault, such as “(*I’m sorry*,) *I lied*.”

(c) **An explanation** of why or how the fault occurred: “(Well I’m sorry it’s been such a mess.) It’s just, this, this whole magazine this year, I mean we’ve had to rely on so many other folks, you know.”

(d) **An offer of repair** (or making amends): making sure the fault is to be corrected or a remedy applied; e.g., (after spilling something) “(Rachel, I’m sorry I’m leaving this here.)” “I’ll tidy it up”

(e) **Promise of forbearance** “(making amends in the longer term by undertaking to do better on future occasions): (Right, right, so I’m very sorry.) I won’t do it again next year”

Apology: Pos-Politeness or Neg-Politeness

The researchers are adamant that apologizing enhances concord and cordiality among the speakers, as well as lowering the likelihood of a violation being committed against the addressee. Inherently, apology is likely to be seen unfavorably in a variety of groups. Leech (2014: 121) considers apology to be face-enhancing as it tackles the violation than face-threaten because its main aim is repairing “to repay the debt, to redeem S’s loss of face. However, it is the intended effect of a speech act on *H* that is crucial: an apology is meant to be face-enhancing to *H* rather than face-threatening”. According to Leech (2014) there are two aspects of linguistic politeness: pos-politeness and neg-politeness. However, Leech manifests apology under pos-politeness because it assigns positive value to the addressee: Neg-politeness typically involves indirectness, hedging, and understatement, which are among the best-known and most-studied indicators of the polite use of language. Pos-politeness, on the other hand, gives or assigns some positive value to the addressee. Offers, invitations, compliments, and congratulations, then, are examples of pos-politeness. Thank-yous and apologies are also kinds of pos-politeness.

The Socio-Pragmatic Facet of Apology

The socio-pragmatic component connects different types and degrees of apologies to the social contexts in which they occur. We can examine them from the perspective of many elements within English-speaking societies as well as from the outside, comparing the frequency of apologies in English-speaking societies to other language communities. This part can just scratch the surface of the subject (Leech, 2014). Holmes observed a significant disparity between males and females in his research of apologies among New Zealand English speakers (1990, 1995). Females made far more apologies to others and also received far more apologies from others. Holmes (1995) comes to the conclusion that women are more polite than men, in apologies as well as other speech events. Another striking conclusion of Deutschmann's research, which is unsurprisingly linked to his finding that men apologize more than women, is that more powerful people apologize to less powerful people more than vice versa. This contradicts Brown and Levinson's well-known claim that politeness rises in direct proportion to three factors: H's power and social distance from S, and the imposition's weight (or what is transacted). Turning to sociopragmatic differences between nationalities or regional groups, Leech found it useful to consider the five socio-pragmatic parameters: vertical distance,

horizontal distance, and cost-benefit, supplemented by the two extra factors of strength of obligations/rights” and “self-territory vs. other territory (Leech, 2014).

Apology and Gender

Gender is one of the most important internal or personal factors that affect communicative competence and the choices of linguistic performance. In other words, women behave and speak differently from men, and men think and understand things differently from women. Many other linguists are researching the impact of gender differences on apology strategies. Fraser (1981:269), for instance, investigates the issue and states: “*there is no systematic or predictable frequency in the occurrence of apology, no sex offer more apologies, a result that is apposite to the stereotype that women apologize more than men.*” Holmes (1989: 197) focuses on sex differences in the realization of apology, and contrary to Fraser's findings, the investigation showed that there are significance of an apology. She noted that: “*The way in which women's used of particular speech act differs from the way of men which has not attracted sufficient attention.*” Thus, the current study attempts to investigate the impact of gender on the choice of the most appropriate apology strategies in different social situations.

Methodology

In the current study, the researcher applied a qualitative research method. Therefore, this study was designed in a way in which qualitative data are selected and then analysed qualitatively based on Leech's (2014) model of politeness and apology classification. What makes this paper different from others is that it measured the Iraqi male/ female EFL learners' attitudes toward the politeness in expressing apologies in different social contexts according to the semantic apology classification proposed by Leech, which involves 4 apology strategies. The present study utilised a qualitative method for three main reasons: to get in-depth information about the aspects under study; to get a clear and sufficient analysis of the data; and to investigate the aspects in their real context.

