The Effects of Monolingualism on the Apology Strategies of Saudi Arabic Speakers

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Abstract

Speech acts (excuses, greetings, complaints, compliments, justifications, requests, and apologies) have been investigated in many studies to understand how to facilitate communication among people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. However, studies that aim to understand speech acts in Arabic language varieties are still rare, and this study hopes to enrich the literature in this area. The study aims to describe the apology strategies used by six Saudi Arabic speakers in six communicative contexts as seen in their responses in role-play tasks (RPTs) and to investigate the differences (if any) between males and females in terms of using these strategies. The findings demonstrate that participants used the following strategies when apologizing: illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), offer of repair, explanation, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility. Additionally, female participants were more likely to use no strategy and/or one strategy, while male participants employed two and/or three strategies more often than their female counterparts did. Moreover, the participants tended to use one or two strategies in their apology more than not apologizing at all or using three strategies. Furthermore, the perceived severity of the offense affects the number of apology strategies used by participants. Finally, knowing another language might have an effect on the way people apologize.

Keywords: apology strategy, Saudi Arabia, role-play tasks (RPTs), gender difference, language, culture

INTRODUCTION

Teachers of foreign languages have long realized that it is not sufficient to teach only the vocabulary and grammar of the target language; in order for students to communicate successfully, they should be taught the pragmatics and develop cultural competence in the target language. As a result, there have been changes in language teaching and learning from grammatical to communicative competence and pragmatic ability.

One branch of pragmatics that serves the needs of language teachers is interlanguage pragmatics, which not only deals with the syntax and grammar of the target language, but also the meaning of the produced words and the meaning intended by the speaker and

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interpreted by the listener (Roberts, Jupp, & Davies, 1992). Therefore, interlanguage pragmatics covers various subfields, including routines, implicatures, and speech acts, among others.

Speech acts constitute an important topic in interlanguage pragmatics. Wolfson (1983) noted that "speech acts differ cross-culturally not only in the way they are realized but also in their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and in the functions they serve" (p. 123). Excuses, greetings, complaints, compliments, justifications, requests, and apologies represent just a few of the communication behaviors performed by all people.

The findings of some previous studies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan, & Reynolds, 1991) reveal that even advanced nonnative speakers (NNSs) often do not have the pragmatic competence of native speakers in various types of speech acts. In fact, second language learners tend to use the pragmatics rules of their first language while performing their second language (El Samaty, 2005). This lack of knowledge of speech act realization patterns and strategies across cultures often leads to communication breakdowns (Rubin, 1989). Therefore, knowing how to perform important speech acts in the target language is crucial for language learners since it helps them to gain cultural knowledge (Al-Issa, 1998; Rubin, 1989). It is also vital for learners to be introduced to the discourse differences between their mother tongue and the target language in order to successfully acquire pragmatic competence (Murcia & Olshtain, 2000).

Apologizing is an important speech act and one of the most studied speech acts in pragmatics research (Ogiermann, 2009). There are various definitions of apology in the literature, one of which is a "compensatory action to an offense in the doing of which S[peaker] was casually involved and which is costly to H[earer]" (Bergman & Kasper, 1993, p. 82). This definition is applied to the term apology in this study. The popularity of apology as a speech act in pragmatics could be attributed to its "vital social function of restoring and maintaining harmony" (Ogiermann, 2009, p. 45) and "to evince good manners, to assuage the addressees' wrath, or to simply get off the hook and be on one's way" (Norrick, 1978, p. 280).

Although there are some conducted studies about the use of apology strategies by Saudis (e.g., Alsulayyi, 2016; Al-Megren, 2018), these studies focused on Saudi learners and teachers of English. This means that the findings of these studies (the subjects' responses) might be influenced by the speech act of apology specific to English. By focusing on monolingual Saudi Arabic speakers, this study sought to highlight the factors that affect participants' choice of apology strategies. It is hoped that the study findings will prove a valuable addition to the literature on apology strategies research that focuses on speakers in different parts of the world. Additionally, the results of this study can assist in making a pragmatics-teaching curriculum. In so doing, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the apology strategies used by Saudi males and females who speak only Arabic?

