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ON GENDER AND APOLOGY STRATEGIES: THE CASE OF ARABIC

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to see whether gender plays a role in the apology strategies employed by native speakers of Arabic, i.e., how Arab males and females express apologies in different situations. Data necessary for this study were collected via a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire, incorporating 10 real-life scenarios in the form of short descriptive statements. In accordance with the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns, participants' responses ($n = 20$) were analysed and further classified into five distinct apology strategies: (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Responsibility (RESP), Explanation (EXPL), Repair (REPR), and Forbearance (FORB)). The researcher initially hypothesised that apology strategies employed by participants would exhibit more differences than similarities among native speakers of Arabic. Contrary to previously conducted research on this subject (i.e., attesting more differences), the data analysed ($n = 350$ apology exchanges) revealed more similarities than differences regardless of gender. In fact, no statistically significant differences were found. In addition to contributing to the current theoretical debate on gender and gender-related topics, the results of this study may entail pedagogical implications for those in direct contact with Arab learners of English as a Second Language or with speakers of Arabic in general terms.*

Keywords: *Apology, Apology Strategies, Arabic, gender.*

1. Introduction

The subject of apology has attracted the attention of scholars within several scholastic domains including - among others - communication, psychology, sociolinguistics, etc.; however, the greatest body of research (and contribution thereof) has been carried out in the realm of cross-cultural pragmatics (Deutschmann 2003), primarily to compare the use of the speech act of apology between native speakers of English and speakers of other languages (e.g., Hebrew, Spanish, Danish, German, among others). The bulk of the research (Cohen and Olshtain 1983; Olshtain 1989; Garcia 1989; Kasper 1989; Trosborg 1987, 1995; House 1989; Meier 1998; Eslami-Rasekh 2004, *inter alia*) indicates that speakers of different ages and social backgrounds oftentimes employ strategies when expressing their apologies. These strategies, as Salgado (2011: 28) points out, are universal because they “operate by universal principles and general mechanisms.” Salgado further explains that “they are essentially identical across different cultures and languages and any differences that may exist are not that important” (28). This perspective is supported by Searle (1969), who maintains that the strategies used to deliver speech acts (e.g., apology) in any language are universal because “they are based on universal felicity conditions” (as cited in Salgado 2011:29).

Further support comes from Wolfson (1983), who also agrees on the universality of strategies but maintains that they may be realised differently across cultures in “their distribution, their frequency of occurrence, and in the function they serve” (123). In other words, the content of such strategies is preserved in the sense that the apologiser often shows regret, accepts responsibility, furnishes an explanation, etc. Nonetheless, the content of the apology itself may be delivered differently via different linguistic expressions, devices and mechanisms. “I am sorry” is probably by far the most frequent linguistic expression employed in apology contexts cross-culturally, as reported by most of the literature cited in this paper.

In investigating the nature of apology, scholars have examined the impact certain social factors (e.g., age, education, gender, etc.) may have on the use of apology strategies. Despite the very large number of studies conducted, the social factor of gender seems to have been under-investigated, probably because of the popular belief that women are stereotyped as better apologisers than men. In fact, this widely held stereotype is backed up by most theories of gender, which maintain that gender differences exist between men and women in communication due to different social norms and cultural contexts.

What is probably worth mentioning here is that there is a shortage of studies examining the possible effects (if any) of gender on the speech act of apology among native speakers of Arabic. In fact, most studies, to the best of the present researcher's knowledge, seem to be more concerned with the overall nature of apology as a linguistic/pragmatic phenomenon than with exploring such social factors as – particularly – gender and the possible contribution these may make to unravelling untouched linguistic and pragmatic facts that may contribute to the overall understanding of language. Therefore, this study attempts to achieve three objectives: (1) investigate the nature and type of apology strategies utilised by both genders, (2) examine the impact gender may (or may not) have on the type of apology employed and (3) determine whether the social factor of gender can account for any similarities or differences in participants' responses.

