

# **The Role of Gender in the Apology Strategies of Advanced Saudi EFL Students**

دور الفوارق الجنسية في تحديد استراتيجيات الاعتذار المستخدمة من قبل الطلاب  
السعوديين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية في المستوى المتقدم

by

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## **Abstract**

Apologies vary across languages and cultures. Therefore, EFL and ESL teachers and learners must be cognizant of the similarities and differences between the target language and the native language, because what might be acceptable in one language might not be acceptable in the other language. The purpose of this study is to examine whether gender plays a role in the apology strategies employed by 20 male and 20 female advanced Saudi EFL university students. Data were elicited using a Discourse Completion Task questionnaire (DCT), comprising of 10 real-life situations in the form of short descriptive statements which required the respondents to make an apology. Questions in the DCT varied according to the level of imposition and the distance between the interlocutors. Only gender was examined as a variable. Participants' responses were analyzed in accordance with a combination of Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) Blum- Kulka & Olshtain's (1984, 1989) and Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) apology strategies. Therefore, the responses were classified into five distinct apology strategies: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Responsibility (RESP), Explanation (EXPL), Repair (REPR), and Forbearance (FORB). The results reveal that gender plays a significant role in the apology strategies used by the respondents. Similarities and differences were also observed in the use of apology strategies. The study findings reveal that both men and women used the main apology strategies, but with different degrees, clearly indicative of the fact that women in Saudi Arabia apologized more than men. This can be interpreted as the influence of cultural gender roles. The researcher concludes with possible pedagogical implications and recommendations for further research.

تتفاوت أساليب الاعتذار من لغة إلى أخرى و من ثقافة إلى غيرها، لذا يتحتم على معلمي و دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية و كلغة أجنبية أن يتنبهوا إلى أوجه الشبه و الاختلاف بين اللغة الأم و اللغة المراد تعلمها. حيث أن ما يمكن اعتباره لائقاً في لغة ما، قد لا يكون كذلك في غيرها. تهدف هذه الدراسة للكشف عما إذا كان لنوع الجنس من حيث التذكير و التأنيث دوراً في تحديد استراتيجيات الاعتذار المستخدمة من قبل عشرون طالباً و عشرون طالبةً من دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في المستوى المتقدم من المرحلة الجامعية. و قد تم جمع البيانات عن طريق نموذج لإستطلاع طرق إتمام الخطاب Discourse Completion Task questionnaire (DCT) و المكون من عشرة مواقف من الحياة الواقعية على هيئة عبارات وصفية قصيرة حيث تتطلب من المتلقي الرد بالاعتذار. تنوعت الأسئلة في استبيان DCT حسب مستوى الإلتزام و نوع العلاقة بين المتحادثين و كان الجنس هو المتغير الوحيد في هذه الدراسة. تم تحليل ردود المشاركين بناءً على استراتيجيات الاعتذار المقدمة من بلوم - كولكا و أوستن (1984 - 1989) و كوهين و أوستن (1981) و التي يطلق عليها الأنماط الإدراكية للفعل اللساني العبر ثقافي Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) حيث تم تصنيف أساليب الاعتذار إلى خمسة استراتيجيات للإعتذار كالاتي:

Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) (أداة القوة الانجازية للفعل الكلامي) و(الإلزاميات) Responsibility (RESP) و(الإيضاحيات) Explanation (EXPL) و(الإصلاحيات) Repair (REPR) و Forbearance (FORB) (الهدوء).

تشير الدراسة إلى أن الجنس من حيث التذكير و التأنيث يلعب دوراً كبيراً في اختيار استراتيجيات الاعتذار المستخدمة من قبل المشاركين، كما تم تسليط الضوء على أوجه الشبه و الاختلاف بينهم. و تخلص النتائج الى أن كلاً من الرجال و النساء يستخدمون الإستراتيجيات الأساسية للإعتذار و لكن بدرجات متفاوتة حيث يظهر جلياً أن النساء في المملكة العربية السعودية تملن للإعتذار أكثر من أقرانهن من الرجال. و يمكن تأويل ذلك على أنه نتاج التأثير الاجتماعي في تحديد أدوار كلاً من الجنسين. كما يختم الباحث بتوصيات لدراسات لاحقة و اقتراحات للتضمنين المنهجي.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The goal of language teaching is the ability of the learner to acquire communicative competence in an environment that develops the ability to negotiate meaning effectively in the target language. Teaching of languages has seen a paradigm shift, from placing considerable emphasis on grammatical and lexical accuracy to emphasis on fluency and the ability to use the language for meaningful communication. Cohen (2011, p. 383) provides a perspective of the paradigm shift by stating, “It has become increasingly clear that the teaching of second language words and phrases isolated from their sociocultural context may lead to the production of linguistic curiosities which do not achieve their communicative purpose.”

Similarly, Hymes (1972) posits that in order to function in society, to be competent in the use of appropriate language in social situations, speakers must know how to produce and interpret language in a variety of contexts, and with a variety of interlocutors. Second language learners may have knowledge of the syntax, lexis, morphology, phonology, yet fail to achieve the communicative goal, as a result of using inappropriate expressions or inaccurate interpretations leading to communication breakdown or unsuccessful communication. Since language reflects the context in which it is used, using language appropriately involves understanding the influence of social factors on speech behavior. According to Holmes (2013, p. 443), “learning to speak appropriately in a range of contexts is important if one wants to avoid giving offence or embarrassing others by a linguistic *faux pas*.”

Therefore, without undermining the importance of linguistic competence, theoretical linguistics place emphasis on understanding the functions of language in a variety of contexts, thereby equipping learners with communicative competence, which includes sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. Sociolinguistic competence refers to a learner’s ability to interpret an utterance for its social meaning, being able to decide the appropriateness of an utterance based on factors such as the context, topic, rules of politeness and formality. Pragmatic competence refers to “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context” (Thomas 1983, p. 92). Pragmatic competence is viewed from the users’ perspective, the linguistic resources they have, the choices they make,

the obstacles they encounter in using language in social circumstances, and the effect of language use on other participants.

Comprehensive research in sociolinguistics and pragmatics over the past several decades has focused on the sociocultural norms of politeness and appropriateness in performing various speech acts. A speech act is an utterance that has a performative purpose in language and communication (Austin 1962). According to Austin (1975), speech acts are the most culturally specific as compared to any other aspect of the language, and probably the most difficult to teach. Consequently, teaching and mastering the proper use of speech acts in various contexts is imperative for an EFL classroom.

The speech act of apology is the focus of the current study. An apology has been defined in numerous ways from various perspectives. Olshtain and Cohen (1983) define apology as a kind of social occurrence that takes place when the norms of the society are infringed. In general terms, an apology is an effective politeness strategy which is required when behavior or linguistic expression of the offender breaches the social norms of politeness. It is a remedy for a light infringement of a social rule for which the offender takes responsibility and thus social harmony is restored among the participants.

An apology is a speech act that has been studied extensively across languages and cultures, thereby establishing the universality of apology strategies. According to Salgado (2011, p. 28), apologies are universal because they “operate by universal principles and general mechanisms.” However, most researchers maintain that the strategies may be realized differently across languages and cultures, depending on their function, distribution, and frequency of occurrence. Furthermore, researchers maintain that pragmatic transfer from native language to target language affects the use of apology strategies.

In the past two decades, scholars have studied the influence of the social factors of age, gender and education on the use of apology strategies, but the social factor of gender has not received much attention, particularly in the Arab region. The study aims to investigate whether gender plays a role in the apology strategies used by EFL native speakers of Arabic. The study,

therefore, attempts to outline the kinds of apology strategies used by young Arab male and female learners of English.

Apologizing in one's native language can be difficult, and having to do it in a second or foreign language can be even more daunting, since there are many factors which need to be considered. In order to understand the nuances of language use, it is important to investigate the way various speech acts are used by both native and non-native speakers. In addition, since English has attained the unrivaled status of *Lingua Franca* and is being taught at most institutions of higher education, a study like this could guide teaching methodology.

### **1.1 Research Questions:**

1. Does gender play a role in the apology strategies used by advanced EFL university students?
2. Are there any similarities and differences in the strategies used?

### **1.2 Outline of the dissertation chapters:**

This study is divided into seven chapters. *Chapter two* provides the background for the study. Therefore, pragmatics and pragmatic competence, inter-language pragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics, language and gender will be briefly discussed to prepare a conceptual ground for the study.

*Chapter three* will examine and discuss the conceptual framework of speech acts, politeness, speech act of apology, and the theoretical framework.

*Chapter four, Literature Review*, provides an account of previous research carried out on apologies in various languages. It also reviews the most current research in the field and introduces the *research questions* which this study aims to answer.

*Chapter five, Methodology*, describes the participants, the procedures, and the instruments used in the collection and analysis of the data.

*Chapter six* deals with the results and findings of the study, and provides an in-depth discussion of the findings in terms of the overall use of the apology strategies used by both, males and females. This section will also provide an insight into the Saudi practices of apologies in English and also reveal that there are similarities and differences in the use of apologies. Finally, the limitations and implications on language learning and language instruction will be considered.

*Chapter 7*, the concluding chapter will summarize the most important findings.

## Chapter 2

### Background

The current study sets out to examine the speech act of apology as realized by Saudi males and females. In order to do so, a general understanding of ideas is not sufficient. Instead, a firm conceptual ground needs to be sketched out in order to provide a comprehensive background of the specific features necessary for the study.

A discussion of pragmatics, inter-language pragmatics, cross-cultural pragmatics provides a coherent, structural framework which is significant for the study. This chapter also aims to discuss language and gender.

#### 2.1 Pragmatics and Pragmatic Competence

Compared to other linguistic disciplines, *pragmatics* is a fairly recent field, having found its way into contemporary linguistics in the late 1960s, when language philosophers like J.L. Austin, J.R. Searle, and other eminent linguists, began exploring the performance phenomena or the “utterance meaning rather than sentence or word meaning” (Bublitz & Norrick 2011, p. 2). Since its inception, pragmatics has advanced more diversely and more rapidly than any other linguistic study.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as we move away from monolingual and monocultural interaction towards a more multilingual and multicultural interaction, communication has become more diverse, necessitating the understanding of norms and values of various languages and cultures since people in every given language community abide by the principles that govern linguistic interaction. With this paradigm shift in communication, research in pragmatics has seen a dramatic increase, which, in turn, has greatly contributed to the study of Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition (henceforth SLA), and its pedagogical implications.

In communication, speakers and writers rely on a lot of beliefs, expectations, assumptions, and value systems that are found in all facets of language use, but are not necessarily communicated through linguistic forms of utterances. In order to make a speech act

situationally appropriate, speakers must be able to address the sociocultural variables. Communicators need to interpret the meaning even when it is not actually said. Similarly, language learners must successfully interpret what other language users intend to convey. Pragmatics focuses on language practices and the users of language in realistic everyday interaction. This definition only provides a narrow view of pragmatics. Although an important field of study in linguistics, there is no holistic definition of pragmatics. Linguists have defined it differently, but the central theme remains the same; focus on the user, context, and use of language. According to Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 19), “pragmatics studies the context within which an interaction occurs as well as the intention of the language user... .” Crystal (2004, p. 301) elaborates and defines pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their language use has on other participants in the act of communication.” Yule (1996, p. 3) offers a more comprehensive explanation by classifying pragmatics into four areas. Firstly, he explicates that “pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader).” Meaning is largely interpreted by utterances, and not by the individual meaning of words or phrases in those utterances. Secondly, he explains that “pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning.” In order to interpret meaning, context and the influence of the context is given consideration. This can be viewed from the perspective of the speaker, the addressee, or the analyst. It is the context which makes a speaker choose the linguistic forms based on who, where, when, and under what situations. Thirdly, Yule (1996, p.3) explicates that “pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said.” In other words, it bridges the gap between interpretation of the speaker’s intentional meaning and how it is inferred by the listener. In many ways, pragmatics is the study of “invisible” meaning which allows the listener to reasonably interpret the intended meaning of the speaker. Finally, pragmatics is the field of study that examines the manifestation of comparative distance. This perspective gives the speaker the choice of linguistic forms based on how close or distant the interlocutors are; distance here could apply to physical, social or conceptual.