2) What are the differences, if any, between the Saudi male and Saudi female participants in terms of using apology strategies?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Apology strategies are not limited to verbal behavior, but also include body language. In the present study, the focus will mainly be on the verbal strategies of the speech act of apology. Several researchers have attempted to present taxonomies of apology strategies. Among these are Fraser (1981), Olshtain and Cohen (1983), Owen (1983), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), and Holmes (1989). Some of these taxonomies overlap with each other while others do not. The reason behind these variations in taxonomies is the different perspectives of the respective researchers when defining the term apology. The common strategies identified in those studies are:

Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID): This strategy means producing apologetic expressions. Examples from participants' responses are as follows: sorry, I apologize, forgive me, and other similar expressions.

Offer of repair: Here, the speaker offers the hearer a repair for the damage that has been caused. The repair can be made in two ways: Fixing the damage or providing compensation; for example, fixing the torn cover of a book or buying a new book.

Explanation: The speaker tries to provide an explanation for why the damage/offense took place. Example: I did not know about the death of your father.

Taking responsibility: The speaker takes full responsibility for the offense/damage and usually adds expressions of regret and embarrassment at the end. Example: It was my fault.

Denial of responsibility: In this strategy, the hearer is expecting an apology for the damage/offence but the speaker denies having responsibility for the damage/offense or denies that the damage/offense has occurred. Example: It was not me who did this.

Some previous studies have explored apology strategies in English and other languages. For example, Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) found that the taking responsibility strategy was the most frequently used by Germans. The speakers of Akan language, spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, tend to employ more than one strategy when they apologize (Obeng, 1999). According to Demeter (2006), Romanians use the IFID strategy more than other strategies. A study that investigated apology strategies in Persian found that in naturally occurring apologies, IFID and taking responsibility strategies are the most frequently occurring (Shariati & Chamani, 2010).

Exploring Thai and American English, Bergman and Kasper (1993) found that the taking responsibility strategy is commonly used if the interlocutors (the apology provider and apology receiver) have a close relationship. House (1988) compared the apology realization patterns produced by German learners of English, native German speakers, and native speakers of British English, and found that German learners of English use the taking responsibility strategy more than the native speakers of British English did.

Compared to studies that have examined apology strategies in English and other languages, studies exploring apologies in Arabic are still under-represented in the literature. Al-Zumor (2011) examined apology strategies in Arabic and English and found that the taking responsibility strategy was not commonly used by Arabic speakers. He also found that native speakers of English tended to use the offer of repair strategy more often than did their Arab counterparts.

Other studies have examined apology strategies in the Arabic dialects of the researchers. For example, Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) investigated the apology strategies used by Jordanian Arabic speakers and found that female students used the taking responsibility strategy more than the male students did. Another study of apology in Sudanese Arabic found that Sudanese students relied on explanation and IFID strategies more than on other strategies (Nureddeen, 2008). A third study that explored apology strategies in Tunisian Arabic found that the taking responsibility strategy was not common among Tunisian university students (Jebahi, 2011).

When studying the apology strategies in Arabic dialects, researchers have paid attention to the role of gender, possibly due to the strict gender segregation in some Arabic societies. Bataineh and Bataineh (2006), for example, noted that Jordanian women used different apology strategies than those employed by men. They found, for example, that females blame themselves or others more than male respondents blame themselves or others.

The influence of gender on apology strategies has long been a focus of research. For example, Holmes (1989) observed that women tend to apologize more often than men. However, she points out that in New Zealand, men tend to apologize more than women only when they arrive late to a meeting. A study of British English found that women tend to apologize less in informal situations (Deutschmann, 2003). Wagner (2000) noted that female native language speakers in Mexico apologize more than men. She also claimed that the IFID strategy was used more by males than females, while the explanation strategy was used by females more than males. Moreover, Yeganeh (2012) indicated that Iranian men used the compensation strategy more than Iranian women.

While, as noted above, several studies have described apology strategies in different dialects of Arabic (e.g., Jordanian Arabic (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006), Sudanese Arabic (Nureddeen, 2008), and Tunisian Arabic (Jebahi, 2011)), research should be conducted on the speech act of apology as performed by Saudis, since Arabic countries have different cultural norms (Al-Eryani, 2007; Al-Issa, 1998) and the results of previous studies should not be overgeneralized. Although some studies have explored apology strategies employed by Saudis (for example, Al-Megren (2018) explored the apology strategies used by Saudi learners of English; Alsulayyi (2016) employed Saudi EFL teachers), a population neglected in previous studies is people who have not been in contact with other cultures (monolingual Arabic speakers). In addition, given the permeating effects of gender segregation in Saudi Arabia, the potential influence of gender on the apology strategies of this population (who grew up and function in a largely gender segregated society) is investigated.

