
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sociopragmatic and Pragmalinguistic Analysis of Speech Act of Apology by Saudi EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to examine the nature of apology strategies by Saudi EFL learners. The strategies are discussed in response to the social external factors of power and distance. The sample of the study consists of 100 Saudi male EFL learners from Onaizah Colleges, Qassim province. Samples responded to discourse completion task (DCT) which consists of six structured scenarios. Results shows that learners are influenced by the factors of social power and distance power. IFIDs were the most utilized strategies by participants who have low social power followed by explanation or Account, while the least used strategies were concern for the hearer. Explanation and account were the most utilized strategies by participants with high social power. Pragmatic transfer is spotted in the findings in which respondents used culture specific terms which are not understandable by English native speakers ENSs.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

An apology speech act is seen as an essential component of civility. The discipline of sociolinguistics has paid a great deal of attention to apology because it is so vital in the restorative interchange process, which tries to restore social peace and equilibrium following a real or perceived offense. The goal of the current study is to examine the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic characteristics of the speech act of apology made by Saudi EFL learners using the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) based on Searle's (1969) speech acts. The production and interpretation of linguistic behaviors varies between different cultures, according to research on speech as a cultural phenomenon (Bella, 2014; Ifantidou, 2014; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; McNamara, 2006). Every language generates a set of structured utterances that speakers utilize on a regular basis to carry out a number of tasks, according to Olshtain and Cohen (1991). Furthermore, the goal of language in use and its underlying meaning are identified by speech act theory (Cutting, 2008; Searle, 1969).

Lack of pragmatic knowledge may result in a pragmatic failure, which is defined as the inability to interpret meaning from spoken words (Al-Issa 1998; Al-Momani, 2009; Al-Zumor, 2011; Banikalef & Maros, 2013). This can hinder cross-cultural communication. The reason for this failure is that various cultures have distinct social and conceptual standards. When L2Ss perform in the target language, it is suggested that pragmatic failure happens when they pragmatically transfer their native language forms and notions (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Beebe & Zhang-Waring, 2001; Liu & Ou, 2004; Olshtain, 1983).

Few studies have investigated the transfer of apology strategies from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) and the influence of social power and social distance contextual variables on the acceptance of apologies, according to the researcher's knowledge in the Saudi context. Pragmatic transfer is believed to negatively impact the performance of speech acts in L2 and may lead to cultural misunderstandings between interlocutors from different cultures (Kasper, 1992; Takahashi, 1996; Thomas, 1983).

2. Problem Statement

Speech acts are a crucial aspect of language use, and they have been identified as a significant challenge for individuals learning English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). The complexity and diversity of speech acts can make them difficult for non-native speakers to comprehend, as they require an understanding of the various functions they perform (Blum-Kalka, 1991; Lin, 2014; Trosborg, 2010). According to Bachman (1990), pragmatic competency is an essential component of communicative competency, and improving this area can help individuals communicate more effectively and successfully across cultures. Therefore, it is important for language learners to focus on developing their pragmatic competency in order to enhance their overall communicative competency.

Apologizing appropriately in a second language is a challenge, as L2Ss must first recognize an event that necessitates an apology, evaluate the gravity of the offense, take into account factors such as power and distance, and select the appropriate output strategy (Bergman, Kasper, 1993). Saudi education curriculums do not consider pragmatic knowledge as a part of communication skills, despite the importance of pragmatic knowledge in communication with ENS. There is a growing demand for research on pragmatic competence in Saudi Arabia, where the results of such research can be used to identify potential problems and offer educated solutions to possible pragmatic challenges faced by Saudi EFL learners.

The main objective of the study is to investigate the conception and production of speech act of apology by Saudi EFL learners. Additionally, it seeks to investigate the impact of social power and distance on the perception of speech act of apology by Saudi EFL learners.

3. Research Questions

- 1- How do Saudi EFL learners produce speech act of apology?
- 2- What is the potential impact of social power and distance on the production of speech act of apology by Saudi EFL learners?

4. The Hypothesis

- 1- Saudi EFL learners produce speech act of apology by using different strategies.
- 2- There is the potential impact of social power and distance on the production of speech act of apology by Saudi EFL learners.