Instruments

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

information about conceptualising apology, obligation to apologise, and the role of social factors (i.e. gender, age, social status/power, and social distance/relationship). The oral DCT was piloted by 4 participants to ensure the face validity.

The Sample

Purposive sampling was used in the current study based on the research design chosen and the study's objectives and research questions. The selection of the sample in any study is not an easy task as it depends on certain criteria. However, the criteria for selecting purposive sampling in the current study are: background knowledge and gender. Based on the criterion of background experiences, the researcher of the current study selected purposefully forty postgraduate EFL students of MA programmes in the academic years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 at the University of Anbar-College of Education for Humanities and College of Arts–English Departments. Furthermore, based on the criterion of gender, the sample of this study involved 40 students (20 males and 20 females).

Data Analysis Procedures

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

Data Analysis and Discussion

The second research question of this study was 'What kinds of apology strategies are frequently used by Iraqi male/female EFL postgraduate students in the academic setting?' The findings of this study revealed the use of the three types of Leech's apology strategies by the participants in a large variety of forms. In addition to the fourth strategy, this was neglected intentionally by Leech in his model. Thus, the findings showed 505 occurrences of the four apology strategies. Table (1) showed that the strategy of "Expressing regret" was the most commonly used

strategy by the subjects of the study. The results mentioned above confirm that the findings of this part of the study agree with the model adopted.

Table (1) The frequency of the overall used apology strategies

No.	Apology Strategy	Freq.	Percent
1	Expressing regret	318	63%
2	Asking hearer's pardon	105	21%
3	Using a performative utterance	59	12%
4	Less common reduced formulae	23	5%
	Total	505	

Table (2) presents the findings related to the kinds of apology strategies that were frequently used by males and females separately. The table below revealed that females used more apology strategies than males. This finding also demonstrated that both males and females were nearly equal in using the first strategy of apology, which is "Expressing regret" in its different forms; but there was a significant difference between them in the use of the other two main strategies, that is to say, "Asking hearer's pardon" and "Using performative utterances".

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

No.	Apology Strategy	Freq.	Males		Females	
1	Expressing regret	318	162	51%	156	49%
2	Asking hearer's pardon	105	44	42%	61	58%
3	Using a performative utterance	59	25	42%	34	58%
4	Less common reduced formulae	23	12	52%	11	48%
	Total	505	243		262	

Regarding the forms of apology strategies used by the participants in this study; the qualitative analysis showed that Iraqi EFL male/female postgraduate students employed 34 formulas of apology when they make apologies. Table (3) revealed that (I am sorry), (I am so sorry) and (Sorry) were the most commonly used forms. This finding goes in line with Leech (2014). The frequency and percentage of each apology form used by male and female participants were also calculated. Table (4) clarifies the percentage of apology forms used by female learners. The qualitative analysis showed that females used (31) different forms of apology strategies in different situations. The frequency and percentages of the following formulas were the highest: (I am sorry), (I am so sorry), (Forgive me) and (Sorry). At the same time, the qualitative analysis of the male participants' responses marked (21) different apology strategies used among them, as shown in Table (5). The following were the frequency and percentages of the most common strategies: (I am sorry) and (Sorry) were the expressions

with the highest frequencies. However, (I apologise), (Forgive me) and (I am really sorry) were less commonly used than the first set of forms.

