A Comparison of Arab and Turkish EFL Learners' Apology Strategies

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to identify and compare apology strategies employed in English by Turkish and Arab EFL students. To this end, this research study further attempted to indicate the preferences of apology strategies used by both groups, making a comparison between Turkish EFL learners' and Arab EFL learners' responses in terms of frequency of using different types of apology strategies. To this end, data were collected through a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which afforded insights into how both Arab and Turkish EFL learners adopt apology strategies in their pragmatic competence in the target language. Findings revealed that the most preferred strategy by both groups was reported to be that of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) and that their linguistic repertoire is influenced by factors such as their proficiency level. Based on the findings of the study, further suggestions and implications are provided.

Introduction

Interlanguage speakers (i.e., those of English as a foreign language speakers), irrespective of their proficiency levels, often encounter problems in communication due mostly to their limited knowledge of how speech acts are commonly performed in the target language.

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Such being the case, the current study aims to provide first-hand insights into Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP), which is comprised of two domains, namely, pragmatics and interlanguage. Bardovi-Harlig (2010) argues that pragmatics is the scientific study of all aspects of linguistic behaviour concerned with contextual meanings. It is the study of the speaker's meaning vis-a-vis the sentence meaning that bridges the gap between the language system and its use. To this end, Kasper and Rose (2002) describe interlanguage in association with the non-native speakers' ability to comprehend and perform acts in the target language and its relevant development. Therefore, the current study is an attempt to contribute to the relevant literature by investigating how the speech act of apology is used and performed by two different EFL learner groups.

Literature Review

Communicative Competence

According to Hymes (1972), communicative competence refers to the ability to use (utilize) grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations. In a similar fashion, Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) described communicative competence as a combination of knowledge and skill needed for communication. On the contrary, Savignon (1972, 1983) highlighted the aspect of ability in her concept of communicative competence by describing it as 'the ability to function in a truly communicative setting – that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors' (Savignon, 1972, p.8).

Canale and Swain (1980) asserted that the ability to communicate involves four different sub-competencies; grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. Sociolinguistic competence could be defined as appropriateness of both meaning and form and embraces knowledge of dialects and language varieties, registers, natural and idiomatic expressions (Bachman and Palmer, 1996, p.68). However, for non-native speakers of a language, each situation has a potential to be unfamiliar due to unknown sociolinguistic conventions (Shaw, 1992). In other words, one needs to know how to vary speech act strategies that are appropriate for situational or social variables in communication in addition to possessing linguistic and lexical knowledge (Harlow, 1990).

Speech Act of Apology

The term 'speech act' has been defined as a minimal unit of discourse, a basic unit of communication (Searle, 1969, p. 16). Speech acts are communicative activities, that is, the performance '.. of a certain act through words, e.g., requesting something, refusing, thanking, greeting someone, complementing, complaining' (Gass & Neu, 1996, p.1). Amongst speech

acts, apologies happen to be one of the most frequently employed strategies. Goffman (1971) claims apologies are remedial interchanges employed to re-establish social harmony following a real or virtual offensive act. To be precise, an apology is an indemnificatory statement used by a speaker to compensate for their harmful behaviour towards someone as is suggested by Bergman and Kasper (1991). Also, apologies are one of the essential and paramount social acts related to politeness (Deutschman, 2006). Through apologising, a speaker acknowledges that they have violated a social norm and that they are somehow partially involved in its cause (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) and they act politely 'both in the vernacular sense and in the more technical sense of paying attention to the addressee's face needs' (Holmes, 1990, p.156); thus, involving loss of face for the speaker and support for the listener accordingly.

To date, there have been many attempts to investigate the act of apology in discrete contexts and situations. Many of these studies have been conducted to compare native speakers and non-native English speakers in terms of how they utilise the act of apology. In a series of studies, Cohen and Olshtain (1985) set out to compare the use of apologies in Hebrew and English, whereby they came up with the apology act set consisting of five major apology strategies, i.e., 1) an expression of an apology/illocutionary force indicating devices(*I apologise, I'm sorry, Forgive me*), 2) an explanation or account (*the traffic was horrible*), 3) an acknowledgment of responsibility (*It's my fault/mistake*), 4) an offer of repair (*I'll pay for it*), and 5) a promise of forbearance (*It won't happen again*). Research shows that amongst these five strategies, Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) are the most central apology strategies in many of the so far examined world languages (e.g., Holmes, 1990; Robinson, 2004, Suszczynska, 1999). Drawing on this classification, there has been a growing interest within the relevant literature to compare apology strategies activated by different groups of participants. For instance, a study generated by Jung (2004) examined how Korean EFL learners performed L2 apology speech acts compared to native speakers of English as well as possible factors contributing to differences and similarities between the two groups. The relevant data were gleaned through two different (distinct) oral role-play situations. Upon finishing up the data analysis, the researcher reported that even advanced L2 learners did not have the required sociolinguistic nor did they have such sociocultural awareness so as to successfully perform the speech act of apology. More specifically, the non-native participating EFL learners differed from native speakers in terms of lexical, grammatical, and pragmatic appropriateness, all of which seemed to be resulting from variety of factors such as L1 transfer and interference, lack of appropriate L2 social norms and L2 linguistic forms to accomplish communicative intentions. Although there were some apparent similarities between the two