METHOD

Instrument

Although different methods can be used to collect data on apology strategies (for example, field notes, linguistic corpora, role plays, and discourse completion task), the current study used role-play tasks (RPTs), each of which comprised an incomplete dialogue. Each situation begins with a brief scenario followed by a sentence or question provided by the speaker. The participants are expected to provide an apology.

The RPTs in the current study were administered in Arabic. The participants were given six hypothetical situations representing different social contexts. Since this study concerns Saudi Arabic speakers' use of apology, the participants were asked to provide their answers in Saudi Arabic dialect.

Three of the six situations used in this study were selected from published studies because they have been proven as valid situations for collecting apologetic responses and are culturally appropriate for the participants in this study. Situation no. 1 was selected from Bergman and Kasper (1993), while situations no. 2 and no. 3 were selected from Jebahi (2011). The remaining three situations (4, 5, and 6) were designed by the researcher to represent familiar situations that are commonly experienced in everyday life, to ensure that participants would respond authentically. Table 1 provides a list of the situations used in the present study.

Table 1. Situations used in the present study

	Name	Situation	Source
1	Tearing off the cover page of a book	You borrowed a book from your friend, but your child at home tore the cover page off. Now you are at your friend's house to return the book.	Bergman and Kasper (1993)
2	Failure to deliver a package	A close friend gave you a package that you were supposed to give to someone else. You discover that you have lost it. Now you are with your close friend.	Jebahi (2011)
3	Forgetting to express condolences	Your friend's father passed away, but you neither visited him/her nor gave him/her a call to say you were sorry. A few days later you meet your friend.	Jebahi (2011)
4	Stepping accidently on your friend's toe	You are at the shopping mall with your friend and accidentally step on his/her toe.	The researcher
5	Arriving late to your friend's house	You promised your friend that you would come to his/her house at 6.00 p.m. Now, it is 6.30 p.m. and your friend opens the door for you.	The researcher
6	Not attending your friend's daughter's wedding	You promised your friend that you would come to his/her daughter's wedding, but you did not.	The researcher

Participants

The study participants comprised three Saudi males and three Saudi females aged 50-65, who were selected because they speak only Arabic, thereby ensuring that their responses would not be influenced by any speech acts specific to other languages. Since apology strategies can be transferred from one language to another (Kim, 2001), it is vital to ensure that participants are monolingual and have never had the experience of learning

a second language. In using this monolingual sample, we can confirm that the apology strategies used belong solely to the Saudi Arabic speakers in this study. All participants were residents of Buraydah City, Najd area, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Another reason for selecting these specific participants is they were homogenous in terms of cultural background (Saudi Arabian), sharing the same culture, language, ethnicity, and religious beliefs. The male participants comprised a teacher, a retired employee, and a businessman. The female participants were all housewives without higher education (they only had primary education).

Data collection procedure

The participants were initially contacted and asked whether they would be willing to participate in the study. I assured the participants that all data collected would be coded to protect their identity and privacy. Participants were also told that participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. The instructions were given in Saudi Arabic and no time limit was imposed. The participants' answers were translated by the researcher and then, for accuracy purposes, checked by a PhD student, who is a native speaker of Arabic, from the English department of a university in the American Southwest. After the answers were translated into English, they were coded to investigate the apology strategies used by participants.

In coding the participants' responses, I categorized strategies in accordance with the previously mentioned studies, as: illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), offer of repair, explanation, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility. A male participant responded to situation no. 2 by saying "المعذره" "forgiveness" which was coded as (IFID). Another male participant responded to situation no. 1 with "راح أبدل لك الكتاب" "I will get you a new one." This strategy was coded as (offer of repair). In situation no. 6, a participant said "فايت لي وعد" "I was invited to another occasion." Here, the participant used (explanation) strategy. In response to situation no. 6, a male participant said "قصرنا بحقك" "It is my fault." This strategy was coded as (taking responsibility). Finally, for situation no. 1, a female participant said "مو أنا اللي قطعته" "It was not me who tore it," which was coded as (denial of responsibility).