Table (3) The overall frequency of the apology formulae used by the participants

Z	Apology formulae	Total	Percent	Z	Apology formulae	Total	Percent
1	I am sorry	91	18%	18	I seek your forgiveness	3	1%
2	I am so sorry	83	17%	19	I sincerely apologize	3	1%
3	Sorry	78	16%	20	Accept my sincere apologies	2	0%
4	Forgive me	51	10%	21	I am so <u>so</u> sorry	2	0%
5	I apologize	46	9%	22	I deeply regret	2	0%
6	I am really sorry	29	6%	23	I'd like to apologize	2	0%
7	Excuse me	18	4%	24	My sincere apologies	2	0%
8	Accept my apology	11	2%	25	I am apologizing	1	0%
9	Pardon me	11	2%	26	I am awfully sorry	1	0%
10	I am very sorry	10	2%	27	I am ever sorry	1	0%
11	My apologies	10	2%	28	I am sincerely sorry	1	0%
12	I am terribly sorry	7	1%	29	I am so very sorry	1	0%
13	So sorry	6	1%	30	I feel so sorry	1	0%
14	I owe you an apology	5	1%	31	I offer my apology	1	0%
15	Apologies	4	1%	32	I really apologize	1	0%
16	Deepest apologies	3	1%	33	My deepest apologies	1	0%
17	I beg your pardon	3	1%	34	Thousand apologies	1	0%
					Total	492	

Regarding the various factors that Leech, 2014 classified to determine the nature of an apology as a speech event, as mentioned in chapter three, the results that were gained in the current study revealed some other kinds of supporting moves used by the participants that were proposed by some other previous studies¹, such as: lack of intent, paying a concern, self-deficiency, euphemistic utterances, non-verbal behaviour, and self-criticism. The technique of 'lack of intent' was found in the form of *M2*: "Sorry I don't mean"; The technique of 'paying a concern' is one of the strategies in which the offender attempts to show his/her concern about the offended to decrease the offence and relieve the offended hearer as; *F15* "Sorry sorry are you ok? Did I hurt you or something?". The technique of self-deficiency, such as: *F5*: "I'm really sorry for losing your data.. I actually don't know how to help you " which expresses an implied admission of responsibility. Regarding self-criticism, is known as self-punishment strategy to increase the hearer's sympathy for the offender.

¹ Hussein and Hammouri, 1998; Trosborg, 1987; Deutschmann's 2003 and Nureddeen, 2008

Table (4) The frequency of the apology formulae used by female participants

Z	Apology formulae	Freq.	Percent	Z	Apology formulae	Freq.	Percent
1	I am Sorry	45	17%	18	I'd like to apologize	2	1%
2	I am so sorry	41	16%	19	So Sorry	2	1%
3	Forgive me	34	13%	20	I am so so sorry	2	1%
4	Sorry	34	13%	21	Accept my sincere apologies	1	0%
5	I apologize	25	10%	22	I am apologizing	1	0%
6	I am really sorry	13	5%	23	I am awfully sorry	1	0%
7	Excuse me	9	3%	24	I am sincerely sorry	1	0%
8	I am very sorry	7	3%	25	I am so very sorry	1	0%
9	Pardon me	7	3%	26	I beg your pardon	1	0%
10	Accept my apology	6	2%	27	I am ever sorry	1	0%
11	My apologies	5	2%	28	I feel so sorry	1	0%
12	I am terribly sorry	4	2%	29	My deepest apologies	1	0%
13	Apologies	4	2%	30	Deepest apologies	1	0%
14	I sincerely apologize	3	1%	31	Accept my sincere apologies	1	0%
15	I deeply regret	2	1%		Total	260	
16	I owe you an apology	2	1%				
17	I seek your forgiveness	2	1%				

In addition to the various factors that have been noticed as defining the nature of apology that were listed by the model of the study, the findings of this study elicited a new kind of supporting move, which is 'Admitting responsibility for an in-group member's fault': M8: "I don't know what to tell you but my little brother is a naughty and he painted a few pages of your book *I'm very sorry* for this behavior I will buy you a new book" Based on the socio-pragmatic scale presented in the model adopted, the degree of politeness depends on the degree of in-group or out-group membership². This newly proposed supporting move, which was elicited via the findings of this study, was used by the participants in situation (9), by expressing full responsibility for what the speaker's little brother did in terms of the extended self-territory of the speaker.