groups in their choice of strategy, there were still differences in terms of their linguistic choices. In a similar vein, Aydin (2013) operated research to identify and compare apology strategies used in Turkish, American English, and advanced non-native speakers of English in Turkey. The results of the study identified similarities shared by the advanced non-native speakers regarding their apologies in terms of general strategies and Turkish participants were relatively more indirect in their apologies compared to the Americans. In addition, non-native speakers rarely utilized intensifiers of the apologies despite the fact that they used cultural norms in terms of general strategies. In a similar vein, Tuncel (2011) compared the speech act realizations of 50 American and British native speakers of English who were prep-school and fourth-year learners at a university in Turkey. He discovered that learners transferred their norms into their L2 negatively in some specific situations. Both groups were observed to transfer Turkish sociopragmatic norms, fourth-year learners transferred Turkish norms in considerably more situations than prep-school learners. Furthermore, the interlanguage system of these American and British learners guided them to use divergent semantic formulas even though they had the same mother tongue and target language sociopragmatic norms. In another study, Cetin (2014) compared Turkish and Portuguese non-native students' use of speech act of apology to examine the cultural differences and find out whether pragmatic competence could be improved through teaching task-based pragmatics. The study results revealed major discrepancies across these cultures. Even though both Turkish and Portuguese have collectivistic cultures, it was scouted that there were variations in the use of speech act of apology with respect to individualistic-collectivistic tendencies.

Some authors have also explored the act of apology among distinct levels of English. For instance, İstifçi (2009) investigated the act of apology with subjects from two different levels of English to find out whether there are similarities and differences between these groups and whether they approach native speaker apology norms. 20 EFL learners at intermediate level, 20 EFL learners at advanced level and 5 native speakers participated in the study. Data were collected through a Discourse Completion Test that had 8 apology situations. To analyse the data, the responses given to the situations were categorised according to Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) apology speech act set. Results, in this regard, revealed both similarities and differences between the two groups - their L1 having an influence on their use of apologies, especially intermediate level subjects were reported to transfer native Turkish speaker norms into English.

Apology speech acts have been cross-culturally investigated mostly to gain insights into the similarities and differences between the languages. The relevant studies have, by and large,

been generated in situations where the participants learn the target language as their second and/or foreign language. What these studies have in common, as is specified by İstifçi (2009), is that the results, albeit multifaceted depending on the context, reveal that EFL learners employ language transfer from their L1, some of them approximate native speaker norms or some others use completely different formulas discrete from the formulas they utilise in their L1 or L2. Essentially, the act of apology was particularly selected for this study since it reflects cultural values.

Interlanguage pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has been defined as 'the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p.3). In other words, ILP mainly studies how non-native speakers (NNS) make meaning of the target language and perform linguistic actions in this language, and how they develop L2 pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1992). According to Thomas (1983), L2 learners transfer the speech acts rules of their L1 into their L2, which may result in pragmalinguistic failure or in some other cases they may experience sociolinguistic failure due to their various perspectives about the appropriate linguistic behaviour. In the case of the present study, the decision whether or not to apologize and whether or not to offer an explanation for the mistake can be referred to as a sociopragmatic decision. On the other hand, if this mistake is regarded as a semantic formula in the speech act set of apologizing, it contains a rather pragmalinguistic choice (Kasper, 1992).

Methodology

Aim of the Study

The primary purpose of the current study is to identify and compare apology strategies used in English by Turkish and Arab EFL students. Originally, this research study further attempts to indicate the preferences of apology strategies performed by both groups, making a comparison between Turkish EFL learners' and Arab EFL learners' responses in terms of frequency of using different types of apology strategies. In line with the goal of the present study, the following questions were addressed:

1. What are the differences between the Turkish and Arab EFL learners in terms of using apology in English?
2. Is there any correlation between the level of English and the apology strategies of Turkish and Arab EFL learners?

Participants

Participants in the present study were 66 Turkish and 46 Arab students who enrolled in English language preparatory schools of one state and two private universities in Istanbul, Turkey in the fall term of 2019-2020 academic year. Since the number of the international students, especially Arab students, has increased in Turkey, having multinational classes in universities is a prevalent concern in the mentioned context. Therefore, the national variety of the participants was not selected specifically for the present study since the aforementioned participants were the official students at their universities and randomly distributed to their classes. Nevertheless, this random circumstance created an opportunity to get further insights into how apologetic strategies were performed by two groups of EFL learners with different L1 backgrounds and from different nationalities. Specifically, at the beginning of each preparatory school, students had taken the Preliminary English Test (PET) by Cambridge, the examination provides reliable assessment at the level above B1 (LevelB2) and the level below, Level A2 (UCLES, 2016). According to the results of PET exam, the participating students were placed to level groups in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) developed by Council of Europe.