Hence, within the conventions of pragmatics, a given communicative action is not understood solely by individual actions and their perlocutionary effects, but the whole speech act, within

the context of its performance, is taken into consideration. The fundamental component of analysis in pragmatics is the speech act. The nature of the speech act is surrounded by unlimited contextual variables that help in shaping meaning. The contextual variables can be in the form of identities of the interlocutors, setting, circumstances that lead to the act, felicity conditions, background knowledge and assumptions. Because of its multifaceted nature, teaching and learning the pragmatics of a language is challenging. However, pragmatics is an important area in the field of SLA teaching and learning. In the field of SLA, *pragmatic competence* is required for successful communication. Some areas of pragmatics include the appropriate use of language in conducting speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, complimenting, refusing and thanking. Pragmatic competence refers to the ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act in a tangible speech situation in a second language (Kasper 1997). Sociolinguist Jenny Thomas (1983) first introduced the term pragmatic competence, and defined pragmatic competence as “the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context.” Another more elaborate definition, is provided by Anne Barron (2003, p. 10). She defines pragmatic competence as, “the knowledge of linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts, and finally, knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular language’s linguistic resources.” Both linguists have underscored the three important aspects of language; knowledge of the language, the purpose of the speech act, and the context. Although, it is a fact that there is no correct way of language use, the appropriate use of language can be defined in different contexts. Therefore, pragmatic competence becomes a fundamental characteristic of communicative competence.

Many linguistic scholars have investigated the close relationship between pragmatic competence and language proficiency and these studies have not only contributed to the theories of communicative competence (Kasper & Schmidt 1996; Kasper & Rose 1999), but have also added substantially to pedagogical theories. For example, in the context of EFL, Kasper (1997) posits that L2 learners must be aware of the appropriateness of the language for mutual comprehension and develop language skills to meet and overcome challenges that arise because of breakdown in communication. Similarly, Rose (2001) suggests that increasing

pragmatic consciousness is fundamentally an inductive approach to developing a general awareness of how language systems are used appropriately in context. In fact, Rose and Kasper (2003), shift their focus to include the native speaker of the language in their proposal. They believe that *pragmatic competence* provides users of language with an instrument to detect intercultural interaction structures and develop appropriate speech act strategies.

## **2.2 Inter-language Pragmatics:**

A large diversity of research interests and advancements in the field of Applied Linguistics has brought forth the relevance of pragmatics and inter-language pragmatics. This variety of linguistic research, according to Levinson (1983), shares a fundamental concern, the necessity to account for the rules that govern the practice of language in context. Researchers in pragmatics, started paying more attention to inter-language pragmatics (ILP) after it was observed that L2 learners usually make errors in their communication because of their ignorance of pragmatic knowledge, and consequently, this leads to pragmatic failure or a social offence, as in the domain of politeness, whereby pragmatic failure can be considered impolite, under-polite, or over-polite. It has also been observed that the L2 learners' pragmatic inaccuracies are judged more objectionable than the linguistic errors by their target language interlocutors, (Blum-Kulka 1997). Furthermore, it was observed that research in SLA focused more on second language performance phenomena rather than second language development or the language learning process.

In the area of SLA, Reinecke (1969) and Selinker (1972) were the first linguistic scholars to use the term *Inter-language*. ILP has been defined as the study of nonnative speakers' practices and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language, (Kasper 1989). In other words, it investigates the way nonnative speakers comprehend and realize a linguistic action in the target language, and the way they acquire L2 pragmatic awareness. Although this definition incorporates all aspects of ILP, it restricts it to nonnative speakers (NNSs), and hence narrows its scope, because English has acquired the status of *lingua franca*, and it is inevitable that L2 speakers will be communicating with not only the native speakers (NSs), but also with other NNSs, and as the percentage of NNSs far exceeds that of NSs, it is highly probable that NSs will be communicating more with NNSs. Moreover, the native speaker is no longer considered the



ideal speaker-hearer, whose values, attitudes, and beliefs were strongly tied to inner-circle countries like the US and the UK. In addition, according to Leech (2014, p.261), “the competence of the native speaker is no longer necessarily the ‘gold standard’ toward which all L2 learners are assumed to be striving.” Swales (2004) suggests that, in an ESL/EFL context, it is more relevant to acquire a high level of proficiency or understanding rather than being a NS. In fact, there is evidence that in the international arena, converging variants of language use is adopted by both NNSs and NSs. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993, pp 3 & 4) attribute it to “emerging intercultural styles.” Hence, in the global context, the field of inter-language pragmatics necessitates the broadening of its perspective. Nevertheless, inter-language pragmatic research still uses the NSs competence as a yardstick to analyze language proficiency.

In SLA research, pragmatics has not been given enough attention. Most research in pragmatics is segmented and has been dominated by studies comparing the ways non-native speakers’ pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge contrasts with that of the native speakers, and among learners with diverse cultural and linguistic background (Kasper & Schmidt 1996). Compared to the large body of research on children’s acquisition of pragmatic competence in the first language, few studies have investigated the acquisition of pragmatic competence by adult nonnative speakers. Similarly, research in Inter-language pragmatics has not paid much attention to the developmental issues of pragmatic competence. Consequently, Inter-language pragmatics has primarily been a study of second language use rather than second language learning.

### **2.3 Cross-cultural Pragmatics:**

The study of pragmatics aims to investigate the rules that govern the use of language in a specific context, where an individual’s background knowledge is culturally determined and plays a role in making sense of the world. According to Yule (1996, p. 87), “We develop our cultural schemata in the contexts of our basic experiences.” In other words, speakers construct meaning based on their experiences, which can lead to different expectations. Yule (1996) posits that the investigation of differences or similarities in expectations based on cultural

schemata is part of a wide-ranging field of investigation known as Cross-cultural pragmatics. According to Young (1998), cross-cultural pragmatics is concerned with linguistic performance of language users coming from diverse language backgrounds. Therefore, cross-cultural pragmatics can be defined as the study of similarities and differences of language usage in diverse cultures, and in a specified context.

One of the most recent and most recognized works in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics is the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Pattern (CCSARP). Initiated in 1982, it is an ongoing project which collects and analyzes data to investigate the speech acts of requests and apologies across a range of languages and cultures (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984). It also aims to establish similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realization patterns in the speech acts of apology and requests in each of the languages studied within the project.

The issue of universality is one of the basic challenges for researcher in pragmatics. Cross-cultural research in pragmatics aims to determine the degree to which the rules that govern the use of language differs across languages and cultures. In the context of speech acts, CCSARP investigates whether there are universal pragmatic principles in the realization of speech acts, and what the characteristics of the universals might be. The researchers in CCSARP have emphasized the need to expand the study of speech acts to incorporate more non-Western languages. This in turn would broaden the scope of culture and language studies. Research in cross-cultural pragmatics is necessary, especially for teachers and learners of the communicative language teaching and learning, as it provides an insight into the applied aspect of the issue of universality (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984).

The pedagogical implications of research in cross-cultural pragmatics is especially relevant in the context of speech acts, as it has been established through various studies (Blum-Kulka 1982; Cohen & Olshtain 1981; House 1989; Kasper 1981) that unawareness of the cross-linguistic differences in the speech act realization rules leads to pragmatic failure. Blum-Kulka (1982), and Olshtain and Cohen (1983) further explicate that the concept of appropriateness differs across languages and cultures. It has been observed that English apology strategies used by learners of the language are constantly marked by inter-language pragmatics, which can be attributed to

pragmatic transfer. Pragmatic transfer refers to the L2 learners' use of the strategies of their L1 to perform a linguistic function which is performed differently in L2. Besides pragmatic transfer, apology strategies used by learners could also be marked by socio-pragmatic transfer, which occurs from applying the socio-cultural norms of L1 to L2. Since speech acts forms an important component of pragmatics, it becomes imperative for second language learners to be competent in the realization of the speech acts, and be conscious of the pragmatic rules of the target language in order to be able to communicate effectively.

This study aims to investigate the speech act of apology using the inter-language pragmatics approach, which focus on second language learners' production of the target language.

## **2.4 Language and Gender**

Gender is a social, cultural and psychological construct by which people acquire characteristics which are perceived as masculine and feminine. This division exists in all societies and has significant consequences. It determines an individual's behavior and role in the society, and creates a social system. Therefore, *gender* is a term used for distinguishing people on the basis of their socio-cultural behavior. How an individual uses language in social interaction is also determined by gender. According to Talbot (2010, p. 3), "Gender affects how we act in the world and how the world treats us. This includes the language we use, and the language used about us." Language plays a significant role in creating and sustaining this division.

According to Holmes (1992), women and men do not speak in precisely identical ways as each other in any community. In some speech communities, difference in particular linguistic features, like pronunciation, word-shapes, syntax and morphology; takes place only in women's speech or only in men's speech. In some languages, for example, traditional Japanese, there are also variances amongst vocabulary items used by females and males (Shibamoto 1985). However, in modern Japanese these differences are attributed to formality and politeness rather than gender.

The interrelationship of gender and other social factors like status and power also contributes to linguistic differences. Holmes (1992, p. 152) believes that in a hierarchical society, where at each level of hierarchy, men are more authoritative than women, linguistic variances between

the speech of women and men, is a reflection of the social hierarchy. Furthermore, in such speech communities, gender-exclusive speech forms reflect gender-exclusive roles. This generalization, however, does not apply to Western societies as women's and men's role overlap here, and thus the speech procedures also overlap. Based on speech data collected from various English-speaking cities, Holmes (1992, p. 152) proposes that "women and men do not use completely different forms. They use different quantities or frequencies of the same form." For example, women use more *-ing* pronunciation than men, and fewer *-in* pronunciation for words ending in *-ing*. In other features of language, Holmes (1995) suggests that women tend to use more of the standard forms than men do, while men use more of the vernacular forms than women do. One of the reasons, she claims, is that women are more status-conscious than men and the use of standard forms signals higher social status. The other explanation for the fact that women use more standard forms is that society expects better behavior from women than men, and this starts early on in life. Misbehavior or rule-breaking is tolerated more from little boys than it is with little girls. Women from an early age are expected to be role models for correct behavior. Therefore, subsequent to this disagreement, society expects women to speak more standardly than men. Another reason proposed for women's use of standard forms is women's subordinate place in contrast to men, so they are expected to speak cautiously and politely.

The idea of women's subordinate place and their difference in language use was identified in Robin Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* (1975). In her book, Lakoff (1975) posited the "deficit approach" to explain women's language. The idea of the "deficit approach" was first proposed by Jespersen (1922). According to this approach, Lakoff maintains that women tend to use language forms that reflect their subordinate role in society. She argues that male language is considered the benchmark while a women's language is deficient against that standard. In other words, women's language is considered to have something fundamentally "wrong" with it. This approach was challenged by linguistic scholars, which led to a refinement of the "deficit approach," thereby, giving rise to the "dominance approach," supported by scholars such as Zimmerman and West (1983) and Spender (1980). According to the "dominance approach," gender differences in language are reflective of power differences in society. In other words, females are perceived as subordinate groups whose difference in

language use is affected by male supremacy. As the field of language and gender studies expanded, Deborah Tannen (1990), proposed the “difference approach,” according to which language differences between males and females is the result of their belonging to different cultures. Moreover, Tannen (1990) advocates that men communicate to convey factual information while women’s language is concerned with maintaining and building relationships. As a proponent of the above theories, Cameron (1990) divides research in gender and language into the above mentioned approaches, and maintains that all research in this area can be placed in one of the three categories.