To see how many times each strategy occurred in the participants' responses, I divided the number of occurrences for each strategy by 36 (since I have six participants and each participant responded to six situations, the total is 6 (participants) * 6 (situations) = 36).

RESULTS

In the present study, I aimed to explore the apology strategies used by six Saudi males and females in the 50s to 60s age group. In addition, I attempted to shed some light on the differences, if any, between participants in terms of their use of apology strategies.

Apology strategies used by participants

Types of apology strategies used by participants

The data demonstrate that the participants used five strategies to express apology: IFID (e.g., "المعذرة" "forgiveness"), offer of repair (e.g., "راح اعطيك كتاب جديد بدل اللي قطعه ولدي" "I will

give you a new book instead of the book that my son ripped the cover off"), explanation (e.g., "ما احد قال لي" "No one told me"), taking responsibility (e.g., "ماانتبهت" "I was not paying attention"), and denial of responsibility (e.g., "مو انا اللي سويت فيه كذا" "It was not me who did this"). Table 2 demonstrates that the explanation strategy was the most used by participants at 63.8 %, while the taking responsibility strategy was the least used at only 2.7%. IFID, denial of responsibility, and offer of repair strategies were used 50 %, 19.4 %, and 13.8 % of the time, respectively.

Table 2. Apology strategies used by participants

Strategies	Situations						Total	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
IFID	2	4	4	5	3	0	18	50%
Offer of repair	3	2	0	0	0	0	5	13.8%
Explanation	1	6	4	5	2	5	23	63.8%
Taking responsibility	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2.7%
Denial of responsibility	5	0	2	0	0	0	7	19.4%
Total number of strategies used for each situation	11	12	10	10	5	6		

As seen in Table 2, the participants apologized most in situation no. 2 (the lost package), using 12 apology strategies. The explanation strategy was used by all participants in this situation, either alone or together with another strategy. The participants used few apology strategies (only five) in situation no. 5 (arriving late to your friend's house).

The number of apology strategies used by participants

To respond to the role play situations, the participants followed these methods: using no strategy (the participants did not apologize at all), using one strategy (e.g., I am sorry [IFID]), using two strategies (e.g., Forgiveness [IFID], I am searching for the package [explanation]), and using three strategies (e.g., Forgive me [IFID]. It was not me who did this [denial of responsibility]. I will buy you a new one [offer of repair]). Table 3 suggests that the respondents preferred to use one or two strategies (42.80% each) in their apologies than using three strategies or no strategies at all.

Table 3. Number of strategies used by all participants

Strategies	Situations						Total	Percentage
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
No strategy	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	8.50%
One strategy	2	2	2	2	1	6	15	42.80%
Two strategies	3	2	4	4	2	0	15	42.80%
Three strategies	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	8.50%

In situation no. 5 where a subject arrives late to his/her friend's house, a female respondent said "الله يحييك ويسلمك" "May God greet you and make you safe." She did not apologize, which infers that she did not think she had done anything wrong. A male respondent said "زواج ولد اختي كان يوم السبت بعد" "My nephew's wedding was on Saturday, as well" in response to situation no. 6 (not attending your friend's daughter's wedding). The respondent here used only one strategy. A female respondent replied to situation no. 3 (not giving condolences to your friend on the loss of her father) by saying "انا اسف مادريت"

"I am sorry. I did not know." In this reply, two strategies were used. Finally, a male respondent provided the following sentences for situation no. 1 (your child tore the cover page off a book you borrowed from your friend) "انا اسف راح اعطيك كتاب جديد بدل اللي قطعه ولدي" "I am sorry. I will buy you a new one instead of the one my son tore (the cover off)." In this example, the respondent used three strategies.

The participants provided more apology strategies for situations no. 1 (Tearing the cover page off a book) and no. 2 (Failure to deliver a package). They also provided fewer apology strategies in situations no. 3 (Forgetting to express condolences) and no. 4 (Stepping accidently on your friend's toe) in comparison with situations no.1 and no.2. The least number of apology strategies was used in response to situations no. 5 (Arriving late to your friend's house) and no. 6 (Not attending your friend's daughter's wedding).