From one of the private universities, 6 Turkish and 20 Arab students; from the other private university, 25 Turkish and 15 Arab students, and from the state university 35 Turkish and 6 Arab students responded to the survey. The age range of the students was between 17 and 20, and 60 of the participants were male while 52 was female. The native language of all the Turkish students is Turkish, and likewise Arabic is the native language of all the Arab participants in the study.

Data Collection Tool

The present study employs a qualitative approach to data collection and based on the purpose of the study a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) in English was provided to both groups to afford insights into how they adopt such strategies in their pragmatic competence in the target language. In the DCT, there exist eight apology situations which have already been used and validated by several studies e.g. Trosborg (1995), Sabaté i Dalmau and Curell i Gotor (2007), Beckwith & Deweale (2008). The primary reason to identify DCT as a data collection instrument is that the responses of participants indicate parallelism with other methods like role-plays. In addition, DCT can provide insights into what subjects think they would do in a certain situation, in the process revealing tendencies or penchants for certain formulations and routine behaviours (Sabaté i Dalmau and Curell i Gotor, 2007, p. 36).

The situations taking place in the DCT are as follows:

1. A university lecturer has not finished marking a student's essay (unfinished marking).

2. A student has forgotten to bring a lecturer's book that he/she borrowed (forgotten book).

3. The manager of a café is late to begin an interview with a candidate (late manager).

4. A waiter brings the wrong dish to a customer (wrong dish).

5. A student is late to meet a friend (late student).

6. A person hits a passenger on the bus by accident and breaks his/her laptop. (broken laptop)

7. An office worker offends a colleague during a meeting (offended colleague).

8. A person's bag falls onto another person on a bus (fallen bag).

With regard to the data collection process, the DCTs were given to the participants as handouts during their class hour, and they were expected to indicate the first answer they thought of to the questions. The participants were told not to share their insights with the other participants, and the researchers conducting the study supervised the participants during this phase in order to prevent such a situation. When the participants finalized responding to the situations in the DCT, they handed it to the researchers.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of the current study is inspired by Olshtain & Cohen's (1983) classification of apologies. The collected data was analysed and classified in pursuant of the semantic formulas indicated in each response. The categorization of Cohen and Olshtain (1981) is as follows:

1) An expression of apology (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device IFID)

a) an expression of regret (e. g. I'm sorry)

b) an offer of apology (e.g. I apologize)

c) a request for forgiveness (e.g. excuse me, forgive me)

2) An offer of repair/redress (REPR) (e.g. I'll pay for your damage)

3) An explanation of an account (EXPL) (e.g. I missed the bus)

4) Acknowledging responsibility for the offense (RESP) (e.g. It's my fault)

5) A promise of forbearance (FORB) (e.g. I'll never forget it again)

Since the above list did not cover all the responses conducted from the DCT, one type of apology strategy that Tunçel (1999) added was also used:

6) DENL (denial of fault or offense) (e.g. I did not cause the accident. You parked your car on my way!)

Frequency of each semantic formula in responses were computed via SPSS, and Chi-square analysis was conducted to check whether there was a statistically significant difference between the used apology strategies of Turkish and Arabic students.

An iterative process of reading through the data collected through DCT was initiated by all of the researchers so as to thickly describe the data at hand as it is known to be usual to move back and forth between data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (Dörnyei, 2007). Having analysed the relevant data individually, we negotiated the final form of categories through peer debriefing, sharing our thoughts regarding the interpretation process in order to ensure validation as well as establish the credibility of the study (Spall, 1998). Detailed coding and analysis were performed until after it was perceived that no further useful categories would emerge within the data to avoid misinterpretation of any kind and to ensure trustworthiness (Seale, 1999). We also counted the frequency of emerging themes in order to determine the representativeness of each of the 8 categories. Overall inter-coder reliability was 90%.

Results

The aim of the present study was to investigate the speech act of EFL learners in terms of apology, and to examine whether there were any differences in the speech act of apology utilized by Turkish and Arab EFL learners.

Table 1 displays data derived from situation 1 where a professor has not finished reading a student's report, and the student asks for it.

Table 1: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 1*

	Nationality				
	Turkish		Arab		
Apology Strategies	N	%	Apl. Strg.	N	%
DENL	1	1,5	EXPL	23	50,0
EXPL	36	54,5	FORB	2	4,3
FORB	4	6,1	IFID A	6	13,0
IFID A	9	13,6	IFID B	6	13,0
IFID B	2	3,0	IFID C	2	4,3
IFID C	1	1,5	REPR	6	13,0
REPR	11	16,7	RESP	1	2,2
RESP	2	3,0			
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) X^2=.553, p > .05

As Table 1 indicates that for the first situation, both Turkish and Arab learners used an explanation of an account (EXPL) (e.g. *I'm sorry, I didn't have much time*), which constituted more than 50% for the use of both nationalities. Turkish students also used an offer of repair/redress (REPR) 16.7% (e.g. *Sorry, I couldn't finish it, but in the break come with me so that I can read and give it to you*). On the other hand, Arab students equally (13%) used an expression of apology (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device IFID) in terms of regret (IFID A)

(e.g. *I'm so sorry*) and apology (IFID B) (e.g. *I apologise for this*), and REPR (e.g. *Sorry about this. Let me read it right now*). However, denial (DENL) was not preferred by Arab students unlike Turkish ones. When the frequency of formulas was compared within the two groups, a statistically significant difference was not found since p>.05.