² The strong relationship between the members of the in-group requires the speaker to be modest not only when he speaks about himself, but also when he talks about the members of his family (Leech, 2005)

Table (5) The frequency of the apology formulae used by male participants

No	Apology formulae	Freq.	Percent
1	I am sorry	46	20%
2	Sorry	44	19%
3	I am so sorry	42	18%
4	I apologize	21	9%
5	Forgive me	17	7%
6	I am really sorry	16	7%
7	Excuse me	9	4%
8	Accept my apology	5	2%
9	My apologies	5	2%
10	Pardon me	4	2%
11	So sorry	4	2%
12	I owe you an apology	3	1%
13	I am terribly sorry	3	1%
14	I am very sorry	3	1%
15	My sincere apologies	2	1%
16	I beg your pardon	2	1%
17	Deepest apologies	2	1%
18	I offer my apology	1	0%
19	I really apologize	1	0%
20	I seek your forgiveness	1	0%
21	Thousand apologies	1	0%
	Total	232	

Table (6) illustrates that the frequency of all of the used supporting moves was (1027 occurrences). (Explaining the situation) was the most frequently used technique, and the lowest occurrence was (A promise for forbearance). The qualitative analysis in Table (7) revealed that male and female participants were totally equal in using the technique of (Explaining the situation), and it was the most frequently used by both. It was also found that there was a significant difference in using the move of (An offer for repair), where males surpassed females in making more offers. Moreover, the findings revealed that males showed themselves as more likely to admit responsibility for their own faults. By contrast, females showed less use of this technique. Other strategies showed an approximate frequency of their use by both males and females.

Table (6) The frequency and the percentages of the overall Supporting Moves of apology Strategies used by the participants.

No.	Supporting moves	Freq.	Percent.
1	Internal modification	214	19%
2	External modification	92	8%
3	Admission of responsibility	117	10%
4	An offer of repair	185	16%
5	Explaining the situation	214	19%
6	a promise for forbearance	17	2%
The new strategy			
7	Admitting responsibility for in-group member's fault	23	2%
8	Self-criticism	42	4%
9	Lack of intent	119	11%
10	Paying a concern	65	6%
11	Expressing self-deficiency	32	3%
12	a euphemistic utterance	2	0%
13	Non-verbal behaviour	4	0%
Total		1126	100%

Table (7) The frequency and the percentages of the supporting moves of apology strategies used by male/female participants

No.	Supporting moves	Males		Females	
		Freq.	Percent.	Freq.	Percent.
1	Internal modification	68	13%	85	16%
2	External modification	50	9%	42	8%
3	Admission of responsibility	64	12%	53	10%
4	An offer of repair	99	18%	86	16%
5	Explaining the situation	107	20%	107	20%
6	a promise for forbearance	8	1%	9	2%
The new strategies					
7	Admitting responsibility for in-group member's fault	12	2%	11	2%
8	Self-criticism	17	3%	25	5%
9	Lack of intent	62	12%	57	11%
10	Paying a concern	32	6%	33	6%
11	Expressing self-deficiency	17	3%	15	3%
12	Euphemistic utterance	0	0%	2	0%
13	Non-verbal behaviour	3	1%	1	0%
Total		539	100%	526	100%

Semi-Structured Interview Analysis

1- The Conceptualization of Apology

The participants' responses revealed two concepts about apology, and all of them met one aim regardless of their variations. Having interviewed the participants about their view on apology, the conceptualization of apology was viewed differently. First, apology as a speech act and social phenomenon is perceived by them as behaviour related to *Admission of Responsibility for a Misbehavior*. They claim that when a person apologizes, he will give the hearer an impression that he/she is attending to his feelings and feeling sorry about his/her misbehaving. This reflects a social perception that Iraqi male/female postgraduate EFL learners in general are among the least apologising people due to their pride and the perception that an apology reduces individual dignity when it is seen as threatening; so, admitting responsibility for misbehaviour is an image of courage, which is required to face and overcome this threat. For example:

MIn1 : *“Apology is to give excuse for a misbehavior...”*

FIn1 : *“Apology means a confession of a fault when you feel sorry about some mistakes you have made and take responsibility for that fault and you apologize in certain sentences that expressing your feelings.”*