1.1 Review of Literature

As previously mentioned, the socio-pragmatic phenomenon of apology (or apologising) has been studied extensively in a wide array of languages and approached from different angles. In this section, I will briefly touch upon some of the major studies revolving around this subject. This section will be divided into three subsections: (1) definitions of apologies, (2) apology studies in English and (3) apology studies in other languages, with special reference to Arabic.

1.1.1 Definitions

According to Holmes (1989), an apology is “a speech act addressed to V’s face-needs and intended to remedy an offence for which A takes responsibility, and thus to restore equilibrium between A and V (where A is the apologist, and V is the victim or person offended” (196). In a later paper, Holmes (1990) views apologies as “primarily social acts, carrying effective meaning” (155). Holmes’ definitions go along with the theoretical framework of the politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1978 & 1987), according to which apologies are viewed as politeness strategies. The illocutionary act of apologising, as Brown and Levinson point out, constitutes a negative politeness strategy as opposed to a positive one. Put differently, apologising can be seen as a negative politeness strategy, constituting a face-threatening situation, which results in substantial damage caused to the apologist’s positive face or wants. Alternatively, apologising is face-saving for the addressee. Holmes (1990) argues that apologies could still serve both positive and negative face wants. They are negative for the speaker’s face and positive for the hearer’s face, but can still be perceived as negative for the hearer’s face if they are used as requests for forgiveness (e.g., ‘please pardon me’, ‘please forgive me’, etc.).

An apology, for Garcia (1989), is “an explanation offered to a person affected by one’s action that no offense was intended, coupled with the expression of regret for any that may have been given; or, a frank acknowledgment of the offense with expression of regret for it, by way of reparation” (44). Olshtain (1989) notes that an apology is “basically a speech act which is intended to provide support for the H (hearer) who was actually or potentially malaffected by a violation X. [...], the S (speaker) is willing to humiliate himself or herself to some extent and to admit to fault and responsibility for X” (156). Obviously, the above-mentioned definitions, irrespective of the different terms employed, are similar in three aspects: (1) parties involved: hearer/speaker; victim/apologist, etc.; (2) offence/violation: done by speaker/apologist to hearer/victim and (3) the act of

apologising: acknowledgement/regret, etc. Simply put, an apology is a social act uttered to maintain relations (or relationships) between at least two participants.

1.2.2 Apology Studies in English & Other Languages

One of the most significant and highly seminal works on the illocutionary speech act of apology was reported in the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Project (henceforth CCSARP) conducted by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984). This project was designed to investigate speech act patterns (i.e., requests and apologies) across different cultures in an attempt to establish similarities as well as differences between native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs). The researchers studied eight different languages: Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew, and Russian. Data necessary for this project were collected via a discourse completion test (DCT). Data collected were analysed and further categorised 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). Upon coding and categorising the collected data, the authors found that respondents pursued similar strategies in their apologies and requests, but still exhibited culturally different tendencies in their use. This situation was attributed to three different variables: (a) situational (b) cross-cultural and (c) individual.

The CCSARP sparked several other influential works deemed to have also contributed substantially to the study of the speech act of apology. Trosberg (1987) compared the use of apology between native speakers of British English and Danish learners of English. Results indicated that both groups of participants exhibited a greater level of variance in many aspects, the most obvious of which was noticed in their use of modality markers when apologising. Similarly, Bergman and Kasper (1993) conducted an experiment in which they examined the perception and performance of native speakers of Thai and those of English speakers with a variety of contexts, i.e., how they would perceive the offence and

how they would choose to apologise in different contexts. Results indicated that the offender takes on more responsibility when he or she is closer to the hearer. As for the strategies employed, accepting responsibility and expressing an explicit apology (IFIDs) were reported to head the list of participants' choices, whereas promise of forbearance (FORB) was at the very bottom of their selection of apology strategies.