Table 2 below displays the statistical data derived from situation 2 in which a student forgets about returning his/her professor's book on time, and the professor asks about it.

Table 2: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 2*

			Nationality		
	Turkish			Arab	
Formulas	N	%	Formulas	N	%
DENL	1	1,5	EXPL	15	32,6
EXPL	20	30,3	FORB	3	6,5
FORB	10	15,2	IFID A	13	28,3
IFID A	8	12,1	IFID B	6	13,0
IFID B	1	1,5	IFID C	1	2,2
IFID C	1	1,5	REPR	8	17,4
REPR	22	33,3			
RESP	3	4,5			
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) X^2=.03, p < .05

As it is seen in Table 2 REPR formula (33.3%) was mostly preferred by Turkish learners for the situation they imagined themselves as students (e.g. *Let me bring it very quickly*.) Also, explaining the situation (EXPL) (30.3%) was a parallel preference within this situation (e.g. *Sorry, I was in a hurry*). For the same situation, Arab learners used EXPL (32.6%) the most (e.g. *I was almost late to school, so I forgot it*.) where IFID A (28.3%) followed their first preference (e.g. *I'm so sorry for this*.) Nevertheless, these learners did not choose to use DENL and acknowledging responsibility for the offense (RESP) (e.g. *It's my fault*) formulas like Turkish learners did. The findings of Situation 2 demonstrated that there was a statistically significant difference between Turkish and Arab learners for Situation 2 as the Chi-square values indicated p<.05.

Table 3 below demonstrates the statistical values of the data derived from the situation 3 in which a manager is late and makes an employee applicant wait.

Table 3: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 3*

	Nationality				
	Turkish		Arab		
Formulas	N	%	Formulas	N	%
EXPL	32	48,5	DENL	1	2,2
IFID A	21	31,8	EXPL	21	45,7
IFID B	4	6,1	IFID A	7	15,2
IFID C	1	1,5	IFID B	5	10,9
REPR	7	10,6	IFID C	2	4,3
RESP	1	1,5	REPR	7	15,2
			RESP	3	6,5
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) X^2=.209, p > .05

In order to respond as a latecomer manager, Turkish learners mostly preferred to explain (EXPL) (48.5%) themselves for the waiting applicant (e.g. *I had a very important meeting.*) They also indicated some other semantic formulas like IFID A (31.8%) (e.g. *I'm very sorry.*) while some of them chose to save the situation by redressing (REPR) (10.6%) (e.g. *Let me buy you a cup of coffee.*) Arab learners chose to explain (EXPL) (45.7%) themselves (e.g. I had something to deal with) and used an expression of apology (IFID A) (15.2%) as well. In contrast to Turkish learners, one learner from Arab group preferred to deny (DENL) (2.2.%). Even though both groups of learners used a variety of semantic formulas, statistically they did not demonstrate any significant difference, p>.05.

Table 4 below demonstrates the statistical scores of the derived data from situation 4 where a waiter brings wrong food to the customer.

Table 4: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 4*

	Nationality				
	Turkish		Arab		
Formulas	N	%	Formulas	N	%
EXPL	3	4,5	EXPL	2	4,3
FORB	3	4,5	IFID A	9	19,6
IFID A	9	13,6	IFID B	2	4,3
IFID B	2	3,0	IFID C	5	10,9
IFID C	4	6,1	REPR	20	43,5
REPR	38	57,6	RESP	8	17,4
RESP	7	10,6			
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) X^2=.473, p > .05

For Situation 4 both Turkish (57.6%) and Arab (43.5%) learners offered to change the dish and redress the situation (REPR) (e.g. *Let me change your food immediately; I will bring your order quickly.*) In the same manner, both groups made use of expression of regret (IFID

A) (respectively 13.6% and 19.6%) (e.g. *I'm so sorry sir; I'm very sorry*.) Unlike Arab students, Turkish subjects promised forbearance (FORB) (4.5%) (e.g. *I will be very careful next time*.) Chi-square values demonstrated that there was no statistically significant difference between Turkish and Arab learners in terms of the accumulation of their responses for Situation 4, p>.05. Table 5 below presents the semantic formula preferences of the participants in situation 5 where a student is late to meet with a friend about their project.