The second conceptualization is that an apology is regarded as a part of *Self-Morality*. The participants stated that the more a person apologizes, the more respectful and polite they will be. Consider the following examples:

FIn1: *“I apologize because I want to regain the trust also to show politeness”*

MIn1: *“Apology is to give excuse for misbehavior or sometimes to create prefix for something you should have done.”*

MIn2: *“Apology means to me respect, because if you respect somebody you apologize to him”*

MIn3: *“Apology means forgiveness in order to show our respect to others”*

This conceptualization is consistent with previous research on apologies, such as Ahmed (2017), who demonstrated that making and accepting apologies is a moral matter of redressing wrongdoings and establishing restorations. It is indicated that apologies are not enough as a restoration to the offended person. Apologies are valuable in themselves, and both physical and moral violations can be redressed. The overall point of view concluded by the interviewees underlines the necessity of an apology in their culture.

2- The Obligation to Apology

All interviewed participants confirmed they should apologize when they commit an offence or make a mistake. For example:

MIn3: *“When I did an ugly mistake and I am sure about it , I rapidly say sorry for my mistake”*

MIn4: *“I usually apologize when I feel that I have offended somebody with my wrong saying or wrongdoing. I do so to dispel any hard feelings that the offended person may have for me.”*

FIn1: *“We should apologize whenever we make a mistake or fault to certain person whether it is accidentally or intentionally we should apologize. And why because we want to regain the trust also to show politeness to show that we don’t mean to do that fault or we feel sorry for doing so”*

FIn4: *“I apologize when I feel that I have said or done something to other people and after that I feel it isn’t suitable so I apologize for them. I apologize for seeking forgiveness for those who I hurt them.”*

It is clear from the given responses, that Iraqi male/female postgraduate students’ apologies are performed to save the offended person’s and the apologizer’s face. They perceived how apology aims at restoring social relation, showing etiquette and courtesy.

3- The Effect of Gender

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

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

FIn4: *“I have actually never apologize for anyone especially for men because I try my best to avoid doing mistakes for others to avoid apologizing for them. Because I believe that ‘ if you don’t like to apologize you have to try not to do anything wrong to others”*

Regarding cultural factor, a view of the participants showed that the way of their apology for the opposite gender is based on the culture of them and the recipient’s culture. See the example:

MIn3: *“I totally believe that the culture of the recipients plays important role in accepting the apology. For males it is ok for all but with females based on her culture, her region her being familiar or unfamiliar.”*

FIn1: *“I think the matter is like this, when a man apologizes to a man it is easier than apologizing to a woman especially in our culture”*

4- Other Social Factors

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

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

FIn4: *“... person when you apologize to someone who is your teacher this is different when you apologize to your friends or relatives.”*

So, people of high rank get the more polite and formal apology as compared with those of low position. Regarding the social distance between the speaker who is the (apologizer) and the hearer who is the (apology-recipient), It was found that socially distant victims usually receive more apology than socially close ones. The following are some of the responses:

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

FIn3: “*Apology differs from person to person.. some people don't accept apology but some people deserve and accept apology. For those who don't accept apology I just don't bother myself at all when apologize for them*”

However, with reference to the view of FIn3, it was found that she has the tendency to be polite for both groups close and distant, since she based her politeness on the person him/herself not the horizontal dimension, in other words social distance. Hence, to sum up; the views of the participants revealed that social distance plays noticeable role in being polite for others. In considering the age of the offended person, the interview data revealed that both gender groups, regardless of their age and social status, showed more politeness to the older hearers than younger ones due to the position of age. These are some of their quoted responses:

FIn2: “... *I want to apologize to someone who is older I have to be more formal and more polite.*”

MIn4: “*Yes, I can swallow my pride and apologize swiftly to a person who is younger than me, but of course I will be more polite with older people*”

The data showed that the older the hearer, the politer apologies she/he will receive. Conversely, the younger the hearer, the fewer and less formal apologies he or she will receive. Others found it easier to do so because it is less formal and of fewer onuses as in the examples:

MIn2: “*I think it is easier because if you apologize to somebody that is younger, you can convince them easily without the need to explain more to them about what happened.*”