Placing more emphasis on the linguistic form, Suszczyńska (1999) set out to examine the realisation of apology in three different languages: English, Polish and Hungarian. By contrast with a great number of previously conducted studies, which furnish confirmatory evidence for the politeness theory, Suszczyńska claims that the politeness theory is inadequate and does not account for the differences observed in her study; for her, the differences spotted can best be attributed to 'culture-specific attitudes', not to universal norms of politeness as advocated by Brown and Levinson (1987). For other studies dealing with the speech act of apology and apology strategies, the reader should refer to the following works: German (House 1989), Austrian (Meier 1998), Hebrew (Cohen and Olshtain 1983; Olshtain 1989), Korean (Lee & Park 2011; Byon 2005), Chinese (Xiao-yan 2004), Russian (Ogiermann 2009), Romanian (Demeter 2006) and Persian (Eslami-Rasekh 2004; Afghari 2007).

1.2.3 Apology Studies in Arabic

Despite the lack of literature on this subject, a few studies have been carried out to explore the phenomenon of apology in Arabic, i.e., to see how apology is realised and carried out by native speakers of Arabic. Sinan (2004), for example, studied the use of apology among native speakers of Arabic learning English in India. Results indicated that Arab learners of English differ in their use of apology. Variations were attributed to different religious beliefs, values, etc. Interestingly enough, the researcher reported that most participants view 'sorry' alone as unsatisfactory and insufficient to repair the relationship with the addressee. For this reason, Arab learners of English were reported to use multiple

apology strategies (up to three sometimes) for such reasons as wishing to communicate the sincerity and seriousness of the apology. Sinan's findings were also confirmed by Alfattah (2010).

In the Jordanian variety of Arabic, Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) used a Discourse Completion Task to examine some specific apology strategies among Jordanian males and females. These include, but are not limited to, compensation, lack of intent to do harm; accepting responsibility, promise of refraining to do similar acts in the future, etc. Most significantly, the researchers found that males and females exhibited differences in their use of apology strategies. Females were reported to apologise more than males, most clearly shown in higher frequencies of the use of statement of remorse. Male respondents used more non-apology strategies than female participants. In a broader scope, Nureddeen (2007) attempted to "outline the type and extent of use of apology strategies in Sudanese Arabic and hence shed light on the socio-cultural attitudes and values of this community" (279). She utilised a 10-item discourse completion task (DCT) which was completed by 110 college-educated adults in the capital city of Khartoum. She found that Sudanese speakers of Arabic prefer to apologise indirectly, that is, through the use of IFIDs and Explanations (EXPLs). The author also notes that the results of her study yield confirmatory evidence to earlier studies, specifically on the universality of some apology strategies.

Most recently, Abu Humei (2013) compared apology strategies employed by Iraqi EFL students ($n = 20$) to those of native speakers of American English ($n = 8$) by means of an online discourse completion task. Unlike in previous apology studies in Iraqi Arabic, Abu Humeid was interested in exploring the roles (if any) gender and status might have on the use of apology strategies among the participants chosen for his study. He found that Iraqi females apologized more than their Iraqi male counterparts, but American males and females exhibited no differences. As for status, Iraqi males used more apology strategies with people of higher status (e.g., parents, officials, etc.), while their American male peers used

fewer strategies with people of higher status and more strategies with those of lower position.

1.2.4 Summary

The bulk of research cited above seems to be in agreement on the universality of apology; that is, the need to apologize in a given situation via the use of certain linguistic expressions used to mitigate any negative impact. However, slight disagreements can still be found among scholars. As we have seen, whereas some have come across more differences than similarities, others have found the exact opposite. Still, others have reported no differences, a state of affairs, which makes the subject of apology a flexible concept to deal with. As a modest contribution to this debate, this paper focuses on exploring the effect(s) of gender on the type of apology strategies employed by native speakers of Arabic.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Participants