5. Literature Review

5.1. Conceptual Framework

The present study's conceptual framework draws upon speech act theory, politeness theory, classifications of apology strategies, pragmatic competence, and pragmatic transfer. This theoretical framework is grounded in the work of British philosopher John Austin (1962), who proposed a system for categorizing speech acts into three primary types: locutionary, illocutionary, and prelocutionary acts. Austin's theory posits that communication is not solely reliant on linguistic expressions, but rather, it involves the performance of specific acts, such as apologizing, requesting, or refusing. Through his work, Austin highlighted the idea that utterances can simultaneously convey meanings and perform actions. By examining the intersection of these theoretical perspectives, the present study aims to shed light on the complex nature of apology strategies in different cultural contexts.

5.2. Speech Act Theory

Speech act theory is a fundamental concept in the realm of linguistic pragmatics, with roots dating back Austin (1962) and his student John Searle (1969, 1975, 1976). Austin's seminal book "How to Do Things with Words" is based on lectures delivered at Oxford between 1951 and 1954, and later at Harvard in 1955. Building upon Austin's work, Searle expanded upon the taxonomy of speech acts and established the conditions necessary for successful performance. The core of speech act theory relies heavily on Austin's initial work on illocutionary acts, which he introduced in his 1962 book. Austin posited that language is not merely used for conveying information, but rather, it is employed to perform actions such as making requests, paying compliments, and offering apologies, among others. Through his work, Austin highlighted the performative nature of language, viewing it as a means of doing things rather than simply saying them. This perspective has had a profound impact on the field of linguistic pragmatics and continues to influence research in the area of speech act theory.

According to Searle (1969), speech acts are the main units of linguistic communication, comprising the basic building blocks of language use. These five categories of speech acts provide insight into the various actions speakers may engage in through language. The present study focuses on one particular speech act, specifically the apology, which falls under the expressive category. Searle posits that any speech act can be performed either directly or indirectly, as demonstrated in the following example.

The speaker says to their friend, "Let's go to the movie tonight," and the hearer responds with "I have to study for an exam." (Searle, 1969, p. 61).

In this example, the speaker's speech act is to make a request, while the hearer's response is to decline the invitation through an indirect speech act of apologetic nature, indicating their inability to comply with the speaker's request. This illustration highlights the versatility of speech acts and the various ways in which they can be employed to convey meaning and achieve communication goals. By examining the speech act of apology in this study, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms underlying language use in everyday interactions.

5.3 Pragmatic Competence

In order to understand pragmatic competency, it is necessary to first define pragmatics. Morris coined the phrase in 1939 to describe the study of the relationship between people who interpret signs and the signs themselves. Morris divided questions into three groups: pragmatics, syntax, and semantics. He underlined that studies of syntax and semantics frequently ignore the human perspective, which pragmatics compensates for. Similar to this, Cutting (2008) points out that pragmatics is a field of linguistics that studies language and its modifications according to the situation in which it is used. Academics have paid close attention to the field of pragmatics, examining it from a variety of perspectives. As an example, pragmatics is defined by Crystal (1997) as "the study of language from the user's perspective, specifically examining the choices made, constraints encountered, and social interactions that result from language use" (p. 301). Rather than focusing on the literal meaning of words, pragmatics examines the meaning given through spoken or written language and how listeners or readers understand it (Yule, 2014). According to Belza (2008), pragmatics is the study of language in connection to its users, who are impacted by social circumstances that have an impact on their capacity for effective communication.

Second language speakers' (L2Ss) poor pragmatic abilities may make it difficult for them to follow the social and cultural norms of the target language (Bu, 2011; Tang & Zhang, 2009; Thomas, 1983). Pragmatic failure is specifically defined as the incapacity to correctly decipher the intended meaning of utterances, which results in misunderstandings, confusion, and breakdowns in cross-cultural communication. In order to prevent pragmatic failure, the current study aims to analyze both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic abilities. Specifically, the focus is on improving L2Ss' ability to produce apologetic methods and raising their pragmatic awareness. Alrshoudi, (2020) examined apologies by Qassimi speakers and found that Qassimi Arabic speakers used a range of apology strategies. Principally, they used a combination of illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) and explanations of the reason for their apology. Likewise, Alhusban and Alshehri (2022) studied apology strategies by different English proficiency levels. Their research examined the cross-cultural aspects of apology speech acts among Arabic native speakers. Findings indicate that Arabic native speakers and Saudi English learners employ apology strategies in a similar frequency order, different from English native speakers. Saudis often utilize oaths and sarcasm alongside or in place of apologies in their responses. The influence of Arabic culture on Saudi English learners leads to effective communication in some instances and challenges it in others.