Lakoff’s work spawned a range of empirical studies and played a significant role in laying the foundations for contemporary research in language and gender. It also served as an impetus for researchers (Halpern 1992, Philips, Steale & Tanz 1987) wanting to study cognitive differences between women and men, and if these influenced language development and use. The researchers claimed that women are born to be better with language than men, and men are inherently better with visual and spatial things. Similarly, it was proved that women process speech on the right side more than men do, and that men’s brains are more lateral. However, their findings were disproved in later research (Hyde & Mckinley 1997).

In this research, the researcher hypothesises that the difference in the apology strategies used by males and females in Saudi Arabia can be placed in the “dominance” and “difference” approach.

## Chapter 3

The present study is an investigation of the potential effects of gender, and the apology strategies used by advanced Saudi ELF students. An apology is a speech act, and speech acts play a significant role in the acquisition of sociopragmatic competence of second language learners. However, it is difficult for learners to understand and produce various speech acts, because learners are not only required to produce speech acts, they must also be proficient enough to perceive the intended meaning of the speaker. Since speech acts and apologies are a fundamental element of the politeness phenomena, all these factors deserve close attention, and will be discussed in this chapter. This chapter also aims to discuss the theoretical framework which has greatly influenced studies on gender and politeness.

### 3.1 Politeness

Politeness is an area of language studies on which linguistic scholars and researchers have very different opinions. According to Leech (2014, p. ix), “politeness is a social phenomenon- and yet a social phenomenon largely manifested through the use of language.” In other words, politeness is the relationship between language use and social behavior. Within the social parameters, Lakoff (1990, p.34) defines politeness as “a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange.” Based on these definitions, it can be claimed that politeness is both, a linguistic phenomenon and a social phenomenon, with ‘pragmalinguistics’ and ‘sociolinguistics’ as the subdomains. The former is oriented to linguistic realization of politeness, or how it is conveyed or manifested linguistically, and the latter is oriented to the social or cultural determinants of politeness, or the various scales of value that make a particular degree of politeness seem appropriate in a given social context. In a more recent and a broad sense, Leech (2014) defines politeness as a system of communicative behavior prevalent very generally in human cultures; indeed it has been claimed as a universal phenomenon of human society. Adding to this definition, Leech (2014, p.4) further calls politeness “communicative altruism” because politeness, an observable phenomenon, is about

speaking or behaving in a manner that gives benefit or value to the other person and not to yourself.

The concept of the universality of politeness has been claimed in early studies (Lakoff 1973; Brown & Levinson 1987). Lakoff (1973), one of the first linguistic scholar to come up with a theory of politeness from a pragmatic perspective, proposed three main principles of politeness, namely “don’t impose,” “give options,” and “make the hearer feel good - be friendly” (p.298). Lakoff was inspired by Grice’s Cooperative Principles (1975), which describe how effective communication is achieved in social situations. Grice asserts that in conversing, a speaker should adhere to the four maxims: Maxim of Quality (Be true), Maxim of Quantity (Be brief), Maxim of Relation (Be relevant), and Maxim of Manner (Be clear).

Lakoff’s first rule emphasizes the fact that all individuals have their personal space. An order or command acts as an invasion of threat to this space. Giving options is important because people can either accept or reject and not feel trapped. The third rule underscores an individual’s desire to feel positive and in control of the situation. The feeling that one’s ideas and opinions are respected makes an individual feels good.

According to Lakoff’s (1973) research, politeness can be described as a culture-specific, universal phenomenon by means of which cultures can be characterized, or which can characterize culture. Although Lakoff’s claim to the universality of politeness has been criticized (Watts 2003), she argues that her theory does not dispute the fact that different cultures have different norms. However, she believes that the differences in the interpretation of politeness are the result of the order in which these rules are realized. In a later publication, Lakoff (1990) came up with three rather different rules, “Distance,” “Deference,” and “Camaraderie.” She believed that according to the culture, these may have different degrees of importance, for example, British culture gives more prominence to “distance,” Japanese culture gives more preference to “deference,” while Australian culture gives more importance to “camaraderie” (Kadar 2010). After Lakoff’s (1973) theory of politeness, research in linguistic politeness proliferated and was of particular interest to scholars in the field of pragmatics, sociolinguistics and language philosophy.

In general terms, politeness entails having to do with concepts of being tactful, modest and agreeable to others in order to contribute to social harmony and thus avoid social conflict. Inappropriate discourse strategies may be considered rude. Therefore, some very important aspects of politeness involve making appropriate linguistic choices when interacting with people, assessing social relationships along the dimensions of social distance, and understanding the social values of a society. Politeness is usually taken for granted, yet it has some unique characteristics. Leech (2014, pp. 4-8) offers eight characteristics of politeness. Firstly, he postulates that politeness is not obligatory, and people can choose to be polite or impolite. People will not behave politely unless there is a reason to be polite. Secondly, he claims that there are varying degrees of polite or impolite behavior. The more a person lowers himself/ herself socially, the more polite it is. Similarly, the greater the evaluation, the more polite the response. Another characteristic of politeness is that there is often a sense of what is normal in a particular situation as recognized by the society. Being unaware of this factor may lead to over-politeness. In some situations, impoliteness dominates over politeness. Thirdly, there is a reciprocal irregularity in polite behavior between two parties. Giving high value to the other party or attributing low value to oneself is considered polite. In contrast, giving high value to oneself and low value to the other person is considered impolite. One more distinguishing factor of politeness is that it involves the passing of some kind of transaction of value between the speaker and the interlocutors. Politeness studies have often focused on certain kinds of speech acts (*thanks, requests, invitations, compliments, apologies*) that involve such transactions. Yet another distinctive feature of politeness, explored by Watts (2003), is its function of maintaining social equilibrium. This feature is particularly clear in the case of the speech acts of *thanks* and *apologies*, both of which are described as remedial, because they seek to repair the sense of debt that one participant has to the other. For example, in the case of apology, the sense of debt arises from the offense committed by the speaker, who attempts to repay the debt in words.

Being polite can be a very complex task in any language, because it involves understanding and using not only the appropriate linguistic devices, but also being aware of the social and cultural norms of the society. The choice of the appropriate linguistic forms is governed by considerations of politeness, which involves background, topic, participants and the purpose of



communication. The other two factors which need to be taken into account are the dimensions of social distance and social power. Social distance and social power determine what is considered polite in different situations and communities. In order to be linguistically polite, it is important to select the appropriate linguistic forms which recognize the relevant social power and distance. Failure to take these factors into consideration can lead to conflict and disharmony between the participants.

### **3.2 Theoretical Framework**

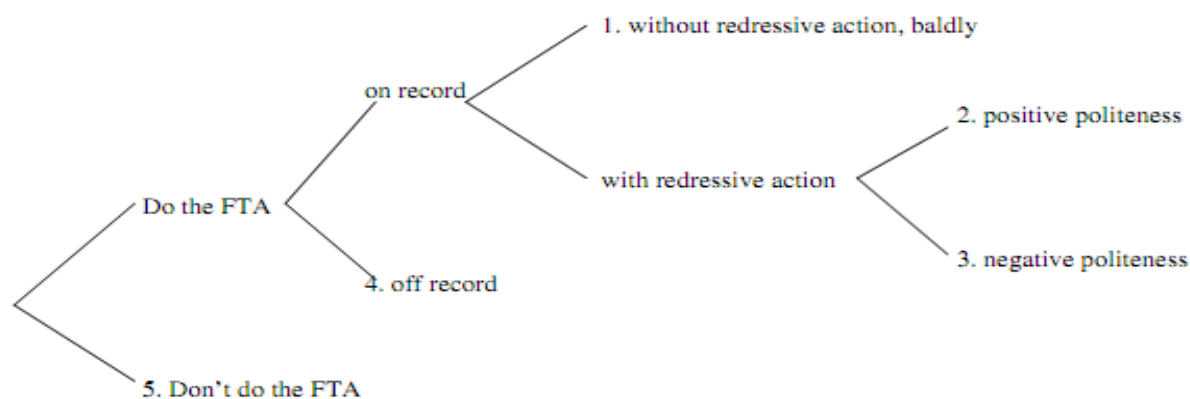
#### *Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory*

A lot of linguistic scholars have proposed a range of politeness theories (Brown and Levinson 1978; Lakoff 1960; Leech 1983). Politeness has been defined as “a property associated with an utterance in which, according to the hearer, the speaker has neither exceeded any rights, nor failed to fulfill any obligations” (Fraser 1975, p. 13). In this regard, Brown and Levinson's (1987) Theory of Politeness, which first appeared in *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*, is considered the best-known and the most influential politeness framework. According to this theory, Brown and Levinson propose the psychological notion of “face,” which was built on the ideas of Goffman (1967), who believed that “face” was something which is given to an individual by society. In pragmatics, “face” is a person's positive self-image or self-esteem, which is the emotional and social sense that an individual possesses, and expects others to recognize. According to Leech (2014, p. 24), “Face is assumed to be a positively evaluated property possessed by individual human beings.” Thus “face” is the psychological property of an individual and is a reflection of the individual's relationship to others, and to society. Showing awareness and consideration of another person's face are the fundamental aspects of politeness (Yule 1985, p. 132). Many scholars studying politeness, even those who disagree with Brown and Levinson's characterization of “face,” have adopted the face-based approach.

The theory not only underscores the general principles of politeness, but also shows how it can differ substantially from culture to culture. Along these lines, Brown and Levinson further propose the notion of *positive* face and *negative* face. They claim that an individual has both a

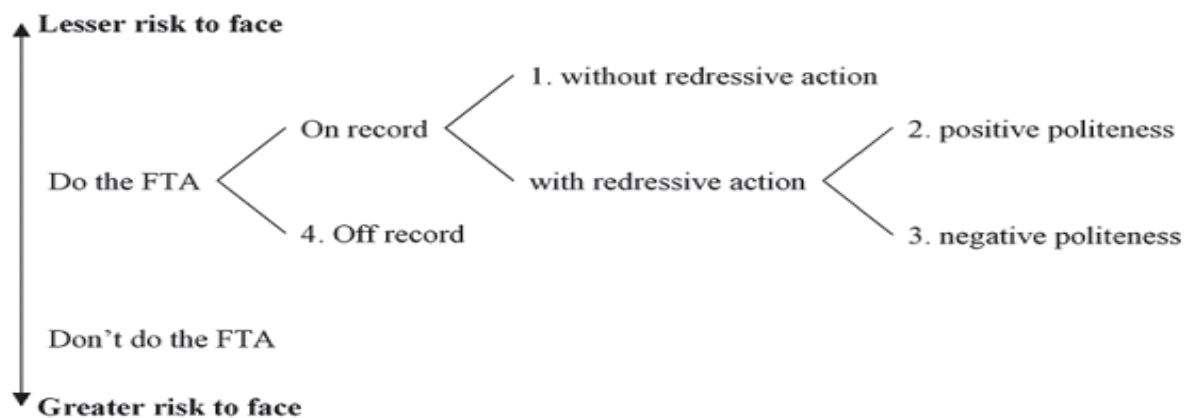
positive face and a negative face. *Positive* face is the “ongoing interest in projecting a self that is affiliated with others, that is liked and identified with, part of a ‘we’ ” (Eckert 2003, p. 134). It is the individual’s need to belong or be connected to society. *Negative* face refers to “projecting a self that is a separate individual, someone deserving of respect and freedom from imposition, someone whose own interest have intrinsic value” (Eckert 2003, p. 134). It refers to one’s desire to be independent and free from obligations.