Table 5: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 5*

	Nationality				
	Turkish		Arab		
Formulas	N	%	Formulas	N	%
DENL	3	4,5	DENL	2	4,3
EXPL	14	21,2	EXPL	10	21,7
FORB	7	10,6	FORB	2	4,3
IFID A	18	27,3	IFID A	15	32,6
IFID B	8	12,1	IFID B	3	6,5
IFID C	7	10,6	IFID C	5	10,9
REPR	8	12,1	REPR	4	8,7
RESP	1	1,5	RESP	5	10,9
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) X^2=.410, p > .05

In this situation, both Turkish and Arab learners employed a wide variety of semantic formulas. IFID A was consistently preferred by Turkish students (27.3%) (e.g. *I am really sorry*.) followed by EXPL (21.2%) (e.g. *I couldn't leave home early*.) Likewise, the same preference order was employed by Arab learners, respectively (32.6% and 21.7%). In addition, for the first time both subject groups used all the apology strategies, but with different frequencies. The results indicated that statistically no significant difference was found between the groups within Situation 5, p>.05.

Table 6 below demonstrates the statistical data derived from situation 6 where a person hits a passenger on the bus by accident and breaks his/her laptop.

Table 6: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 6*

	Nationality				
	Turkish		Arab		
Formulas	N	%	Formulas	N	%
DENL	3	4,5	EXPL	1	2,2
EXPL	4	6,1	IFID A	12	26,1
IFID A	12	18,2	IFID B	3	6,5
IFID B	1	1,5	IFID C	2	4,3
REPR	44	66,7	REPR	28	60,9
RESP	2	3,0			
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) X^2=.12, p > .05

When the findings are examined, it is seen that for Situation 6 most of the Turkish and Arab subjects employed REPR (respectively 66.7% and 60.9%) as semantic formula. Some Turkish learners responded as "*Let me buy a new computer; Let me pay you expenses.*" while some Arab learners offered to repair it (e.g. *Let me repair it for you.*) In the same order, both subject groups displayed an expression of regret (IFID A) (respectively 18.2% and 26.1%) (e.g. *I am really sorry; I'm very sorry.*) Unlike Arab subjects, 2 of Turkish ones (3%) acknowledged the responsibility (RESP) (e.g. *It's all my fault.*) As Chi-square results indicate in spite of different rates of semantic formulas within the groups, there was no statistically significant difference, p>.05.

Table 7 below displays the statistical findings derived from the situation 7 in which an office worker offends a colleague during a meeting.

Table 7: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 7*

			Nationality		
	Turkish			Arab	
Formulas	N	%	Formulas	N	%
DENL	6	9,1	EXPL	4	8,7
EXPL	9	13,6	FORB	2	4,3
FORB	6	9,1	IFID A	23	50,0
IFID A	25	37,9	IFID B	9	19,6
IFID B	8	12,1	IFID C	4	8,7
IFID C	6	9,1	REPR	3	6,5
RESP	6	9,1	RESP	1	2,2
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) X^2=.053, p > .05

In Situation 7, Turkish learners indicated a wide variety of semantic formulas as a response. Even though they mostly preferred IFID A (37.9%) as a strategy (e.g. *I am really sorry.*), some tried to explain (EXPL) (13.6%) the reason behind the behaviour (e.g. *I didn't notice that I made you sad.*) and apologise (IFID B) (12.1%). However, the response preferences followed in the same frequency as DENL (9.1%) (e.g. *I had a point.*), FORB (9.1%) (e.g. *It will never happen again.*), IFID C (9.1%) (e.g. *Please forgive me.*) and RESP (9.1%) (e.g. *I made a mistake.*) On the other hand, half of the Arab subjects employed IFID A (50%) as the strategy while 19.6% chose to offer an apology (IFID B) (e.g. *I apologize for the thing I did.*) The other Arab learners employed various semantic formulas like Turkish ones. Chi-square results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference between groups in terms of Situation 7, p>.05.

Table 8 below displays the data derived from situation 8 where a person's bag falls onto another person on a bus.

Table 8: *Frequency of Use of Semantic Formulas in Situation 8*

	Turkish			Arab	
Formulas	N	%	Formulas	N	%
DENL	4	6,1	DENL	2	4,3
EXPL	7	10,6	EXPL	1	2,2
FORB	1	1,5	FORB	1	2,2
IFID A	32	48,5	IFID A	25	54,3
IFID B	9	13,6	IFID B	8	17,4
IFID C	2	3,0	IFID C	3	6,5
REPR	1	1,5	REPR	2	4,3
RESP	10	15,2	RESP	4	8,7
Total	66	100,0	Total	46	100,0

(Turkish vs. Arab) $X^2=.563$, $p > .05$

In this situation, both group subjects employed all the strategies, but with different frequency. Expressing regret (IFID A) was the most preferred strategy by Turkish learners (48.5%) (e.g. *I am really sorry.*) beside the other IFID types. Moreover, they used RESP (15.2%) as a semantic formula (e.g. *How can I fix my mistake?*) Explaining the situation (EXPL) was another preference by Turkish subjects (10.6%) (e.g. *I couldn't put my bag properly.*) while some chose to deny (DENL) (6.1%) (e.g. *It isn't my mistake.*) More than half of the Arab subjects (54.3%) preferred to express regret (IFID A) by saying "*I'm very sorry.*" Following IFID A, they also employed other expressions of apology IFID B and IFID C (respectively 17.4% and 6.5%). 4 Arab learners (8.7%) acknowledge the responsibility of offense (RESP) (e.g. *This is my wrong.*) However, 4.3% denied (DENL) the fact that it was their bag which hit the other passenger (e.g. *It wasn't me; The bus was going so fast, I didn't do anything.*) When the chi-square values are considered, there is no significant difference among the two groups regarding Situation 8, $p>.05$.