5.4 Pragmatic Transfer

Numerous linguists and second language educators have proposed various interpretations for the term "pragmatic transfer." Pragmatic transfer, according to Kasper and Dahl (1991), refers to L2 speakers employing speech act realization strategies or linguistic approaches that resemble native speaker language practices yet diverge from the use in the target language. As stated by Olshtain (1983), pragmatic transfer involves speakers incorporating elements of their native language into their use of the target language. Pragmatic transfer, according to Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), refers to the application of a native language's socio-cultural pragmatic skills when performing speech acts in a second language or in any L2 conversational situation where the speaker aims to achieve a specific language function.

Pragmatic transfer, as defined by Kasper (1992), is the impact that a learner's exposure to languages and cultures other than their second language (L2) has on their understanding, synthesis, and acquisition of pragmatic information in L2. According to Thomas (1983), there are two layers to this concept: sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic transfer. Sociopragmatic transfer happens when an L1 language user's subjective evaluation of a comparable L1 environment shapes the social perceptions that underlie their interpretation and performance of linguistic activity in L2. Due to the significance of pragmatic transfer in the EFL learning process, this study will shed light on this linguistic fact based on the respondents' responses.

6. Methodology

6.1. Sample

The sample is 100 Saudi male EFL learners who responded to DCT questionnaire. The students are conveniently chosen from Onaizah Colleges, Qassim region. This is done to understand their responses and understand their sociopragmatic knowledge

especially with the variable of P power and D distance. Table 3 below shows the respondents' backgrounds and the possibility of apologizing once there is a need for it.

Table 3: Respondents Background Data

age					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	19-20	13	13.0	13.1	13.1
	21-22	86	86.0	86.9	100.0
	Total	99	99.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.0		
Total		100	100.0		
Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	male	100	100.0	100.0	100.0
Educational Level					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Undergraduate	100	100.0	100.0	100.0
How frequently do you use Speech Act of Apology					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	always	71	71.0	71.0	71.0
	often	24	24.0	24.0	95.0
	sometimes	5	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

6.2 Instrument

The current study primarily utilizes the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as its primary data collection instrument (Al-Shboul & Maros, 2013; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2011). DCT was employed to collect the data from the respondents. It is considered as a valuable instrument in the data collection of the speech acts realm, since it has proved its validity to collect large number of data in a short time. The study adopted six verbal DCT scenarios adopted from Al-Khaza'leh's (2016) study. These scenarios were chosen since they involve the required variables integrated into this study, which are social power and social distance, as shown below:

Table (1) The three categories of social power P and social Distance D according to the six situations.

Category	Social power P and social distance D	Situations
1	(+P + D)	1-Professor promised to return a student term paper but he did not. 2-Customer called the waitress to change the order.
2	(-P + D)	3- Student forgot to return the book he borrowed from his professor.

		4-Employer forgot an important appointment with boss for the second time
3	(=P -D	5-You forgot an appointment with friend for the second time. 6-You said something that annoyed your colleague

Adopted from Al-Khaza'leh (2016)

Note: P= social power, D= social distance. Table 1 above illustrates the categories of social power and social *distance*; these are the context external variables that influence the respondents' responses.

Category 1- (+P + D) indicates that the apologizer has higher power over the listener and social distance is high as well. Category 2- (-P + D) indicates that the apologizer has less power over the listener and the distance is high. Category 3- (=P -D) indicates that there is a balance in power between the interlocutors and lack of social distance.