According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, an action or utterance that an individual may perceive as a threat to self-image is called a face threatening act (FTA). On the other hand, an action or an utterance which reduces the possible threat to another’s face is called the face-saving act (Yule 1985, p. 133). FTAs are threatening to the speaker’s face. For example, apologies are FTAs that directly cause harm to the speaker’s face. An apology produced by a speaker indicates that the individual regrets doing a preceding FTA, thereby damaging his own face. Since face is mutually vulnerable, the speaker will either try to avoid the FTAs or will use strategies to minimize the threat. In order to reduce the threat posed by FTAs, to either the addressee’s face or the speakers face, an individual is expected to adhere to the politeness conventions and choose appropriate politeness strategies. In this regard, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed five politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1987; chapter 22, p. 316): **(1) speak bald on record, without redress**. This involves doing it directly, clearly and concisely without attempting to decrease the threat to the addressee’s face. In this manner, the speaker is not afraid of retribution from the addressee. This strategy is generally used where there is a close relationship between the interlocutors. On the one hand, using this strategy gives advantage to the speaker because he or she gets credit for being honest and non-manipulative, and avoids the danger of being misunderstood. On the other hand, the speaker can come across as being inconsiderate and tactless; **(2) speak on record, with redress**, in the form of positive politeness; **(3) speak on record, with redress**, in the form of negative politeness; **(4) speak off record**. This is an indirect strategy whereby the speaker avoids the direct FTAs ; **(5) don’t do the FTA**. In relation to these strategies, the speech act of apology belongs to the third strategy. The proposed five strategies for doing an FTA are shown in Figure 1 below (Brown and Levinson 1987; chapter 22, p. 316).



**Figure 1.** Brown and Levinson's (1987) possible strategies for doing an FTA.

It is important to mention here that these strategies pose different degrees of risk to the speaker's or the hearer's face as presented in the following figure (Ogiermann 2009, p. 12).



**Figure 2.** The degree of risk of politeness strategies

A redressive action refers to “giving face” to the addressee. The speaker recognizes the addressee's face wants and wants them to be achieved himself. Therefore, the speaker attempts to counteract the potential damage by modifying the FTA, indicating clearly that no face threat was intended. Such a redressive action can take the form of positive politeness or negative politeness (Brown and Levinson 1987; chapter 22, p. 317).

According to Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 317), “Positive politeness is oriented toward the positive face of the hearer (H), the positive self-image that he claims for himself.” In other words, the speaker (S) recognizes the addressee has a desire to be respected, and therefore,

the S avoids giving offense, so the potential threat of an act is minimized. It is solidarity oriented, emphasizing shared attitudes, interests and values, and makes the H feel a sense of friendship and belonging. This strategy decreases social distance and is generally used in situations where the interlocutors are familiar to each other. Giving compliments is an example of positive politeness.

By contrast, “negative politeness is oriented toward partially satisfying (redressing) H’s negative face, his basic want to maintain claims of territory and self-determination,” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 317). This strategy essentially involves giving people respect, recognizing social distance, and emphasizing avoidance of imposition on H by showing deference. With the presumption that the speaker will be imposing on the listener, the S attempts to avoid imposition by using expressions that soften the illocutionary speech act, and the risk of face-threat is minimized. Additionally, there is a higher chance of awkwardness or embarrassment than in the positive strategy. Using negative politeness assumes a direct relationship between indirectness and positive politeness. An apology is an example of negative politeness.

Besides the above mentioned strategies, Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed three social variables that speakers choose, according to which the weightiness (W) of an FTA is calculated: 1. Social distance (D), 2. power (P) and 3. the rating of the impositions in the particular culture (Rx) (Harris 2007). This is represented by a specific formula as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987):

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$$

(S = speaker, H = hearer )

According to this formula, **D** represents the social distance between the interlocutors, which can vary from very high, as in an unfamiliar person, to very low, as in close friends. Therefore, the greater the distance between the interlocutors, the more politeness is expected. **P** refers to the relative power of the hearer has over the speaker. For instance, a manager has more authority over his subordinate. As a result, the greater the perceived power of the hearer over speaker, the more politeness is suggested. **R<sub>x</sub>** refers to the absolute ranking of the imposition

which is determined culturally and situationally. Therefore, the more serious the imposition, the more weightiness of the politeness is required.

Apologies often try to correct the social wrong done to others. The speech act of apology is one of the politeness strategies that exist universally in all languages. Undermining any of the above mentioned factors that may influence the delivery of an apology, can lead to offence or inconvenience among the interlocutors. Brown and Levinson (1987) theory of politeness has greatly influenced work on gender and politeness, and has offered a framework for doing comparative work on politeness. Brown and Levinson (1987) categorize an apology as *negative politeness* whereby an individual needs to make a place for oneself, to maintain individuality that is recognized and respected without interference from others. The scholars believe that much of the behavior that people call polite is a matter of *negative politeness*. An apology, thus, is a face-threatening act that requires the speaker to admit responsibility for an offensive behavior that has affected the hearer.

Although Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory has offered a framework for comparative studies on politeness, there are some scholars who do not agree with this theory. For example, Matsumoto (1988) claims that Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory does not apply to Japanese speakers. Gu (1990) puts forth similar claims about the Chinese, all of which can lead to the conclusion that the concept of face is also culture specific. The reason Matsumoto (1988) provides after her observation is that, in contrast to Europeans, Japanese do not define themselves as individuals. Instead, they define themselves as belonging to a group based on rank relations (Demeter 2000). Therefore, saving face for them does not necessarily mean caring for individual well-being.

Similarly, Gu (1990) claims that the Chinese view politeness differently from Brown and Levinson's (1987) taxonomy. Gu (1990) asserts that Chinese negative face is never threatened in speech acts such as inviting and offering. In fact, Gu (1990, p. 242) claims that, for the Chinese, "politeness exercises its normative function in constraining individual speech acts as well as the sequence of talk exchanges." Consequently, the perception of face differs cross-culturally.

In light of the two above mentioned findings, Nwoye (1992) emphasizes that it is significant to sub-divide the concept into “individual face” and “group face” (Demeter 2000). In relation to this, an individual face “refers to the individual’s desire to attend to his/her personal needs and to place his/her public self-image above those of others,” while group face “refers to the individual’s desire to behave in conformity with culturally expected norms of behavior that are institutionalized and sanctioned by society” (Nwoye 1992, p. 131). With this sub-division of the concept of face, Nwoye (1992), concludes that in some cultures speech acts such as, offers, thanks and requests are not considered face threatening.

Politeness is not only culturally determined, but it is also contextually determined. In this regard, Frazer (1990) argues that language functions which may be considered polite in normal situations may not be so contextually. For instance, a person trying to be highly polite than required as per the social expectations, would be considered arrogant, impolite, or even disrespectful. Frazer (1990) believes that Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory tends to overlook this factor.

Despite its criticisms, Brown and Levinson’s (1987) theory is still considered the most comprehensive taxonomy for studying politeness.

### 3.3 Speech Acts

In order to communicate effectively, people do not only produce utterances containing grammatical structures and words, but actions are also performed via those utterances. Moreover, the hearer of the utterance needs to interpret the meaning of an utterance in terms of the speaker’s communicative intention. **Speech acts** are used to perform actions such as requesting, complimenting, promising and apologizing. Speech acts can be defined “as actions performed by a speaker with an utterance” (Yule 2014, p. 131). For example, if the speaker says, *I’ll be home early for dinner*, the speaker is performing the speech act of promising. The speaker expects his or her communicative intention to be recognized by the hearer, and this process is facilitated by the circumstances surrounding the utterance. The circumstances and the utterances are called the **speech event**.

Within the general theory of language usage, the **speech act theory** has aroused the broadest interest, not only by linguists, but also by psychologists, literary critics, anthropologists, and philosophers. Psychologists, for example, have paralleled the acquisition of the concepts of speech acts with a prerequisite for the acquisition of language in general (see e.g. Bruner 1975; Bates 1976). Linguists, on the other hand, have looked at the concepts of speech act theory as differently applicable to the problems in syntax (see e.g. Sadock 1974), semantics (see e.g. Fillmore 1971), and second language learning (see e.g. Jakobovitz & Gordon 1974). In linguistic pragmatics, speech acts are considered the most fundamental phenomena that any general pragmatic theory must account for (Levinson, 1983).

The concept of *Speech Acts* was originally introduced by J.L. Austin (1962) in *How to Do Things with Words*. The concept was later refined and developed by J.R. Searle (1969), who believed that language is a “rule-governed behavior.” In pragmatics, various sets of conventionalized, frequently repeated, and routinized expressions are called speech acts (Celce-Murcia 2001, p. 399). Speech act performance constitutes an area of constant concern for language learners since they are continuously confronted with the requisite to utilize speech acts such as apologies, requests, refusals, complaints and compliments, each of which can be realized by means of numerous potential strategies. As such, speech acts are typically classified by their communicative and pragmatic functions. Speech acts can be direct or indirect (viz., a word, a sentence, sentences or body movement) and, hence, they differ in their degree of politeness and comprehensibility. Speech acts are realistic everyday interactions and speakers need to have both, knowledge of the language and knowledge of how to use it appropriately to avoid miscommunication and maintain social harmony. As a result, the speaker or hearer must comprehend the pragmatic function of a speech act in order to achieve the communicative goal. According to Austin’s theory of speech acts (1962), utterances have three kinds of meaning; *locutionary*, the basic act of utterance, or producing a meaningful linguistic expression, *illocutionary* or the social function of the utterance, which is performed by the communicative force of an action known as the **illocutionary force**, and *perlocutionary force*, the result or effect produced by the utterance. Of these three dimensions, the focus of Austin’s interest is the illocutionary act and the term *speech acts* is generally interpreted to mean only the illocutionary force of an utterance. The illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) is an

expression of a performative verb (Vp) that explicitly names the illocutionary act that is being performed, for example, *I (Vp) for coming late*. It is important to mention here that speakers may not always use the Vp. Other IFIDs, such as, word order, stress and intonation can be identified.

In order for a speech act to be recognized as intended, certain appropriate circumstances known as **felicity conditions** are expected. Austin (1962) distinguished these into three categories (Levinson 1983).

- A. (i) There must be conventional procedures having a conventional consequence.  
(ii) The conditions and persons must be appropriate, as identified in the procedure.
- B. The procedure must be executed appropriately and completely.
- C. It is necessary that the persons have the requisite thoughts, feelings and intentions, and if subsequent behavior is specified, then the concerned parties must do so.

Following a communicative approach to the speech theory, Searle (1976) has provided a classification of speech acts according to the types of general functions performed by the speech acts: declaratives (that bring about changes with the use of utterances), expressives (utterances that express feelings and attitudes), representatives (present they things are), directives (instruct somebody to do something), and commissives (when an individual commits himself or herself). The speech act of apology is an expressive because it expresses the psychological state or attitude of the speaker. A different approach to distinguish types of speech acts can be made on the basis of structure (Austin 1962), which is provided by the three basic sentence types: declaratives, interrogatives and imperatives. Austin (1962) has recognized a direct relationship between the three structural forms and the three communicative functions of statement, question and command/ request. Accordingly, a **direct speech act** is a direct relationship between a structure and function. In other words, a direct speech act has a locution with a force called the illocution, and consists of the actual words that carry the intended meaning the speaker wants to convey. The intended meaning is direct and does not need to be inferred. For example, if a speaker says, "I apologize for missing my appointment," the speaker's meaning is direct and explicit. An **indirect speech act** is an indirect relationship between structure and function (Yule 1996, p. 55). It requires inferring the intention of the



speaker from the actual words spoken. For example, if a speaker says, "It is my fault," the speaker's intention is inferred.

### **3.4 Apology**

Research in the field of politeness has proliferated in the last decade and has concentrated on particular types of speech acts that are "politeness sensitive." An obvious advantage this concentration has provided is that it accounts for a wide range of politeness behavior. Leech (2014, p. 115) believes that the speech acts of apologies and requests are complex phenomena and "offer particularly salient demonstrations of politeness in English-speaking societies and therefore deserve close attention in themselves." Studies in apologies have attempted to shed light on what exactly an apology is, how it can be classified, and how it is realized in English and other languages and cultures.