Differences in use of apology strategies between males and females

The number of the apology strategies used by males and females

As illustrated in Table 4, female participants were more likely to use no strategy and/or one strategy, while male participants employed two and/or three strategies more often than their female counterparts did (44.40 %, 16.60 %, and 38.80 %, 0%, respectively).

Table 4. Number of strategies used by male and female participants

Number of strategies	Males		Females	
	Number of times	Percentage	Number of times	Percentage
No strategy	1	5.50%	2	11.10%
One strategy	6	33.30%	9	50%
Two strategies	8	44.40%	7	38.80%
Three strategies	3	16.60%	0	0.00%

Types of apology strategies used by males and females

With the exception of the explanation strategy, male participants used the other strategies (IFID, offer of repair, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility) more than female participants did. In addition, female participants tended to explain more than their male counterparts (72.2 % and 55.5 %, respectively). Table 5 below provides summaries of the percentages of strategies used by male and female participants.

Table 5. Apology strategies used by male and female participants

Strategies	Males		Females	
	Number of times	Percentage	Number of times	Percentage
IFID	12	50 %	6	33.30 %
Offer of repair	4	22.20 %	1	5.50 %
Explanation	10	55.5 %	13	72.20 %
Taking responsibility	1	5.50 %	0	0.00 %
Denial of responsibility	4	22.20 %	3	16.60 %

Table 6 shows that male participants apologized more in situations no. 1 (Tearing off the cover page of a book) and no. 2 (The lost package). A male participant, for example, said: "المعذرة مو انا اللي سويت فيه كذا" "Forgiveness. It was not me who did this." Another participant

said: "فقدت الغرض ومستعد استبدله لك وارجو المعذره" "I lost the package and I will give you another one. Please, forgive me." On the other hand, situations no. 5 (arriving 30 minutes late to your friend's house) and no. 6 (Not attending your friend's daughter's wedding) received the lowest numbers of apology strategies used. For example, a male participant said: "ياهلا وغلا والعذر والسموحة على التأخير" "Welcome. Forgive me for being late." Another participant said: "كان عندي ارتباط بمناسبة ثانية" "I was invited to another occasion."

Table 6. Apology strategies used by male participants

Strategies	Situations					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
IFID	2	3	2	3	2	0
Offer of repair	2	2	0	0	0	0
Explanation	0	3	2	2	1	2
Taking responsibility	0	0	0	0	0	1
Denial of responsibility	3	0	1	0	0	0
Total number of strategies used for each situation	7	8	5	5	3	3

Table 7 shows that the female participants apologized more in situations no. 3 (Forgetting to express condolences) and no. 4 (Stepping accidently on your friend's toe). A female participant, for example, said: "ما احد قال لي" "No one told me." Another participant said: "واخزياه والله اني ماشفتك" "Shame on me. I swear I did not see you." On the other hand, situations no. 5 (arriving 30 minutes late to your friend's house) and no. 6 (Not attending your friend's daughter's wedding) received the lowest number of used apology strategies. A female participant, for example, said: "الله يحييك" "May God bless you." Another participant said: "والله اني تعبانه" "I swear I was sick."

Table 7. Apology strategies used by female participants

Strategies	Situations					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
IFID	0	1	2	2	1	0
Offer of repair	1	0	0	0	0	0
Explanation	1	3	2	3	1	3
Taking responsibility	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denial of responsibility	2	0	1	0	0	0
Total number of strategies used for each situation	4	4	5	5	2	3

DISCUSSION

Apology strategies used by participants

Research question one explores the apology strategies used by a group of speakers of Saudi Arabic in their 50s and 60s. Examining the participants' responses in the RPTs, they were found to use the following strategies when apologizing: IFID, offer of repair, explanation, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility. Counting the number of occurrences of each strategy in participants' responses, the explanation strategy was the most used while the taking responsibility strategy was the least used.

As previously illustrated in Table 2, the participants used different numbers and types of apology strategy for each situation. It is very that situation no. 5 (arriving 30 minutes late to your friend's house), which received the lowest number of apology strategies, is seen as less severe than situation no. 2 (the lost package), which received the highest number of apology strategies. Another possible explanation is the influence of culture on participants. That is, receiving the lowest number of apology strategies might indicate that it is culturally acceptable to arrive late when visiting a friend.