FIn1: “*Yes I can easily apologize to someone who is younger than me ...the age is also plays an important role in apologizing, when the person is younger than me it is easier for me to apologize than that who is older than me since it is less formal*”

Discussion of Findings

The present study is in agreement with some of the past studies; (Abu Humeid 2013; Hassan 2014; Harb 2016; Qari 2019; Aboud 2019; Al-Sallal and Ahmed 2020; and Al-Rawafi et al. 2021) in dealing with the role of gender in making polite apologies. In spite of this similarity, the current study is different from those past studies in the aspects under the study. The current study explored the effect of participants' gender as an independent social factor on the selection of appropriate polite apology strategies based on Leech's 2014 apology semantic classification, then to be analysed socio-pragmatically. According to the researcher's preliminary knowledge, this aspect may not have been investigated previously by

similar research. In terms of methodology, (Abu Humeid 2013; Hassan 2014; Harb 2016; Qari 2019; Aboud 2019; Al-Sallal and Ahmed 2020; and Al-Rawafi et al. 2021) used written (DCT) as data collection instrument. In comparison, in the current study, an online oral (DCT) was used, supported by semi-structured interviews. This type of methodology was proposed to gain a larger amount of semi-natural data, where the participants feel free to express what comes in their minds, as not everything can be expressed on the sheet. This method was also used in the study of Hassan 2014, where oral DCT was used to get data from illiterate participants, which differed from the present study, as used for well-educated participants.

With reference to the first research question; which is “what kind of apology strategies that are frequently used by the participants?” the findings showed that the students implemented all the four types of apology strategies of the model adopted. Table (1) showed "Expressing regret" was the most commonly used strategy by Iraqi male and female postgraduate students. This finding is consistent with prior research such as Qari 2019, Al-Rawafi et al. 2021. This strategy was the most frequently used by males while the other strategies by females. This finding is consistent with Al-Rawafi et al. 2021 as male students did not offer an apology as frequently as the female students, nor ask for hearer's forgiveness. In consistency with Abu Humeid 2013, Iraqi females used more strategies than males, this is because men in this society can talk and behave more freely than women. The students support their apologies with different indirect strategies in order to mitigate the offense. The most frequently used supporting move was "explaining the situation," by both genders equally, which agrees with Harb 2016, Sallal 2020. This indicates that Iraqi EFL learners prefer to use this strategy to present detailed justifications in order to get the hearer's understanding and forgiveness. Internal modifications were also of common use by both genders, which agrees with Qari 2019. "Admitting responsibility" and "promise for forbearance" were the least used, which does not agree with Al-Rawafi et al. 2021, where both strategies were of the highest frequency especially by females. The current study agrees with the findings of Harb 2016; Aboud 2019; Sallal 2020; and Qari 2019 as they thought that those strategies were to be more face-threatening than other apology strategies.

The findings of the current study also revealed a new indirect strategy. This is "admitting responsibility for an in-group member's fault." The use of this strategy can be explained as the constraint of politeness was governed by determining who was included in the domain of the speaker and who was excluded. The strongest group in the Eastern culture is that which represents the in-group membership (family members). The strong relationship between the members of the in-group requires that, the speaker should be modest not only when he speaks about himself, but also when he speaks about the members of his family, because they considered as a part of his extended self-territory, so the debt or fault of the in-group members naturally belongs also to the speaker. This strategy was also of little use since it is a context-based strategy. Some politeness maxims formulated by

some indirect apology strategies, such as offer of repair, self-criticism, paying a concern, and so on. The technique of “an offer of repair”, suggests that the participants did not try to imitate the apology of the target language through their apology production; instead, their approach, selections, and applications were distinctive. This finding goes in line with Harb 2016 and About 2019 as it was used by males more than females; but does not with Qari 2019 and Al-Rawafi et al 2021 where females used it more. "Paying a concern" was as an attempt to decrease the offense and relieve the offended person. Regarding self-criticism strategically, the offender is trying to limit the alternatives available to the offended and force him to accept the offered apologies without hesitation by using strong phrases of self-reproach to indicate intense displeasure. This strategy was used by females more than males.