Since both culture and context affect the realization of apologies, it is necessary that a combination of the definitions are viewed and their specific features taken into account, in order to understand the possible characteristics of apologies.

The speech act of apology is an expressive speech act, because it expresses the psychological state or attitude of the speaker. An apology occurs between two actors, the victim and the offender. The American Heritage Dictionary defines apology as, "An acknowledgement expressing regret or asking pardon for a fault or offence." An apology is an example of giving justification or giving an excuse. Goffman (1941) defines apologies as corrective interchanges used to reestablish social harmony after an actual or virtual wrongdoing. He further asserts that several felicity conditions are imperative in order for an apology to be successful, the most important of which are for the apologizer to recognize that a transgression has happened, take responsibility for that transgression, propose some recompense for reparation, and, finally, promise not to repeat the offence. Olshtain (1989, p. 156) defines apology as "a speech act which is intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially affected by a violation." With an offer of an apology, one expresses willingness to humiliate oneself to a degree that makes an apology a face-saving act for the recipient, and a face-threatening act for

offender. An apology must be effective, and in order to achieve the result, it should reflect genuine feelings of distress and repentance.

Based on the theoretical framework of the politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978 & 1987), Holmes (1990) views apologies as primarily social acts, carrying effective meaning. Prior to the above definition, Holmes (1989, p. 196) posits that an apology is “a speech act addressed to V’s face needs and intended to remedy an offence which A takes responsibility for, and thus restores equilibrium between A and V (where A is the apologist, and V is the victim or the person offended.”

An important feature of resolving a conflict is the fact that two individuals or groups are essential to initiate an interpersonal conflict and two individuals or groups are required to resolve it (Takaku et al., 2001). In other words, if the victim waits for an apology from the offender and the offender does not think it is necessary to apologize, then the wait is futile. Similarly, if the transgressor chooses to offer an apology, but the victim does not allow him/her to defend his/her position, then the apology is rendered unusable. According to Bataineh & Bataineh (2006, p. 1903), “An apology must have the three Rs: regret, responsibility, and remedy, all of which a wrongdoer must show for the offended to take his/her apology as sincere.” A combination of these elements of apology must be present so that the apology is convincing and has the desired effect.

### **3.5 Types of Apologies**

In an attempt to investigate speech acts of requests and apologies across cultures and languages, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), initiated the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (henceforth CCSARP) with an aim to investigate the existence of any common pragmatic characteristics. In order to establish similarities or differences between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs), the researchers studied eight different languages; American English, British English, Australian English, Canadian French, Russian, Hebrew, Danish and German. The researchers, Holmes (1990), Bergman and Kasper (1993), Jaworski (1994), Deutschmann (2003), and Ogiermann (2009), used a DCT, and after coding and categorizing the data, the researchers found that respondents used similar

strategies in their apologies and requests. However, significant cultural differences were exhibited. According to CCSARP, the scholars identify five strategies of apology which an apologizer can choose from:

1. Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) such as *sorry, I'm sorry, I apologize*.
2. Acknowledgement of responsibility such as, *It was my mistake*. The apologizer may express self-deficiency, or lack of intent.
3. An explanation of account such as *I'm sorry, my car broke down on the way*. The offender describes the reason which caused the offense.
4. An offer to repair the offending act such as *I'll buy you a new book*. The offender thus makes an attempt to compensate for the damage resulting from the infraction.
5. A promise of forbearance such as, *It won't happen again*.

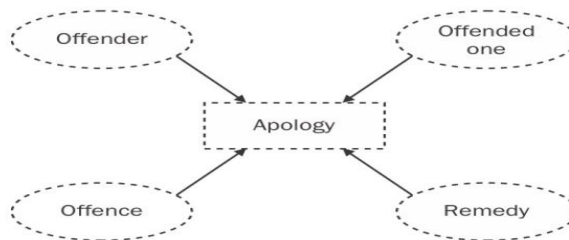
In addition to the above mentioned strategies, Olshtain & Cohen (1983) suggest two other categories: a denial of the need to apologize and a denial of responsibility. Furthermore, according to Olshtain (1989), wrongdoers can either intensify their apologies with expressions such as *very, really, terribly*, or downgrade their apologies such as, *I'm sorry, but you shouldn't make a big deal of it*. Holmes (1990) later amended Olshtain and Cohen's taxonomy because, she believed that it was essential to reorganize these strategies in order to make them clearer. Therefore, she divided apology strategies chronologically into four key categories, with sub-divisions (p. 167)

1. An explicit expression of apology
  - I. Offer apology/ IFID
  - II. Express regret
  - III. Request forgiveness
2. An explanation or account
  - I. Excuse
  - II. Justification
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility
  - I. Accept blame
  - II. Express self-deficiency

- III. Recognize hearer as entitled to apology
  - IV. Express lack of intent
  - V. Offer repair
4. A promise of forbearance

Bergman & Kasper (1993) proposed seven apology strategies: IFIDs (I'm sorry), upgrader or use of intensifiers (I'm terribly sorry), taking on responsibility (It was my fault), giving an account (My computer broke down) downgrading responsibility (I'm only 10 minutes late), offer of repair (I'll pay for the damage) and verbal redress or showing concern for victim (It won't happen again). Taking on responsibility was divided into three sub-categories: self-blame, lack of intent, admission of fact.

After analyzing The British National Corpus, Deutschmann (2003) offered a prototype view of creating a taxonomy of apologies, a semantic frame consisting of four components (Leech 2014, p.118).



**Figure 3.** The four components included in a prototypical apology.

Source: Leech (2014, p. 118). *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. NY: Oxford University Press.

The four components can be expanded on as follows (Leech 2014, p. 118):

1. The offender: the person who takes responsibility for the offence, but may not have necessarily caused the offence
2. The offended: the person who is supposed to have suffered due to the offence
3. The offence: which can be real, potential, or perceived by the offender or the offended
4. The remedy: recognition of the offence, acceptance of responsibility, and expression of regret

Deutschmann (2003) further mentions three kinds of apologies that are non-prototypical. These consist of (a) “formulaic apologies” whereby the offence is marginal and as such an apology is offered as a routine, (b) “formulaic apologies” whereby the offence is minimal, but consists of added functions other than repair work, (c) “face attack apologies” which may actually be considered impolite as these are offered to neutralize the hearer, for example, “Excuse me, Sarah. I’m talking to Jenny.”

Human discourse is an ongoing project of meaning-making, and depends on the individual’s ability to get meaning across. Before a speaker contributes to the discourse, he/she must create a ground for the discourse, and in doing so must analyze the situation and the appropriateness of the discourse. While investigating apology strategies, researchers have identified certain factors that may affect the delivery of an apology.

1. Gender of the participants
2. Intensity of the offence
3. Age of the participants
4. Education of the participants
5. Relative authority that each participant has
6. Place where the exchange takes place
7. Familiarity with the recipient

## **Chapter 4**

### **Literature Review**

Pragmatic research offers a large diversity of studies conducted in speech acts. Particular attention has been given to the speech acts of apologies and requests. The phenomenon of the speech act of apology has been studied in a large variety of languages and approached from various perspectives. For instance, scholars have investigated the way apologies are realized by native and non-native speakers of English. Comparative studies have also been conducted to examine various apology strategies used in Western and Eastern languages, and the impact of social (age, education, gender) and contextual factors in the perception and production of apologies. A review of relevant literature shows that, taking a comparative approach, more recent studies have focused on investigating the way second and foreign language learners perceive and use apologies both in their native language and the target language. After all, in any given speech community, participants need to have the pragmatic knowledge of being able to apologize in order to have harmonious relationships within communities. This has led to a growing awareness of the importance of teaching speech acts. However, numerous issues still remain unanswered mainly because researchers in apologies have either used different methodological approaches, or used diverse theories of speech acts (Blum-Kulka & Kasper 1989).

The next section of this paper is divided into three subsections presenting an overview of some of the studies conducted that are relevant to this paper. In this regard, research in cross-cultural apologies, apologies and gender, and apologies in Arabic will be presented. There is abundant literature on the effect of gender on the realization of apologies cross-culturally, but the influence of the social factor of gender on the realization of apologies has been under-explored in Saudi Arabia. By examining the effect of gender in the apology strategies used by the Saudi EFL students, the researcher intends to contribute to this inadequacy.

## 4.1 Research in cross-cultural apologies:

The subject of the speech act of apology has been investigated extensively by linguistic scholars, giving considerations to variables such as the influence of culture reflected in the use of apology (e.g. Cordella 1990; Suszezynska 1999); strategies of apology used, in general (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1978; Garcia 1989; Ruzichova 1998); the social factor of gender (e.g. Holmes 1995; Sugimoto 1997; Cordella 1990); factors influencing the choice of a specific strategy (e.g. Cohen & Olshtain 1981; Frazer 1981; Olshtain & Cohen 1983); apology strategies used by native and non-native speakers (e.g. Trosborg 1987).

However, most of the studies have been conducted to examine speech acts across cross-cultural pragmatics (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984), specifically, to draw comparisons between native speakers of English and speakers of other languages. Studies in cross-cultural apologies have directed attention to identify the pragmatic principles that influence the use of apologies across cultures and languages. Subsequently, such studies have lent support to the concepts of communication among people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. For example, Green (1974) asserts that speech acts differ in conceptualization and verbalization across cultures and languages. Later researchers examining cross-cultural discourse have concluded that politeness is culture specific because rules of appropriateness are different across cultures (e.g. Gumperz & Tannen 1979; Cohen & Olshtain 1981, Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984).

One of the most significant and cited works on speech acts is CCSARP, an ambitious project initiated by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) to analyze the speech acts of requests and apologies across cultures and languages. The project was designed with an aim to (1) investigate the common pragmatic characteristics in the speech acts of apologies and requests, (2) establish any similarities and differences between native and non-native speakers' realization patterns, and (3) account for cross-cultural variability, situational variability, and individual variability. The CCSARP project team studied eight different languages: American English, Australian English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew and Russian. The necessary data were collected by a controlled elicitation procedure using a reliable discourse completion test (DCT). The DCT consisted of eight items eliciting apologies along the "social parameters of distance and dominance" (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, p. 197). For each

language, the population consisted of 400 university students, with an equal number of males and females, and an equal number of native and non-native speakers. Data collected were analyzed and further categorized into five major strategies: (1) illocutionary force indicating device (IFID), (2) accepting responsibility (RESP), offering an explanation (EXPL), offering to repair (REPR), and (5) promise of forbearance (FORB). The CCSARP team collaborated in preparing the coding scheme. After coding, the researchers found that the participants from different groups used similar strategies for apologies and requests, but the strategies were marked by cultural preferences. In apologizing, most of the respondents used expressions of explicit apology and accounts (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989). The diversity in the use of speech acts was attributed to the three kinds of variabilities: intercultural variability, cross-cultural variability, and individual variability.

This study is significant because the findings provide essential insight into the study of apologies across cultures and languages. Furthermore, the methodology and the coding system provide a framework for other similar studies. For instance, with slight cultural and stylistic modifications, but retaining the main features, the DCT used in this project later became a master version for the entire CCSARP project (except Russian).

The CCSARP project provided impetus to further research in the field of speech acts. Olshtain (1983) studied the production of the speech act of apology by English and Russian learners of Hebrew in their native language, and in Hebrew. She examined the performance in role-plays enacted by an equal number of native speakers of American English, native speakers of Russian, native speakers of Hebrew, and American and Russian learners of Hebrew. She used Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) taxonomy to examine the realization patterns of the speech act of apology among the participants and draw comparisons between the native and non-native speakers. On coding the results, she concluded that the Russian learners apologized more in Hebrew (L2) than the American learners of Hebrew, who preferred to apologize in their L1. The results also revealed that for Russian learners of Hebrew, the decisive variable was the severity of the infraction, rather than culture or language. Native speakers of English, on the other hand, felt less need to apologize in Hebrew, thus suggesting culture-specific perceptions.