Analysis of the Level of English and the Apology Strategies

In order to get further insights, the correlation between the English level of both Turkish and Arab learners and the semantic formula they preferred in each situation were analysed. For every situation, the frequency of the formulas was computed based on the foreign language level. Chi-square values were considered to examine whether there was any difference between the use of learners regarding their English level. For the Situation 1, it was discovered that there was a statistically significant difference between Turkish learners based on their levels, $p<.05$. While A2 level Turkish learners preferred to explain (EXPL) themselves the most, the other two levels, B1 and B2, chose to express an apology (IFID). Nevertheless, the same result was not observed for the Arab subjects since in each level they all preferred to explain

themselves (EXPL), p>.05. Table 9 presents the data collected from Situation 1 in which a university professor didn't return a student's essay as promised:

Table 9: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 1*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 1	DENL	1	0	0	1
		EXPL	25	8	3	36
		FORB	2	2	0	4
		IFID A	2	7	0	9
		IFID B	0	2	0	2
		IFID C	0	0	1	1
		REPR	3	6	2	11
		RESP	2	0	0	2
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 1	EXPL	2	7	14	23
		FORB	0	0	2	2
		IFID A	0	4	2	6
		IFID B	0	3	3	6
		IFID C	1	1	0	2
		REPR	3	1	2	6
		RESP	0	1	0	1
	Total		6	17	23	46

Table 10 below designates the data collected from Situation 2 in which a student forgets to return the book on time and Table 11 demonstrates the data derived from Situation 3 in which the manager of a café is late for the job interview with a student. For Situation 2 and 3 the level of English did not have any significant effect on the preference of semantic formula of the learners. Both Turkish and Arab learners in each level chose the same formula the most, which led to no discrepancy based on the level of English.

Table 10: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 2*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 2	DENL	0	1	0	1
		EXPL	13	6	1	20
		FORB	5	5	0	10
		IFID A	5	2	1	8
		IFID B	0	1	0	1
		IFID C	1	0	0	1
		REPR	8	10	4	22
		RESP	3	0	0	3
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 2	EXPL	1	7	7	15
		FORB	0	2	1	3
		IFID A	3	4	6	13
		IFID B	2	1	3	6
		IFID C	0	0	1	1
		REPR	0	3	5	8
	Total		6	17	23	46

Table 11: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 3*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 3	EXPL	19	10	3	32
		IFID A	8	12	1	21
		IFID B	2	2	0	4
		IFID C	1	0	0	1
		REPR	4	1	2	7
		RESP	1	0	0	1
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 3	DENL	0	0	1	1
		EXPL	3	9	9	21
		IFID A	0	2	5	7
		IFID B	2	1	2	5
		IFID C	0	0	2	2
		REPR	0	3	4	7
		RESP	1	2	0	3
	Total		6	17	23	46

The similar findings were observed for Situation 4 as well since most of the learners (Turkish ones 57.6% and Arabs 43.5%) employed REPR formula as a response within this situation. Likewise, learners from both nationalities in each level shared the same apology strategy for Situation 6 in which REPR was the most preferred formula. Thus, Chi-square values displayed that there was no statistically significant difference between the learners with reference to their level of English, $p > .05$.

Table 12 presents the data from Situation 4 in which a customer claims a waiter made a mistake with the order, and Table 13 indicates the data from situation 6 in which a passenger breaks another passenger's computer in a bus:

Table 12: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 4*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 4	EXPL	3	0	0	3
		FORB	0	3	0	3
		IFID A	4	5	0	9
		IFID B	1	1	0	2
		IFID C	2	2	0	4
		REPR	20	13	5	38
		RESP	5	1	1	7
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 4	EXPL	0	2	0	2
		IFID A	0	5	4	9
		IFID B	0	1	1	2
		IFID C	0	2	3	5
		REPR	2	5	13	20
		RESP	4	2	2	8
	Total		6	17	23	46

Table 13: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 6*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 6	DENL	2	1	0	3
		EXPL	0	4	0	4
		IFID A	4	6	2	12
		IFID B	1	0	0	1
		REPR	27	13	4	44
		RESP	1	1	0	2
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 6	EXPL	0	1	0	1
		IFID A	0	7	5	12
		IFID B	0	0	3	3
		IFID C	0	1	1	2
		REPR	6	8	14	28
	Total		6	17	23	46

On the other hand, the level difference demonstrated significance only for Arab learners in Situation 5 and 8, p<.05. For Situation 5, while B2 Arab learners chose to express regret (IFID A) the most, A1 level learners preferred IFID C and denying (DENL). Same subject group performed a similar semantic formula within Situation 8. B2 level Arab subjects preferred to express regret (IFID A) mostly whereas A2 level learners showed a variety of responses encapsulating denial (DENL), unlike B2 level. Table 14 below demonstrates the data obtained from Situation 5 in which a student is often late, and Table 15 shows the data derived from Situation 8 in which a passenger puts their bag in the rack, and it hits another passenger:

Table 14: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 5*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 5	DENL	2	0	1	3
		EXPL	9	3	2	14
		FORB	3	3	1	7
		IFID A	9	9	0	18
		IFID B	0	7	1	8
		IFID C	6	1	0	7
		REPR	5	2	1	8
		RESP	1	0	0	1
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 5	DENL	2	0	0	2
		EXPL	0	4	6	10
		FORB	0	2	0	2
		IFID A	0	5	10	15
		IFID B	0	0	3	3
		IFID C	3	1	1	5
		REPR	0	2	2	4
		RESP	1	3	1	5
	Total		6	17	23	46

Table 15: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 8*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 8	DENL	4	0	0	4
		EXPL	3	2	2	7
		FORB	0	0	1	1
		IFID A	16	15	1	32
		IFID B	3	5	1	9
		IFID C	2	0	0	2
		REPR	1	0	0	1
		RESP	6	3	1	10
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 8	DENL	2	0	0	2
		EXPL	0	1	0	1
		FORB	0	0	1	1
		IFID A	1	8	16	25
		IFID B	0	4	4	8
		IFID C	0	2	1	3
		REPR	0	1	1	2
		RESP	3	1	0	4
	Total		6	17	23	46

Table 16 below exhibits the data derived from situation 7 in which an employee in a company offends a colleague. Findings of Situation 7 displayed different outcomes compared to the other situations based on English proficiency level. Both Turkish and Arab learners reflected a difference among each other in terms of their English proficiency level. About Turkish learners, B1 and B2 level subjects focused on IFID A formula while A2 level responses demonstrated scattered order. Similar to Turkish learners, Arab subjects employed the same distribution regarding their responses to Situation 7. Chi-square values of this analysis indicated that for both nationalities, English proficiency level had a statistically significant effect on learners' responses, $p<.05$.

Table 16: *Correlation between the Level of English and Semantic Formulas in Situation 7*

Nationality			Level of English			Total
			A2	B1	B2	
Turkish	Situation 7	DENL	5	1	0	6
		EXPL	6	1	2	9
		FORB	4	2	0	6
		IFID A	7	14	4	25
		IFID B	2	6	0	8
		IFID C	5	1	0	6
		RESP	6	0	0	6
	Total		35	25	6	66
Arabic	Situation 7	EXPL	2	0	2	4
		FORB	0	2	0	2
		IFID A	0	6	17	23
		IFID B	1	8	0	9
		IFID C	3	0	1	4
		REPR	0	1	2	3
		RESP	0	0	1	1
	Total		6	17	23	46

Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored the speech act of apology of Turkish and Arab EFL learners studying in three different universities in Istanbul, Turkey. To gather data, participants were asked to respond to a DCT. The analysis of the data provided valuable insights on the use of apology speech act used by L2 learners from two different nationalities (Turkish and Arab) and with three different English language proficiency levels (A2, B1, and B2).

The first research question of the present study aimed to examine the differences between the Turkish and Arab EFL learners in terms of utilizing apologetic strategies in English. Although there were differences between the two groups corresponding to linguistic choices, they seem to have referred to similar strategies to apologise in situations 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8, which indicates that because both groups speak the target language as their foreign language, their linguistic repertoire is influenced by factors such as their proficiency level. In a similar vein, since both groups were EFL learners, other than proficiency level, their L1, cultural factors (i.e., how they apologise in their native language) as well as social norms were seen to have an impact on how they apologise in the target language, which is in line with a

body of relevant studies in the literature (e.g., Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper, & Ross, 1996; Wouk, 2006, Dalmau & Gotor, 2007). This being so, it can be argued that due to the different sociocultural values that govern language use, preferences in the use of apology strategies vary across languages (Jung, 2004). Furthermore, even though initially the researchers referred to the speech act of apology set as suggested by Olshtain (1981), the data analysis revealed a further category which was observed to be that of denial. In situations 2 and 3, the subjects were seen to use the denial strategy (Tunçel, 1999) instead of apologising, which might be thought of as violating politeness (Deutschman, 2006). As such, it can be argued that the speech act of apologising encompasses politeness, exemplifying what Brown and Levinson call (1987) 'culturally stabilized interaction rituals with conventionalised formulae'(p.285).