Regarding the third research question, that was about investigating the effect of gender on the use of apology strategies; and the effect of any other social factors. Concerning the five dimensions of the socio-pragmatic scale, other social factors can affect the degree of apology politeness, such as the factor of “obligations and rights”. This factor was affective in the situations of academic and family domains. It falls within the dimension of Strength of socially defined rights and obligations. So, the degree of obligation S has towards O to perform the action and to give benefit to the O is what made most males and few females apologise and help the hearers. Regarding family domain, specially, in Eastern cultures, some families have a kind of solidarity between the parents and the sons, this was reflected in the responses of some participants; where those participants found it as an ordinary thing to forget a promise with the father or mother, as the parents did not expect such a verbal apology from them; but they cannot let it pass without achieving the promise at once, or even making a new promise to save the parents’ face. This is the socially sanctioned obligation the speakers have to do what their parents want. That is to say, giving high value to their parents’ wants. This obligation falls within the scale of strength of socially defined rights and obligations.

Hearer’s offensive reaction toward the speaker, can be considered as an effective factor that made some participants violate some maxims of politeness, the participants justified their non-apologetic behaviour or their being rude as being annoyed because of hearer’s reaction of anger toward their unintentional behaviour. At the same time, it is the same factor that might lead some participants to offer apologies to the offended hearers with little sympathy in the above situations, specially. Male participants were more affected by this factor. Concerning the factors of solidarity, these are sub-summed under the horizontal scale. In some situations few speakers avoid using any direct strategy of expressing apology to their offended hearers, and they only expressed their lack of intent about the offence; as expressed by the participants that there is no need to make an apology to close friends and the opposite when there is no solidarity. Also males were

more influenced by this factor. Hence, males mostly tended to be polite with socially distant people; while females prefer to keep their close relationships, this is in agreement with Qari 2019. Regarding the factor of 'the value of what was transacted', In other words, the value of the things that have been misused by the speakers, for example, the erased data in situation 3, the ruined book and the broken laptop, therefore, the participants tried to mix their apologies with some justifications as; offers for repairs, expressions of lack of intent to be more polite and soften the offence. So that, gender has no significant effect over the value of what is being transacted, this is fallen within the scale of cost/benefit. In such a situation where physical damage and lost possessions are the offences involved, the single use of only IFIDs is inappropriate since it might be understood as impolite by the offended person; but when there is no physical offence involved, therefore, it would be more polite to use the appropriate strategy, especially one addressing the inner feelings. In such a situation, the participants used the strategy of paying a concern and lack of intent, therefore, it can be said that most Iraqi male and female postgraduate students are socio-pragmatically competent since they support their apologies with appropriate supporting moves, regardless of the degree of closeness of the relationship between them and the offended people, which reflects the effect of the type of offense. This finding is not in agreement with the study of Muhammed 2006 who found that degree of offence made a slight influence on the choices of the polite strategies; but agrees with Al-Rawafi et al 2021 who stated that the selection might be affected by the context-internal than context-external.

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

participants. To sum up, the findings revealed that the factor of social status and age were the most effective social factors over the gender of the participants. This finding is in consistency with Muhammed 2006, Hassan 2014 and Qari 2019. Worthy mentioning, the gender of the addressee was more effective than the gender of the speaker to choose the degree of politeness as was proved by nearly all the participants in the supportive conducted interviews, which agrees Hassan 2014.