In another study, Olshtain (1987), examined the speech act of apology with regard to the most preferable apology strategies chosen by native speakers of English, French, German and Hebrew. She found the elements of universality in the choice to specific apology strategies such as, IFIDs and expression of responsibility. To sum up her findings, Olshtain (1989) states that universality in the realization of apologies exist in different languages.

Another study on linguistic politeness was conducted by Rosina M. Reiter (2000). The researcher presents the results of a contrastive analysis of the realization patterns of apologies and requests in British English and Uruguayan Spanish with an aim to identify similarities and/or differences between the realization patterns of requests and apologies by female and male speakers of both languages. Her theoretical framework was based on Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) distinction between 'negative' and 'positive' politeness. The participants were all native speakers of British English and Uruguayan Spanish university students. For the purpose of the acquiring natural data, the researcher had carefully devised a new method of elicitation, which was a non-prescriptive, interactive, open role-play combining both speech acts. The role-play was created in English and Spanish, and was enacted by 61 native speakers of British English (29 males and 32 females), and 64 native speakers of Uruguayan Spanish (33 males and 31 females). The open role-play consisted of 12 combined real-life situations resulting in the elicitation of requests and apologies, and varied according to the social variables of distance, power and in case of apologies, the severity of the infraction. The data was analyzed according to CCSARP coding scheme and Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) taxonomy of apology strategies (discussed above) and sub-categories. The data revealed that IFIDs and 'taking responsibility' was present in high numbers in both languages, but British English speakers used more intensifiers with all IFIDs, and provided more explanations while apologizing. The reason the author provides is that the British English speakers give greater significance to saving face (Demeter 2000, p. 33). 'Taking responsibility' was the most preferred sub-strategy in both languages, and the other three semantic strategies varied situationally and cross-culturally. The results exhibited cross-cultural agreement in terms of the severity of the infraction, but showed differences in the choice and realization of the apology strategies. According to Rosina M.

Reiter (2000, p. 147), “data of this study confirms Blum-Kulka et al’s (1989) claim that the use of IFID and expression of responsibility will materialize to varying degrees in all situations in all languages whereas the other three strategies will materialize only in relevant situations.”

Finally, the results show that speakers of British English and Uruguayan Spanish vary in their choice of (in) directness levels, modifications of IFIDs, and the politeness forms of males and females in both cultures.

Sugimoto (1997), whose study has enriched the field of intercultural pragmatics, conducted a study comparing the apology strategies used by 200 male and female American and 181 Japanese male and female college students, using an open-ended questionnaire. Her study discussed potential linguistic factors such as the cultural perception of language, the vagueness of ‘sumimasen,’ (as cited in AlSulayyi 2016), which in Japanese is a casual apology to a stranger, and is represented by ‘sorry’ or ‘excuse me.’ Sugimoto (1997) observed that the Japanese and American apologies are significantly affected by cultural differences in perceptions and realization of apologies. She observed that the four most used strategies were statement of remorse, accounts, description of damage and reparation, but the Japanese used these strategies more than the Americans. Furthermore, more Americans than Japanese included accounts. Strategies such as repair, compensation, promise not to repeat the offence and forgiveness were employed more by the Japanese participants.

Her study consolidates claims made by other researchers (Kitagawa 1988; Barnlund and Yoshioka 1990; Kasper, Ross, Maeshiba and Yoshinaga 1997; who have observed that Japanese are more apologetic than Americans. The reason, Sugimoto (1999) asserts, is that the Japanese, being group oriented, account for offences that are committed not only by them, but also by other individuals belonging to the group. On the other hand, Americans generally apologize for infractions committed only by themselves or their close relatives. In a similar study by Barnlund and Yoshioka (1990), the researchers observed that the Japanese offer more direct and extreme apologies, while the Americans prefer to be indirect. The authors conclude that the Japanese differ fundamentally in most other forms and behaviors related to the delivery of apologies.

## 4.2 Apologies and gender:

Research on the topic of men's and women's speech patterns has been of specific interest to sociolinguists (Lakoff 1975; Tannen 1990; Holmes 1995; Cameron 1995) and has proliferated in the last few decades. Some of the issues investigated by researchers are gender-differential tendencies in formal and casual speech, style-shifting, use of prestige and stigmatized variants. For example, Labov (1966, 1972) and Trudgill's (1972) empirical studies of variation in language use were probably the earliest influential studies. Trudgill (1972) examined the linguistic change in Norwich English. He correlated "phonetic and phonological variables with social class, age, and stylistic context" (1972 a.180). Trudgill (1972) found that, in pronunciation, women tended to use the prestige forms more than men. He explains that "women in our society are more status-conscious than men, generally speaking... and are, therefore, more aware of the social significance of linguistic variables" (1972, p. 182).

The social factor of gender and speech acts has been investigated extensively in sociolinguistic research. Many research findings suggest that gender differences exist in politeness, leading to stereotyping women as more polite, less critical and more prone to using softening devices. Holmes (1989) investigated the similarities and differences in the realization of apologies using an ethnographically collected corpus of 183 remedial interchanges produced by adult native speakers of New Zealand English. The social variables of gender, power, status, distance, as well as the distribution patterns of apologies between women and men, were taken into consideration. Holmes (1989) found 295 occurrences of apologies. The results revealed that overall, both men and women used the same apology strategies; however, women used these strategies more than men. She also observed that women apologized more to other women than to men, and men apologized more to women than to men. In other words, women apologized and were apologized to significantly more than men. In addition, women offered apologies to women of the same power, while men offered apologies to women regardless of power and with whom the social distance is not close. Holmes thus argues that the realization pattern of apologies is dissimilar between men and women. Tannen (1994) substantiates Holmes arguments based on a study on speakers of American English in a corpus of apologies recorded in work environments and observed the same pattern as Holmes (1989).

Holmes (1995) suggests that women are more likely to use positive politeness than men which she considers “evidence of concern for the feelings of the people they are talking to” (1995, p.6). In other words, they try to establish solidarity with the addressee. Women may also use “superpolite” forms like two or more intensifiers.

Another significant study was carried out by Bataineh and Bataineh (2006). The researchers used a DCT to examine specific apology strategies used by Jordanian undergraduate EFL male and female students. The sample consisted of two groups of one hundred Jordanian undergraduate EFL students. The researchers classified the strategies according to Sugimoto’s (1997) strategies. The results indicated that males and females exhibited differences in their use of apology strategies. Apology strategies such as statement of remorse, compensation, lack of intent to do harm, acceptance of responsibility, promise of forbearance were used by the students. Statement of remorse was the most frequently used strategies by both males and females, but females tended to use it more frequently. In addition, female respondents used more non-apology strategies in order to avoid discussing the offence, while the male respondents blamed the victim. From the study, it is clear that gender plays a significant role in the realization of apologies.

Another study conducted by Bataineh and Bataineh (2008) compared the apology strategies used by native speakers of Arabic and native speakers of American English, and the effect of gender in both groups. Participants of the study were 100 American (50 M, 50 F) and 100 Jordanian (50 M, 50 F) undergraduate students. Like the first study, data was collected using a 10 item DCT. More differences in the use of apologies were observed in Jordanian males and females than in American males and females, which could be attributed to similar upbringing of boys and girls in the American culture. Therefore, differences in the use of apologies were observed not only in the two cultures, but also between genders of the same culture.

### **4.3 Apology in Arabic:**

Arabic is the most widely spoken Semitic language, and is an example of the sociolinguistic phenomenon of *diglossia*, which is two distinct varieties of the same language used in the same

society: Classical Arabic and colloquial Arabic. The former is 'high' variety and is used in formal contexts, while the latter is 'low,' the local version of the language which is used in everyday affairs. Classical Arabic is the language of the Quran, and is taught at an early age in Saudi Arabia.

A fairly good amount of pragmatic research has investigated apologies and gender in other languages, but the effect of gender in the speech act of apology in the Arab region has not received much attention from linguistic scholars of the region, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Likewise, few studies have focused on apologies by Arab learners of English (as cited in Bataineh and Bataineh 2006, p. 1908). An interesting factor which emerges from the study of the literature is that the social variables of gender, power, status and distance influence the effectiveness of apologies, which seems to consolidate the claims of universality in the realization of the apology strategies. Besides social distance and status, Hussein (1995) identified other factors that influence apologies, such as age, formality of the situation, place, and the level of education of the interlocutors. The following section provides an overview of studies on apologies by Arab learners of English, and studies of apologies and gender in the region.

Hussein and Hammouri (1998) investigated apology strategies in Jordanian Arabic and American English. The respondents for the study included 50 Jordanian male students, 50 female students, and 40 Americans. Although data were collected from both male and female Jordanians, gender was not analyzed as a variable. The necessary data was collected using a DCT consisting of 18 items eliciting apologies. The participants' responses were categorized into 12 strategies as developed by Frazer 1981; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984, and Trosborg 1987. Analysis of the data revealed striking disparity between the apology strategies of Jordanians and Americans. Both groups of respondents exhibited similar apology strategies: acknowledgement of responsibility, accounts, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance. However, strategies used by Jordanian respondents were more varied, more elaborate, and more complex, but less direct. In contrast, Americans preferred less elaborate strategies that were more direct and more concise. Moreover, the strategies of lessening the degree of

infraction, using axiomatic expressions and praising Allah were specific to Arabic data. This could be attributed to cultural and religious beliefs.

For the purpose of exploring interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics of Arab learners of English, Al-Zumor (2008) investigated the realization of apologies in different social situations by Arab learners of English studying in India. The strategies used by the Arab L2 learners were compared and contrasted against apology strategies used by American English Speakers, British English Speakers and Indian English Speakers. The results of the study revealed that apology strategies used by Arabic speakers of English differed from the strategies used by native speakers of English, and were marked by cultural and religious beliefs. A significant difference between the two groups of native speakers and the Arabs was that the Arabs were more intense on taking responsibility. Conversely, the native speakers were more inclined to using standard offers of verbal redress. In addition, cultural and religious beliefs influenced the perception of the severity of the offence in the Arab group, and unlike the native speakers of British and American English, the Arabs were less embarrassed in acknowledging one's deficiency to set things right.

A more recent study was conducted by Humei (2013). The researcher examined the effect of gender and status on the apology strategies used by American native speakers of English and Iraqi EFL university students by means of an online DCT. The results exhibited the difference in the apology strategies used males and females of both groups. The results, specifically, showed that Iraqi EFL learners use more apology strategies with people of higher level, while American males use more apology strategies with people of lower position. On the other hand, Iraqi females use more apology strategies than males, but there was no difference in the apology strategies among female and male Americans.

One of the most recent studies was conducted by Harb (2016). The researcher randomly selected 20 Arab students, 10 males and 10 females, studying at Ball State University. Data was collected using a DTC. Contrary to previous research done in the Arab region, the study revealed that there were more similarities than differences between Arab males and females in their choice of apology strategies. Based on a detailed statistical analysis of the results, the researcher concludes that gender does not play a role in the choice of apology strategies.

Another most recent study was conducted by AlSulayyi (2016). The researcher examined the apology strategies used by Saudi EFL teachers, focusing on variables such as severity of the offence, social distance, power, and gender. The results revealed that Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) strategy and the up grader strategy were used more by males than by their female counterparts. Females, on the other hand, used the downgrading responsibility (DR) strategy more than their male counterparts.

Since there is limited literature on the role of gender and apology strategies in the region, a consensus cannot be drawn. The researcher hopes that the study can add to the existing research.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Methodology**

The present study aims to provide an insight into the role of gender in the apology strategies of the Saudi advanced EFL students. It provides a quantitative analysis of the apology strategies used in English by both genders.