With reference to the second research question focusing on the relationship between English proficiency and apology strategies, the findings reported that there were both similarities and differences in terms of how these groups responded to the situations. To this end, in almost all the given situations the most preferred strategy was that of IFID, which concurs with the previous studies within the relevant literature (e.g., Robinson, 2004; Suszczynska, 1999). In this regard, the students' ability to perform the speech act of apology in English was also seen to be affected by their respective English proficiency. This particular finding is consistent with İstifçi (2009) who discovered that advanced learners made more complex strategy combinations than learners at lower stages, claiming that students' apology realisations and selections expanded as they grew more proficient in English. To this end, in our study the B1 level students were reported to make more use of apology strategies and have a higher frequency of use of strategies than the A2 students. The strategy that was used (employed) less frequently by both groups is strategy 4, acknowledging responsibility for the offense which also supports the findings of previous studies on apology speech acts (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain, 1989). This strategy rarely occurs in communication since it is situation specific i.e., it is closely tied to the situation that determines whether it is necessary to acknowledge responsibility in different domains and situations. To this end, our findings reported that there was a statistically significant difference among Turkish learners in terms of which strategy they exert to apologise in given situations. While A2 level Turkish learners preferred to explain (EXPL) themselves the most, the other two levels, B1 and B2, chose to express an apology (IFID). This particular finding echoes Jung (2004) who examined how Korean EFL learners performed L2 apology speech acts compared to native speakers of English and found that such differences resulted from variety of factors such as L1 transfer and interference, lack of appropriate L2 social norms and L2 linguistic forms to accomplish

communicative intentions. However, Arab learners were reported to perform more EXPL, which might as well be related to the fact that the participating Arab learners were at a higher level of English; thus, proficiency affecting the speech act to be performed as is denoted by İstifçi (2009) and Jung (2004).

Overall, it can be argued that our findings illustrate how non-native speakers (NNS) make meaning of the target language and perform linguistic actions in this language, and how they develop L2 pragmatic knowledge accordingly (Kasper, 1992). There are obvious cross-cultural differences as well as certain proficiency-related differences, all of which indicate that EFL learners transfer the speech acts rules of their L1 into their L2 (Thomas, 1983).

The findings of the study have to be considered in the light of some limitations. First of all, despite the invaluable information and insight provided by the participants, the current study investigated A2, B1 and B2 level Turkish and Arab EFL learners. Considering the fact that speech act of apology shows significant distinctions across levels of English, future research could include A1, C1 and C2 level EFL learners. The number of the participants could be stated as another limitation of the study. Since the data were collected from 112 EFL learners, it is hard to generalize the findings of the study. To be able to make more reliable and valid conclusions, future research may encapsulate more participants in their studies.

Conclusion and Implications

Our study comparing the speech act of apology employed by two different groups of EFL learners is intended to contribute to the respective fields of interlanguage pragmatics and speech act studies, deepening our understanding of what factors are associated with how these two groups perform the speech act of apology. The main conclusion drawn from the study is that there emerge certain factors at play when it comes down to cross-cultural differences in relation with the speech act of apology. Such differences can be closely attributed to linguistic repertoires of both Turkish and Arab learners and their proficiency levels in English. This particular finding suggests that investigations and comparisons in the speech act of apology could further examine the processes of how EFL learners from different backgrounds and cultures perform such apologetic strategies and emphasize the importance of raising awareness of cross-cultural differences. Similarly, given that we are all now living in multilingual communities and monolingualism is no longer the norm, educators, course designers, material designers, and administration at schools should be more inclusive, laying a particular emphasis on how English classes are now full of students with different L1s and from different cultures. Therefore, there is paramount relevance to the literature focusing on cross-cultural differences and how these differences might influence the performance of apology. While acknowledging

potential individual differences, we argue that a theoretical model needs to consider the specific monolingual contexts in which there is now an increasing diversity taking place in EFL classrooms.

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Appendix A

DCT English version
The current survey aims to investigate apology strategies in Turkish and English. There are situations given below which possibly require apologies. You do not have to provide an apology if you feel like it is not appropriate. Please read the situations carefully and try to provide as closest respond as possible to your natural spoken respond to the situation. The first part requires you to provide some personal information. If you feel uncomfortable, you are not obliged to provide information. All responses will be kept anonymous.

Age: Gender: Native Language:
The level of English (if not a native speaker):
English Learning background (if not a native speaker)
Education: Current Class:

Situation 1
Imagine you are a university professor. You promised to return a student's essay today, but you haven't finished reading it. The student showed up and asked for the essay. What would you say to the student?

Situation 2
Imagine you are a student. You borrowed a book from one of your professors, but you forgot to return it on time. You went to a meeting with the professor and the professor asked for the book. What would you say to the professor?

Situation 3
Imagine you are the manager of a café. Today you have an interview with a student who wants to a job in the café. However, you are half an hour late for the interview because of a meeting. The student is waiting for you in the café. What would you say to the student?

Situation 4
Imagine you are a waiter in an expensive restaurant. A costumer ordered beef, but you brought chicken instead. The costumer mentions the mistake you made. What would you say to the costumer?

Situation 5

Imagine you are a student who is often late. Today you are late for a meeting with a friend you are working on an essay with. Your friend has been waiting for you for two hours. What would you say to your friend?

Situation 6
Imagine you were in a bus and you bumped into another passenger and broke his computer. What would you say to the passenger?

Situation 7
Imagine you are working for a company. You offended a colleague during a meeting. After the meeting the colleague you offended made a comment about the incident to you by stating that he was offended by your comment. What would you say to your colleague?

Situation 8
Imagine you are travelling on a bus. You put your bag in the rack, but it fell down and hit another passenger. What would you say to the passenger?