Table (2) Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) taxonomy of the speech act of apology

Taxonomies	Strategy	Example
1- Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDS)	Expression of regret Offer of apology Request for forgiveness	<i>I'm sorry</i> <i>I apologize</i> Excuse me/ Forgive me/ Pardon me
2- Explanation or Account	Objective reasons for violation	I was sick and couldn't do it
3- Taking responsibility	External mitigating circumstances Explicit self-blame Lack of intent Expressions of self-deficiency Expressions of embracement Self-dispraise Justify the hearer Refusal to acknowledge guilt	The traffic was terrible It's my fault I didn't mean it I was confused I feel awful about it I'm super clumsy You're right to be angry Blame, denial, offended: it wasn't my fault
4- Concern for the hearer		Are you alright?
5- Offer of repair		I will make it up for you
6- Promise of forbearance		It won't happen again

7. Data Analysis

The data has been collected from the respondents, that is, 100 Saudi male students at Onaizah Colleges, Qassim region. The questionnaire has processed statistically by using SPSS 25.0 Statistical program. The researchers analyzed and displayed the results of the questionnaire's items to investigate the conception and production of speech act of apology by Saudi EFL learners, revealing statistical variations between variables on the percentages for all survey variables. As detailed below, the researchers produced the graphical diagrams, then offered remarks and discussions.

4.1. Table (4) Results of the first situation are as follows:

1	(+P + D)	1-Professor promised to return a student term paper but he did not.
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Professor promised to return a student term paper but he did not					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IFIDS	19	19.0	19.0	19.0
	Explanation or Account	78	78.0	78.0	97.0

	Taking responsibility	2	2.0	2.0	99.0
	Offer of repair	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 shows that the most notable strategies used by those with high social power is Explanation or Account which is 78%, whereas Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) in 19% of responses, taking responsibility in 2%, and offer of repair 1%.

The influence of the social external variables of power and distance is obvious. Results show that most respondents did not opt to use IFIDs which are direct apologies such as I'm sorry. However, most of them used the term *al-ma?therah* (المعذرة). This is an apologetic term in Arabic but it saves the apologizer's face by not apologizing directly to lower status party. It is almost like *excuse me*.

Examples:

Excuse me, (المعذرة) your research was not clear, so I will give you quarter of the point.

I did not finish reading and by Alla's willing (إن شاء الله) it satisfies me.

No, I did not read it.

Unfortunately I didn't finish reading it.

Responses for the first situation show that social power plays a role in choosing the way of responses. This is typical since it was found also by studies of (Al-Khaza'leh, 2016; Banikhalef & Maros, 2013) that high power speakers are influenced by social power and did not use clear IFIDs or direct apologies. Further, it is noticed that some respondents used Islamic expressions such as in shaa' Allah (by Alla's willing) since all respondents are Arab and Muslims.

4.2. Table (5) Results of the Second situation are as follows:

(+P + D)	8. Customer called the waitress to change the order.
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Customer called the waitress to change the order					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IFIDS	17	17.0	17.0	17.0
	Explanation or Account	75	75.0	75.0	92.0
	Taking responsibility	6	6.0	6.0	98.0
	Concern for the hearer	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	Offer of repair	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 5 shows that there is a difference in findings between respondents in a situation (2); the customer called the waitress to change the order. The results reveal that the most notable used strategy is Explanation or Account which is 75%, whereas Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) is 17% of responses, taking responsibility is 6%, concern for the hearer is 1%, and offer of repair is 1%. Therefore, the most common apology strategy for "second situation of a customer calling the waitress to change the order is Explanation or Account at 75%, while the least used one if offer of repair.

Concerning the respondents' responses in scenarios 1 and 2 with high social power and social distance between interlocutors, results demonstrate that responders used Explanation or Account as a kind of politeness, but did not use direct apology except for a few cases.

Examples:

I did not notice that you have another food, excuse me but I want the other dish.

I hope you accept my apology (العذر منك), but I want to change the order and I'm ready to pay extra money.

Excuse me (المعذرة) if it is possible to change my order.

My choice was wrong and I hope you change my order.

The above examples show that although there is social power but the customers are still polite and try not to damage the other party's faces.