The findings regarding the most and least used strategies are similar to the findings in Nureddeen (2008), who claimed that Sudanese students relied on explanation and IFID strategies more than on other strategies. They are also similar to the findings by Jebahi (2011), who pointed out that the taking responsibility strategy was not commonly used among Tunisian university students. The participants in this study used the explanation strategy more than other strategies (61.10%), while the taking responsibility strategy was the least used (2.80%).

In line with the findings of Al-Zumor (2011), who examined apologies in Arabic and English, the offer of repair strategy was among the least used strategies. Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) found that the taking responsibility strategy was the most used strategy by Germans, contrary to the Saudis in the current study, who used the taking responsibility strategy less than any other strategy of apology.

When comparing the findings of the current study with studies on other Arabic dialects (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Nureddeen, 2008; Jebahi, 2011), several generalizations can be made. As illustrated in Table 8, native speakers of Arabic tend to use the explanation and IFID strategies more than any other strategies. By contrast, it is clear that native speakers of Arabic rarely use the offer of repair or taking responsibility strategy.

Table 8. Findings of this study and other studies that focused on other Arabic dialects

Strategies	This study	Bataineh and Bataineh (2006)	Nureddeen (2008)	Jebahi (2011)
IFID	50 %	60.90 %	72 %	64.90 %
Offer of repair	13.8 %	10.70 %	14 %	3.70 %
Explanation	63.8 %	27.60 %	70 %	51.50 %
Taking responsibility	2.7 %	1.40 %	13 %	10.40 %
Denial of responsibility	19.4 %	6.80 %	6 %	24.80 %

Additionally, Table 9 compares the findings of my study (the participants were monolingual Saudi Arabic speakers) and those of other studies that focused on studying the apology strategies produced by Saudi learners and teachers of English. It is clear that Alsulayyi's (2016) and Al-Megren's (2018) findings share many similarities. However, the current study is different from those studies, specifically in the use of offer of repair, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility strategies. Such differences could be

attributed to the fact that the subjects in those studies are familiar with English language. Looking at the close percentages of the employed apology strategies in Arabic and in English by the subjects in Al-Mogren's study, support my claim that knowing another language could have affected the way they apologize.

Table 9. Findings of this study and other studies

Strategies	My study	Alsulayyi (2016)	Al-Megren (2018) Arabic	Al-Megren (2018) English
IFID	50%	79%	61.7%	85.4%
Offer of repair	13.8%	29.3%	27.7%	27.1%
Explanation	63.8%	21%	51.6%	44.8%
Taking responsibility	2.7%	28%	37.7%	27.9%
Denial of responsibility	19.4%	2.6%	1.3 %	0.6%

As shown in Table 3, the respondents in this study preferred using one or two strategies (42.80% each) in their apology than using three strategies or none. Although this finding differs from some previous studies (e.g., Wouk, 2006), where participants preferred to use only one strategy, and from Vollmer and Olshtain (1989) and Obeng (1999), whose participants preferred to use a combination of multiple strategies, the Saudi participants in this study had no preference toward choosing only one strategy or a combination of strategies.

Gender differences in apology strategies

The number of apology strategies used by males and females

Research question two asks whether any differences occur between male and female participants in terms of using apology strategies. Contrary to the males, none of the females used three strategies in one situation. The female participants in this study tended to use simpler apologies, unlike male participants who used complicated apologies to achieve the same goal. This finding (women apologizing less than men) differs from some existing studies. Holmes (1989), for example, observed that women tend to apologize more often than men, while Wagner (2000) noted that female native language speakers in Mexico apologize more than men. However, the findings are similar to Deutschmann's (2003) finding that British women tend to apologize less than men.

Types of apology strategies used by males and females

With the exception of the explanation strategy, male participants used the other strategies (IFID, offer of repair, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility) more than the female participants did. This finding corroborates Wagner (2000), who indicated that the IFID strategy was used more by males than females, while the explanation strategy was used more by females than males. By selecting the explanation strategy more often than the male participants did, the female participants probably sought to clarify the situation and ensure that the other person fully understood the situation for which they were apologizing. The denial of responsibility strategy was used more by males than females. Since the denial of responsibility strategy is used by participants to save face (Nureddeen, 2008), it can be said that the male participants in the current study were more concerned with saving face than the female participants.