#### **5.1. Population:**

For the current study, 20 male and 20 female Saudi advanced university students were chosen. The students are currently taking advanced Service Courses offered in the English department at a university in Riyadh. The Service Courses prepare the students to embark on various majors taught in English. Before the students enroll in the Service Courses, they are required to complete one year in the Preparatory Year Program (PYP), which is an intense English language skills program designed to equip students with intermediate to high-intermediate level of linguistic skills. Learners progressively develop their Communicative Competence, comprising of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence and strategic competence. The contexts used to introduce and practice language points vary from general to academic English, with a strong emphasis on personalization and internalization. Therefore, the respondents are at an almost equal level of English proficiency, and possess a fairly good repertoire of English apology strategies. All respondents for the current study are in the age group of 19-22 and belong to the same cultural background. It is important to mention here that the male and female students are segregated in the university.

#### **5.2. Data Collection and Instrumentation:**

Methodological concerns present challenges in interlanguage pragmatic research. In response to these challenges, sociolinguists have developed creative methods for attaining data (Geeslin 2014). In order to analyze pragmatic and sociolinguistic variations, naturalistic data is considered the most authentic as the context of interaction plays a significant role in language use. Kasper and Dahl (1991) assert that authentic data are genuine, offers realistic discourse, and accounts for the validity of the results. However, it has its limitations of being time-



consuming, and allows comparatively little control over social variables such as status and culture. Role-plays are another elicitation device which provides genuine data, and allows for better control of contextual factors. Role-plays have been criticized for being unable to reflect spontaneous real-life discourse, and transcribing data is likely to be time-consuming (Kasper & Dhal 1991). Perhaps, the best-known example of sociolinguistic research methodology, also made famous by Labov (1972), is the sociolinguistic interview (Geeslin 2014). This provides the researcher access to less formal and less monitored speech. One of the challenges which researchers face is to avoid the **Observer's Paradox**, which refers to the presence of the researcher at the time of data collection. In other words, the researcher may not be able to observe what he or she wants to observe, because the respondent may become conscious of the researchers presence and hesitate in providing natural speech and focus on speech which is considered right. Most of the data collection instruments mentioned above have their limitations in terms of time and context.

This study uses a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) as an instrument for data collection. Written DCTs are questionnaires which comprise of a description of different situations that require the subjects to fill in appropriate responses. DCTs, compared to other data collection instruments, are the most convenient. One of the strengths of DCT is that it can provide controlled, rich, reliable data in a relatively short time. They allow for better quantification of the data and are very versatile. Researchers in pragmatics have observed some limitations in using a DCT. Kasper (2000) and Woodfield (2007) argue that DCTs fail to capture dynamic discourse features such as conversational structure, turn-taking, pragmatic features and speaker-listener interaction. However, for its advantages, it was used in CCSARP, the most empirical work on speech acts, and continues to be used in most research in speech acts.

### 5.3 Procedure

The participants were provided with the Plain Language Statement of this research (see appendix B), which provided them with information about the research, their participation and their freedom to withdraw from the project. Participants were asked to fill in the consent form (see appendix C) if they were willing to participate.

The present study emulates previous research conducted in the field, particularly the research conducted by Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) since the Saudis and Jordanians share cross-cultural and cross-linguistic characteristics. The DCT was written in English and divided into two sections. The first section requested the participants to provide general information; name, age, gender and nationality. This section also informed them of the purpose of the study, and assured them of confidentiality of their responses. The researcher refrained from using the word “gender” in describing the title of the study, because she did not want respondents to get influenced by the word. The second section included 10 real-life apology scenarios which participants were asked to respond to. The situations in the DCT were randomly ordered and controlled along the lines of the social variables of power between the interlocutors, and the severity of the offence, as represented in *Table 1*. However, only gender was taken as a variable. For the reason stated above, the researcher used an adapted version of the questionnaire used by Bataineh and Bataineh (2006). Therefore, it was not checked for validity and reliability. For the females, the questionnaire was administered in one of the researcher’s colleague’s classroom. Out of the 22 students, only 20 students were present on the day. The researcher would have preferred to collect data outside the formal settings of the classroom, for example, in the university cafeteria, but the Saudi students rarely use English in social interaction outside the classroom. Since there is complete segregation of males and females in the university, the researcher could not administer the questionnaire herself in the males section. She requested one of her male colleagues to administer the questionnaire with his students under similar conditions. There were 22 responses from the males, but for the sake of maintaining uniformity in the number of participants, only 20 were chosen for analysis.

**Table 1: Social variables of power and the level of imposition in the DCT**

No	Apology Situations	Role of the offender	Role of the offended	Level of power	Level of imposition
1	Spoiled magazine	friend	friend	Equal (=)	Low (-)
2	Owe money	friend	friends	Equal (=)	High (+)
3	Job interview	interviewee	manager	High (+)	High (+)
4	Missed exam	student	teacher	High (+)	High (+)
5	Late for appointment	student	teacher	High (+)	High (+)
6	Graduation	friend	friend	Equal (=)	Low (-)

7	Take coffee library	student	librarian	High (+)	Low (-)
8	Scratched CD	Brother/sister	Younger sibling	Low (-)	Low (-)
9	Erased term paper	friend	friend	Equal (=)	High (+)
10	Damaged dress	Assistant	secretary	Equal (=)	High (+)

#### 5.4. Data Analysis:

The data were statistically analyzed to obtain quantitative data. Frequencies and percentages were calculated to determine which apology strategy had the highest and lowest value. The data collected was organized and classified according to the coding procedure proposed by CCSARP (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, 1989). The respondents had 5 primary apology strategies and sub-strategies to choose from.

1. IFID: the most commonly used apology strategy in which the offender acknowledges offense, and offers a direct explicit apology. IFIDs are sub-divided into the following categories.
  - An expression of regret: *I'm sorry.*
  - An offer of apology: *I apologize.*
  - A request for forgiveness: *Forgive me.*
2. Acknowledge of responsibility: the offender claims that he/she is responsible for the infraction, e.g., *It was my fault.* This can also be sub-divided into three categories, but these fall under the secondary strategies.
  - Accepting blame
  - Embarrassment
  - Lack of intention
3. An explanation of account: the offender tries to mitigate the infraction committed by providing an explanation of the offense. The offender expects the offended to see that he is worthy of forgiveness. *My car brown down.*
4. An offer of repair: the offender tries to compensate for the damage that he has caused and expects the wrong to be forgotten. *I will buy you a new MP3 player.*

5. A promise of forbearance: the offender promises not to repeat the offense in the future thereby expecting the offended to sympathize with him/her. This is a situation-specific strategy and is used less frequently than the other strategies. *It will not happen again.*

Although the researcher expects the subjects to use the primary and the secondary strategies, only the five primary strategies were analyzed.

## Chapter 6

### Results and findings

The purpose of this study was, firstly, to determine whether gender played a role in the apology strategies used by the respondents. Secondly, the researcher wanted to determine if there were any similarities or differences in the apology strategies used. This section briefly describes the strategies used by both males and females.

All together there were 681 strategies used by both males and females. As represented in Table 2, overall IFIDs (n= 242) and EXPL were the most frequently used strategies by both males and females. Males and females used similar expressions of these apologies. However, the females used the **IFIDs** more than the males; females 59%, males 47%. Females resorted to various expressions of this strategy. For example, *"I'm sorry"* followed by *"excuse me"* or *"I'm sorry, please forgive me."* Both males and females used one of two intensifiers (*so, very, terribly*) with the IFID. Another difference that was observed in this strategy was the different perceptions of the infraction. Females' apologies intensified relatively more than the males in situations where they perceived that the level of infraction was high. Situations where the level of imposition was low, or the level of power was low, both groups offered fewer apologies. For example in situation 8, the infraction was not perceived as serious. A remarkable feature that was observed in this strategy was that both groups tended to repeat the IFIDs, *"I'm sorry, I'm terribly sorry"* or in some cases repeated the intensifier *"I am very very sorry"* probably for more force. Such a feature of repetition was also found in Al Zumor's (2008) data, and he attributed it positive transfer from Arabic.

An **explanation of an account** (EXPL) had the highest frequency (n=251) and here the results showed similarity between males and females; Males 49% and females 51%. Both groups offered an explicit explanation, especially where the infraction and the power were high. For example in situation 5, both groups perceived this as being a major infraction and therefore offered an explicit explanation. In both cases this strategy was combined with the IFIDs. For example: *I apologize for coming late. Actually, my car broke down and I couldn't find a workshop nearby. I'm terribly sorry for being late. My car broke down, and I couldn't get a taxi.*

Except for situation 8, EXPL was used in all the other situations by both groups. For situation 8, it can be assumed that the offenders thought the younger sibling would be more pacified by offering a repair.

The next most used strategy was **offer of repair** (n= 86). This was primarily situation and time sensitive and comprised of 13% of the overall strategies; Males 57%, Females 43%. Females used this strategy in situations where the offender and the offended are socially close and have equal power. Males outnumbered the females in this strategy. They not only used this strategy with close relations and equal power, they also used it in situations where the infraction was high and the social distance was equal. For example in situation 9 where the offender accidentally erased the term paper a friend had been working on for 3 weeks, responses such as *"I'm terribly sorry. Let me try to help you retrieve it"* were observed. In situation 9, females tended to avoid repair. This contrasted with situation 1, 2, 6, 8, where the females offered repair. The possible explanation for this could be that females prefer to commit to repair in situations where they perceive repair is achievable.

**Taking on responsibility** was another strategy which was used more by males than females; males 61% and females 38%. As in the case of **repair**, females used this strategy in situations where the social distance was equal or the infraction was perceived as low. They refrained from using this strategy in situations where the distance and infraction was high.

Although the **Promise of forbearance** had the lowest frequency and comprised of 7.3% of the overall strategies, females used this strategy more than the males; females 58% and males 42%. Females used this strategy more in situations where the infraction and the social distance were high. Males, on the other hand, used this strategy in situations where the social distance and the level of infraction were either low or equal.

**Table 2****Apology strategies used by males and females; frequencies and percentages**

Type of Apology	Frequency	Overall %	<b>Males</b> %		<b>Females</b> %	
IFID	242	35.5%	n= 114	47%	n=128	59%
RESP	52	7.6%	n= 32	61%	n=20	38.4%
EXPL	251	36.8%	n= 123	49%	n= 128	51%
REPR	86	12.6%	n= 49	57%	n= 37	43%
FORB	50	7.3%	n=21	42%	n= 29	58%
Total	681	100				

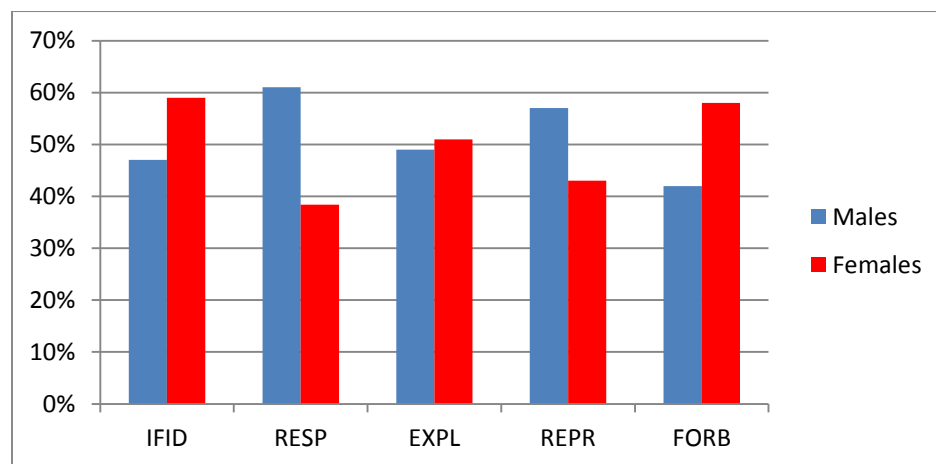
**Table 3: Apology Strategies and Male and Female Responses**