Conclusions

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

- 1- Regardless of any social factors, females tend to make apologies to the hearers more than males, and they always attempt to make their apologies more polite by using other supportive strategies. They also try to show concern towards the hearer's feelings and behave modestly in making such an apology to get the sympathy of the hearer and increase the chance of accepting the apology.
- 2- Males tend to repair the offence more than females to decrease the size of the offence and rebuild the relationship with the offended party. In addition, they mostly try to control their real bad feelings and overcome the negatives to save face in embarrassing situations.
- 3- The frequency of the revealed strategies implies that the participants of the study have positive attitude towards such a type of strategy besides an awareness of its significance and usage.
- 4- The use of the investigated strategies in the appropriate contexts shows that the participants are socio-pragmatically competent.
- 5- Males prefer to use the strategy of "Expressing regret" when they apologise, while females tend to ask for hearer's forgiveness and offering apologies by using performative utterances.
- 6- Both genders prefer to use explaining the situation to support their apology to mitigate the offense, while they rarely use expressions of responsibility and a promise for forbearance, since those strategies are more face-threatening than other apology strategies.
- 7- The facets of Eastern culture are reflected clearly in the behaviours of most of the participants, particularly in their choice of strategies when apologising to their parents, family members, friends, and professors.
- 8- "Admitting responsibility for in-group's fault", was a newly revealed supporting move, based on the context of the situation, which indicated that according to the speaker, the hearer was belonging to the out group members, so the speaker spoke modestly about one of his in-group members.
- 9- The gender of the participants as a social factor has a slight significant effect on the use of polite strategies. On the other hand, the gender of the addressee may have a greater effect on the degree of politeness.

- 10-Internal factors such as the type and degree of offence have a more significant effect than external factors like the gender of the participants and the horizontal distance between the interlocutors.
- 11-The offensive reaction of the offended party towards the offence also affects negatively the degree of politeness the speakers employ when apologising, which leads them to violate some maxims of politeness.
- 12-Social status and age are the most effective social factors that govern a speaker's degree of politeness; both factors are related to the vertical distance scale.

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كلية المعارف الجامعة

الخلاصة

التأدب هو نمط محدد ثقافيًا لاستخدام اللغة يُمكن المتحدث من صياغة أفعال الكلام مثل الإعتذار. يعتبر الإعتذار جزءًا من الدراسة التداولية وينتمي إلى أفعال الكلام التعبيرية؛ ومع ذلك، لا يمكن فصله عن علم اللغة الاجتماعي؛ لأن العوامل الاجتماعية مثل السياق الاجتماعي، والنوع الاجتماعي، وعلاقة المشاركين يمكن أن يكون لها تأثيراً على كيفية قيام المعتذرين بتقديم اعتذارهم. لذا فإن اختيار الصيغ المناسبة لاستراتيجيات الاعتذار لتجنب انتهاكات الأعراف الاجتماعية واستعادة الانسجام يعتبر مهمة صعبة؛ لأنها تستند إلى بعض المعايير الثقافية والاجتماعية. تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى دراسة استراتيجيات الإعتذار المستخدمة من قبل طلاب وطالبات الدراسات العليا العراقيين في جامعة الأنبار بالإضافة إلى التحري في تأثير النوع الاجتماعي والعوامل الاجتماعية الأخرى على استخدام الطلبة لاستراتيجيات الإعتذار المؤدبة. تم استخدام إكمال الخطاب شفويًا كأداة لجمع البيانات مدعماً بمقابلة شبه مهيكلة. تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام الأساليب النوعية للتحليل الوصفي بإعتماد تصنيف لينتس ٢٠١٤ لاستراتيجيات الاعتذار. وأظهرت النتائج أن كانت 'الإعراب عن الأسف' هي أكثر استراتيجيات الاعتذار استخداماً بين أفراد العينة. وقد كشفت النتائج أن كلا الجنسين استخدم استراتيجيات غير مباشرة مختلفة لدعم اعتذارهم بناءً على سياق الموقف. وقد استخدم كلا الجنسين نوعاً جديداً من الاستراتيجيات الداعمة وهي 'تحمل مسؤولية خطأ أحد أعضاء المجموعة'. وتوصلت النتائج إلى أن نوع المشاركين الاجتماعي كان له تأثير طفيف على اختيار استراتيجيات الإعتذار المهذبة. علاوة على أن الوضع الاجتماعي (القوة) والعمر كانت أكثر العوامل تأثيراً مقارنة بالعوامل الاجتماعية الأخرى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استراتيجيات الإعتذار، النوع الاجتماعي، مهمة إكمال الخطاب الشفوي