As seen in Table 5, the offer of repair strategy was used more by males than females, perhaps because Saudi Arabia is a male-dominant culture in which males are responsible for supporting their families financially. In this male-dominant culture, it is likely that females could not offer to replace the book (situation no. 1) or lost package (situation no. 2) since the female participants in this study were housewives and had no source of income. This possible lack of control over finances in a family may explain the limited use of the offer of repair strategy by female participants in this study.

Some situations elicited more apology strategies (in terms of number and type) than others. As illustrated in Table 6, the male participants provided more apology strategies in situations no. 1 (Tearing off the cover page of a book) and no. 2 (The lost package). This suggests that they probably considered these situations to be more offensive than other situations. Table no.7 shows that, unlike male participants, the female participants provided more apology strategies in situation no. 4 (Stepping accidently on your friend's toe), perhaps due to the potential for physical damage involved.

As a sign of their sincere apology, the female participants invoked God's name in their apology for situation no. 4. For example, one female participant said "والله مادريت" "I swear, I did not know." Another female participant said "وخزياه والله اني ماشفتك" "Shame on me, I swear I did not see you." Invoking God's name could be a way to intensify the apology, to make the addressee accept the apology, or to emphasize whatever claims the participants are making.

Situations no. 5 and no. 6 received the fewest apology strategies, perhaps implying that the participants perceive these situations to be the least severe. Therefore, it can be said that, in Saudi Arabia, arriving late to your friend's house and not attending your friend's daughter's wedding are culturally acceptable, and do not require an apology. As a result, few apology strategies were provided by the participants in these two situations.

Unlike the female participants in Bataineh and Bataineh (2006), who apologized more than male participants, the female participants in the present study used fewer strategies than the male participants. Table 10 below demonstrates that female participants in Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) used a higher percentage of all apology strategies than male participants, contrary to the findings of the current study, where the male participants used more apology strategies than female participants with the exception of the explanation strategy.

Table 10. Strategies used in this study and in Bataineh and Bataineh (2006)

Strategies	This study		Bataineh and Bataineh (2006)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
IFID	50 %	33.30 %	57.80 %	74 %
Offer of repair	22.20 %	5.50 %	7.80 %	13.60 %
Explanation	50 %	72.20 %	27.40 %	27.80 %
Taking responsibility	5.50 %	0.00 %	0.40%	2.40 %
Denial of responsibility	22.20 %	16.60 %	4.60 %	9 %

The differences between the findings in the current study and those in Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) in terms of the dissimilar apology strategy use by males and females

probably cannot be attributed solely to culture. Other factors might also have contributed since the participants in Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) comprised undergraduate students majoring in English. Therefore, level of education and/or knowing another language could have affected the way they apologize.

CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the apology strategies used by Saudi males and females in their 50s and 60s. Using RPTs, the findings suggest that native speakers of Saudi Arabic employ various strategies when apologizing. These strategies are: Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), offer of repair, explanation, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility (50 %, 13.8 %, 63.8 %, 2.7 %, and 19.4 %, respectively).

In this study, it was found that participants used one or two strategies in their apology more often than not apologizing at all or using three strategies. It was also found that female participants tend to use only one strategy or not to apologize at all, while male participants were more likely to use two or three strategies when apologizing. This finding demonstrates that female participants preferred to give a simpler apology.

Although the male and female participants used five strategies (IFID, offer of repair, explanation, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility), the male participants used different strategies than female participants. While male participants used IFID, offer of repair, taking responsibility, and denial of responsibility more often than female participants, female participants used the explanation strategy more often than male participants. Finally, the male respondents apologized more than their female counterparts.

Some of the findings of the current study are similar to those of previous studies that dealt with apology strategies, while other findings differ. Overall, this study makes an important contribution to the literature. First, it suggests that level of education might influence the number and types of apology strategies used. Second, it shows that culture plays a role in determining the number and type of apology strategies employed.

Future studies could include a larger sample size, with participants from different cities. In addition, future studies could investigate the effect of other variables on the apology strategies used by participants, such as differences in power and social distance. Comparing and contrasting the apology strategies used by various age groups is another area of potential exploration.

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