4.3. Table (6) Results of the Third situation are as follows:

(-P + D)	3- Student forgot to return the book he borrowed from his professor.
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Student forgot to return the book he borrowed from his professor.					
Apology strategies		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IFIDS	79	79.0	79.0	79.0
	Explanation or Account	12	12.0	12.0	91.0
	Taking responsibility	3	3.0	3.0	94.0
	Concern for the hearer	1	1.0	1.0	95.0
	Offer of repair	2	2.0	2.0	97.0
	Promise of forbearance	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 6 demonstrates a considerable difference in findings between respondents for situation (3) Student forgot to return the book he borrowed from his professor. The results show high prevalence of Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) which is 79%, whereas explanation or account is 12% of responses, taking responsibility is 3%, concern for the hearer is 1%, and offer of repair is 2% and promise of forbearance is 3%. Therefore, the most common apology strategy for "third situation is Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) which is 79%. As expected, Saudi EFL speakers in the lower status showed the highest proportion of using intensifiers as it occurred 71 times across situation 3. The following examples from situation 3 illustrated how Saudi EFL speakers of lower status intensify their apology. – "I'm very sorry my professor, I just forget the book at home. I'm really apologizing." "I am very sorry Prof. I really forgot all about it, I will bring it by tomorrow for sure, and I really apologize for that." "Oh, I am so sorry professor I forgot to bring the book with I promise I will bring it soon. I really appreciate if you forgive me Prof."

The examples provided in situation 3, where a student fails to return a professor's book, illustrate how these speakers intensify their apology.

Examples:

One of the new strategies used by Saudi is the word *ma'alesh* (معليش). This term is another way to say I am sorry.

I'm very sorry professor and I hope you accept my apology.

I'm deeply sorry (انا شديد الاعتذار) but I promise to get it next class.

Contrary to situations 1 and 2 when the apologizers are those with high social power, in situation 3 there is a heavy use for IFIDs which is direct apology. Also the use of other strategies were low or not considerable percentage. This might prove the influence of social power variable on the Arabic culture. That is, those with low social power add more effort to explain their sincere apology to those with high social power such as university professor.

4.4. Table (7) Results of the fourth situation are as follows:

(-P + D)	4-Employer forgot an important appointment with boss for the second time
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Employer forgot an important appointment with boss for the second time					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IFIDS	71	71.0	71.0	71.0
	Explanation or Account	12	12.0	12.0	83.0
	Taking responsibility	6	6.0	6.0	89.0
	Concern for the hearer	3	3.0	3.0	92.0
	Offer of repair	5	5.0	5.0	97.0
	Promise of forbearance	3	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 shows that the most remarkable apology strategy is the Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) which is 71%, whereas Explanation or Account is 12% of responses, Taking responsibility is 6%, offer of repair is 5% and Promise of forbearance is 3% concern for the hearer 3%. Therefore, the most common apology strategy is (IFIDs). Consequently, it is notable that when the apologizers are low social power and apologizing to high social power they opt to use direct apology most of the time IFIDs. Other strategies are used as well but with different frequencies.

4.5. Table (8) Results of the fifth situation are as follows:

(=P -D)	5-You forgot an appointment with friend for the second time.
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You forgot an appointment with friend for the second time.					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IFIDS	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Explanation or Account	4	4.0	4.0	7.0
	Taking responsibility	7	7.0	7.0	14.0
	Concern for the hearer	20	20.0	20.0	34.0
	Offer of repair	59	59.0	59.0	93.0
	Promise of forbearance	7	7.0	7.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 shows that there is a remarkable difference in findings between respondents to a situation (5) You forgot an appointment with a friend for the second time. The results reveal that the most apology strategy used by EFL students is an offer of repair which gains 59%, whereas concern for the hearer is 20%, Explanation or Account is 4% of responses, Taking responsibility is 7%, Promise of forbearance is 7% and (IFIDs) is 3%. Therefore, the most common apology strategy for "fifth situation of you forgetting an appointment with a friend for the second time, which is an offer of repair. This might show that people with equal power and distance try always the repair the misunderstanding by pledging to compensate for the issue the next time.