Apology Strategies	Male Students' Responses	Female Students' Responses
IFID	<p><i>I'm sorry.</i></p> <p><i>I'm very sorry.</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry.</i></p> <p><i>I'm very very sorry.</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry. Forgive me, please.</i></p> <p><i>I'm sorry. I'm terribly sorry.</i></p> <p><i>I apologize.</i></p> <p><i>I apologize. I'm really very sorry.</i></p>	<p><i>I'm sorry. Please forgive me.</i></p> <p><i>I'm very sorry. Please forgive me.</i></p> <p><i>I'm very very sorry.</i></p> <p><i>Excuse me.</i></p> <p><i>I apologize. Please pardon me.</i></p> <p><i>I'm really very sorry.</i></p> <p><i>So very sorry. Please excuse me.</i></p> <p><i>I'm really sorry. I apologize. Hope you will forgive me.</i></p>
RESP	<p><i>I'm sorry. I shouldn't have left it around. (Item 1).</i></p> <p><i>It was my fault. I'm very sorry. I should have left home early. (Item 5).</i></p> <p><i>I'm sorry, guys. My mistake, I should have called. I will pay you my share tomorrow. (item 2)</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry. It was my fault. I should have saved your work before browsing. (Item 9)</i></p>	<p><i>I'm terribly sorry. My sister did this while I was away. (Item 1)</i></p> <p><i>I'm so very sorry. It was my mistake. I had left it around. (Item 1)</i></p> <p><i>I'm very sorry. I left early, but there was traffic jam on the way. (Item 5)</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry. I hope you can forgive me this time. Actually, something came up at the last minute. I promise to pay you tomorrow. (Item 2)</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry. I just forgot all about it. (item 2)</i></p>
EXPL	<p><i>I'm sorry for being late, Sir. There was traffic jam on the way. (Item 5)</i></p> <p><i>I'm late because the roads were blocked. I could not be here on time. I'm terribly sorry. Please forgive me. (item 5)</i></p> <p><i>I'm very sorry, my friend. Something personal came up at the last minute. (item 6)</i></p> <p><i>I'm sorry. There is something wrong with my CD player. I will try to replace it. (Item 8).</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry for being late, Sir. I apologize. My car broke down on my way here. (item 3)</i></p>	<p><i>I apologize for being late, teacher. I was stuck in a traffic jam. (Item 5)</i></p> <p><i>I'm extremely sorry, my dear, for missing the dinner. I had to take my mom to the hospital. I hope you understand. (Item 6).</i></p> <p><i>I'm so very sorry. I need to change my CD player. It is scratching CDs lately. I'll get you a new CD. (Item 8)</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry, Sir. Please pardon me. I'm late because my car broke down on the way. I hope you understand. (Item 3).</i></p>



REPR	<p><i>It was something personal. I'll make it up to you. I'm really sorry. (item 6)</i></p> <p><i>I am very very sorry. Let me try to retrieve the file for you. (Item 9)</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry. I was in a hurry. Please allow me help you clear up the mess. (Item 10).</i></p>	<p><i>I'll buy you a new CD. I promise. (Item 8)</i></p> <p><i>I'm so sorry. I'm extremely sorry. Let me see if my brother can help you recover the file. (Item 9).</i></p> <p><i>I'm terribly sorry. I just didn't see the glass. Let me help you clean up. I really feel very embarrassed. (Item 10)</i></p>
FORB	<p><i>I'm very sorry, teacher. Please allow me to retake the exam. This will not happen again. (Item 4)</i></p> <p><i>I'm sorry. I will leave the cup outside. (Item 7).</i></p> <p><i>I will go with you next time. (Item 2)</i></p>	<p><i>I apologize for coming late. I was not feeling well. Please allow me to retake the exam. I promise this will never happen again. (Item 4)</i></p> <p><i>I'm very sorry. I will try to remember it next time. I'll go outside to finish my coffee. (Item 7)</i></p> <p><i>I promise never to do this again. Let me make it up to you. (Item 2).</i></p>

**Figure 4: Distribution of the apology strategies**



Based on the analysis of the data, it can be concluded that gender plays a significant role in the use of apology strategies, and there are more differences than similarities in the use of apology strategies. Overall, the males and females used the five main apology strategies (IFID, RESP,

EXPL, REPR, & FORB). However, both used them in different degrees specifying their preferences. It was also observed that both males and females combined one or two strategies (IFID + EXPL) depending on the severity of the offence, and the status of the hearer, for example in item 3, 4, 5 and 9 of the questionnaire. Another similarity was observed in EXPL, which was used by both to almost the same degree. In terms of differences, about 85% of the respondents, males and females, used intensifiers (very, so, terribly, extremely) with their IFIDs. However, the females used them more often than men. According to the data IFIDs were used more by females than men. It becomes obvious that among Saudis, women apologize more than men. The reason for this is that since childhood women are taught to be more apologetic than men. The other strategy which showed a striking difference between males and females was taking on responsibility. Here the males exceeded women. The reason for this could be that the Saudi society is a patriarchal society, and men usually take responsibility as head of families. Moreover, the data collected for this study was taken from a university where female students come from families of high social and economic status, whereby the students are not trained to take responsibilities.

Another difference was observed in REPR, where men exceeded women. This also could be attributed to the higher status of males in the Saudi culture. Saudi females also used FORB more than the men. The reason for this could be that the Saudi females might like to reinforce the apologetic act. The study substantiates the similar study done by Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) in Jordan and Holmes (1995), and contradicts Harb's (2016) study, which found that gender does not play a role in the apology strategies used by Saudis.

### **6.1 Limitations and suggestions for further research:**

The participants of the study were 40 advanced EFL university students, 20 males and 20 females, which is a fairly small sample and, therefore, limits the ability of the study to generalize the findings to the population. A larger sample from various social groups is recommended. Moreover, other social variables such as age, apology and social distance can be considered for further research. This will confirm or revise the findings of the study. The use of DCT as a data collection instrument is another limitation as naturalistic data, which is

considered the most authentic and reliable, could not be provided. A combination of DCT, role-plays, and interviews can be used to provide more accurate results.

Taking age, gender, power, and social distance as a variable, further research should also focus on other speech acts such as compliments, requests, invitations and complaints. In the researchers experience in Saudi Arabia, she has observed that the above mentioned speech acts in English can be easily misconstrued by second language learners.

“Few studies appear to have examined speech acts both from the speakers’ and the listeners’ perspectives” (Beth Murphy in *Speech Acts Across Cultures*). A rich data would be added to speech act research if studies examine speech acts from both perspectives. Most researchers have only concentrated on the productive aspect, which leaves the researcher with a restricted representation of the consequences of speech act performance.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this research was to investigate whether or not gender played a role in the speech act of apology among advanced Saudi EFL students, and whether there were any similarities or differences in their apology strategies. The study found that gender plays a significant role in the way apology strategies are used in the Saudi context. The study also found that there were more differences than similarities in the apology strategies used by males and females.

Teaching pragmatic competence is always a challenging task for an EFL teacher because of limited resources available to teachers and learners. Research in Second Language Acquisition acknowledges that teaching pragmatic competence in the target language is important in an EFL classroom. It is also emphasized that making learners aware of the sociolinguistic and sociocultural variables of the target language facilitates understanding of the pragmatic behavior of the Native Speakers. Therefore, in order to use the target language in a socially and culturally appropriate way, learners need to be aware of, not only the specific social and cultural aspects of the target language, but also the similarities and differences between their own language and the target language. Despite research clearly necessitating the teaching of pragmatic competence, there is a serious dearth of resources to support the teaching and learning of pragmatic competence.

The researcher would like to end with the pedagogical implications of the study. Most speech act literature has shown that it is difficult for learners of a language to acquire communicative competence. Speech acts comprise of distinctive characteristics, which may be noticeable in one language and not in the other. For example, in the Arab context, EFL students are not aware about how to respond to a compliment in English. Their response in Arabic is an English equivalent of “beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder.” Another speech act which learners have difficulty is complaints, which in English are distance, culture and time sensitive. Most ESL/ EFL books have undermined the importance of teaching speech acts. The speech acts of requests and permission in English are taught while teaching Modals. In order to avoid miscommunication, speech acts must be explicitly taught, from the perspective of the listener and the speaker.

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## Appendix A: Discourse Completion Task (DCT) Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

The current survey aims to investigate the **apology strategies of advanced Saudi EFL students**. There are 10 situations given below which require apologies. You are kindly requested to read the situations carefully and provide answers.

Before completing the situations, you are requested to provide some personal information. Rest assured that your personal information will only be used for research purposes and will remain confidential.

Thank you for providing support to the current study.

The Researcher

### I. General Information

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

### II. Please respond to these questions as realistically and as honestly as possible.

1. You borrowed your best friend's magazine. Your younger brother/sister scribbled on it. What will you say to your friend when you return the magazine?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. You had made plans to go to a resort with your friends. All of you had decided to share the expenses. You could not make it and you still owe them money for the rent. What would you say?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. You applied for a job of a Marketing Assistant and were called for an interview with the manager. On your way to the office, your car broke down. You arrived an hour late. What will you say to the manager?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. You are a student. You failed to come on time for an exam, because you were not feeling well. What will you say to your teacher?

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5. Your teacher had agreed to see you regarding your project during the office hours. You were late because there was a traffic jam. What will you say to your teacher?

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6. To celebrate his/her graduation, your best friend had invited you for dinner. You failed to show up because of a personal reason. What will you say?

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7. You are a student. You walk into the library with a cup of coffee. The librarian reminds you that food and drinks are not allowed in the library. What will you say to the librarian?

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8. You borrowed your younger brother's/ sister's music CD, and it now has scratches on it. What will you say?

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9. You were browsing the internet on your friend's computer and accidentally erased the term paper she/ he had been working on for 3 weeks. What will you say?

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10. You are an assistant in a company. You went to the manager's office to submit a report. His secretary informed you that the manager is in an important meeting. While you are turning to leave, you knock over a glass of orange juice on the secretary's desk. It spills on her dress and on the important papers on the desk. What will you say?

---

**THANK YOU**

## Appendix B: Plain Language Statement

### PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

#### Apology Strategies of Advanced Saudi EFL Students

You are requested to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by Ms. Fawzia Goni of the Faculty of Education at The British University in Dubai. This project will form part of Ms. Fawzia's Master's thesis, and has been approved by her dissertation supervisor, Dr. Emad Ayyash.

You are requested to complete a ten-item questionnaire. With your permission, the questionnaire will be kept with the researcher. I estimate that the time commitment required of you would not exceed 15 minutes.

I assure you of the anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. The data will be kept securely and then will be destroyed at the end of the project.

Please be advised that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any unprocessed data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

If you would like to participate, please indicate that you have read and understood this information by signing the accompanying consent form and returning it in the envelope provided.

Should you require any further information, or have any concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Ms. Fawzia at 00966502140358.

Whatever your decision on this matter, thank you for devoting some time to reading this statement, and considering its contents.

**This information sheet is yours to keep.**

Adapted from:

<http://www.awej.org/images/Theseanddissertation/shatha100/100%20full%20thesis%20.pdf>

## Appendix C: Consent form

Consent form for students participating in a research project **PROJECT TITLE: Apology Strategies of Advanced Saudi EFL Students**

Name of the Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Researcher: Ms. Fawzia Goni

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written plain language statement to keep.
2. I understand that after I sign and return this consent form it will be retained by the researcher.
3. I understand that my participation will involve answering a questionnaire and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
4. I acknowledge that:
  - (a) the possible effects of participating in answering a questionnaire have been explained to my satisfaction;
  - (b) I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation or prejudice and to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
  - (c) the project is for the purpose of research;
  - (d) I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
  - (e) my name will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
  - (f) I have been informed that a copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I agree to this.

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from:

<http://www.awej.org/images/Theseanddissertation/shatha100/100%20full%20thesis%20.pdf>