4.6. Table (9) Results of the sixth situation are as follows:

=P -D	6-You said something that annoyed your colleague.
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You said something that annoyed your colleague					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	IFIDS	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	Explanation or Account	5	5.0	5.0	8.0
	Taking responsibility	7	7.0	7.0	15.0
	Concern for the hearer	24	24.0	24.0	39.0
	Offer of repair	50	50.0	50.0	89.0
	Promise of forbearance	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 shows that the most notable apology strategy is an offer of repair which is 50%, whereas concern for the hearer is 24%, Explanation or Account is 5% of responses, Taking responsibility is 7%, Promise of forbearance is 11% and Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) is 3%. Therefore, the most common apology strategy for the sixth situation which is offer of repair.

Concerning the respondents' responses in scenarios 5 and 6 which show the equal social power and minus social distance between interlocutors, results show that responders used IFIDs as a kind of politeness. The least used strategy is IFID which might show when the relation is equal between the interlocutors, there is no need to directly apologize especially between friends. Offer of repair is the most prevalent strategy.

Examples:

You are right to be angry, my friend but put yourself in my shoes, I faced some circumstances that's why I forgot

I'm deeply sorry my friend I forgot I hope you forgive me.

I apologize for repeating the same mistakes but I faced some circumstances.

Hi I forgot to meet you today but I promise to compensate you.

Analysis show that when there is equal social power between the interlocutors, they mostly used offer of repair followed by concern for the hearer as the main apology strategies. This could be due to not break the friendship relation between the speakers, or harm the colleagues' faces.

8. Discussion

The results of the study revealed that the Saudi EFL learners had a tendency to transfer their pragmatic norms from L1 (Arabic) to L2 (English). For instance, in Saudi, instructors are seen as having a greater social position than pupils themselves. Hence, it is possible that they do not feel the need to express their regret to their students in writing. They would rather employ the explanation apology technique as a result. Stated differently, it is customary in Saudi for those with higher rank to be given more respect and control over those who are lower in status. Consequently, the L1 sociopragmatic knowledge of Saudi EFL learners was translated into the target language, English. In addition, Saudi EFL students demonstrated a tendency to apply their pragmatic linguistic expertise to L2 (English). For example, some Saudi EFL students attempted to make their apologies seem more sincere by intensifying it by saying I'm deeply sorry. The reason for this incorrect intensification could be attributed to a lack of pragmalinguistic competence in the use of acceptable intensifiers, such as sorry, very, and so. Some Saudi EFL learners tried to use profanity in this phrase as well to make their apologies seem more sincere (Oh, I am so sorry). I promise I overlooked it. In summary, a number of factors, including learners' inadequate linguistic competency in L2, particularly in L2 pragmatics, transfer of their L1 sociolinguistic knowledge, and transfer of their pragmatic competence in L1, affect how well Saudi EFL learners do speech acts of remorse.

The results of this study suggest that learners' L2 sociolinguistic ability and pragmalinguistic understanding of the target language are scarce and thus should receive more emphasis in the curriculum. Furthermore, this study highlights how critical it is to help EFL students become proficient in employing L2 idiomatic speech actions generally, and apology in particular. By seeing native speakers' use of speech actions in everyday communication (drama, movies), EFL learners can enhance their sociolinguistic competence and pragmalinguistic understanding. In terms of pragmatic knowledge, EFL teachers also need to make their students aware of the distinctions between the target language and the student's native tongue. Thus, EFL instructors need to think about innovative teaching techniques or strategies. Findings are contrary to Alhusban and Alshehri (2022) study which found that Saudis used sarcasm and oaths. In this study these terms were not used which might show some proficiency competence in English communication.

9. Conclusion

In many Saudi universities, English has become the main language of instruction; however, the importance of pragmatic competence, including speech acts, is often neglected in English teaching within the Saudi EFL context. This study revealed that even skilled Saudi English speakers are likely to make pragmatic errors. EFL instructors in Saudi Arabia need to understand the pragmatic similarities and distinctions between Saudi Arabic and English.

Recognizing that Arabic is a multiglossic language, the researcher suggested that participants refrain from using their individual dialects. In spite of the limitations of this study, the findings are anticipated to enhance understanding of specific cultural distinctions in apology speech acts between English and Arabic. This study is important for understanding Arabic forms of apology. Future research might benefit from focus-group discussions to enhance understanding of the implications behind respondents' remarks. It could be enhanced by including a broader spectrum of scenarios and taking extra contextual factors into account. In the end, it would benefit from conducting longitudinal studies.

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