The population for this study consisted of 20 randomly selected subjects: ten males and ten females. All participants were attending Ball State University (BSU) at the time of the study. All 20 participants were native speakers of Arabic, mainly of three varieties: Saudi Arabic (SA), Jordanian Arabic (JA), and Egyptian (EA). These three dialects are deemed spatially and geographically representative of the Arabic language spoken in all corners of the Arab World, extending from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean in the southeast and from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east. Table 1 below summarises the participants' demographic information cross-tabulated:

Table 1: *Participants' Gender * Age * Education Cross Tabulation*

Gender			Education			Total
			HS	BA	PhD	
Male	Age group	18 to 29	2	4	1	8
		30 to 39	0	1	2	3
	Total		2	5	3	10
Female	Age group	18 to 29	3	0	0	3
		30 to 39	2	5	0	7
	Total		5	5	0	10
Total	Age group	18 to 29	5	4	1	8
		30 to 39	2	6	3	2
	Total		7	10	3	20

As can be seen from Table 1 above, of the ten male participants, five had a bachelor's degree, three had a doctoral degree and the remaining two were high school graduates. Three of them were between the ages of 30 and 39, with a mean average of 34.5 years. The remaining seven male participants were between the ages of 18 and 29 with a mean average of 23.5 years. As for the ten females, five had a bachelor's degree and the other five were reported to be high school graduates. Of the five bachelor's degree holders, two females were between the ages of 18 and 29 ($M = 23.5$), two between the ages of 30 and 39 ($M = 34.5$) and one over 50 years. Of the high school graduates, three were between the ages of 18 and 29 ($M = 23.5$) and two between the ages of 30 and 39 ($M = 34.5$).

2.2 Data Collection and Instrumentation

Data necessary for this study were collected via a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) questionnaire. The DCT questionnaire was made up of two sections: (i) demographic information and (ii) a discourse task. In the first section, the participants were requested to indicate their age, gender and educational level. The second part of the DCT questionnaire consisted of 10 statements, each of which represents a social situation/context. Situation 1, for example, represented the social situation of borrowing a book from a classmate. The offence is committed

when the borrower's child accidentally draws on several pages of it. Respondents were asked to state what they would say to the lender when returning the book. Situation 8 represented another situation where the two parties are an adult and a child promised an ice cream. (For a complete list of all 10 situations see Appendix A).

To ensure validity and reliability, the English version of the DCT was checked by a native speaker of English who holds a doctoral degree in linguistics with a focus on pragmatics. After this, the DCT was translated from English into Arabic (by the researcher) and the translation was double-checked by a native speaker of Arabic to ensure accuracy, clarity and equivalency-related issues (see Appendix B).

The researcher administered the DCT questionnaire in informal situations including, but not limited to, the following: friends talking with each other at the BSU Student Center, students chatting with each other outside their classroom, etc. These situations, among others, were deemed appropriate to ensure that participants were at their ease and free from stress. The researcher approached potential participants, introduced himself, indicated the purpose of the study, assured potential participants of the confidentiality of answers and asked them if they would be willing to fill out the questionnaire. Most welcomed the researcher and did fill out the DCT questionnaire as requested.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, the participants' responses were statistically analysed to determine frequencies, percentages for cross-classification purposes, e.g., to determine which apology strategy (or set of strategies) had the highest statistical frequency in the respondents' choices or alternatively to determine which apology strategy (or set of strategies) had the lowest statistical mean. The researcher used statistical data to see whether or not the hypothesis of this study needed to be either accepted or rejected. Qualitatively, the participants' responses to the DCT questionnaire were coded, categorised and descriptively analysed for discussion

purposes. It should be made clear that some responses ($n = 3$) were eliminated due to missing answers (over half of cases) or illegibility of participants' handwriting.

The data collected were organised according to the coding procedure proposed by the CCSARP (Blum Kulka and Olshtain 1984, 1989). Thus, there are five apology strategies the apologiser can choose from:

- An implicit or explicit expression of apology (use of IFID), e.g., *I apologise/I am sorry*; (ʔ aʕ taðer/ʔ anaasef);
- An acknowledgement of responsibility (RESP), e.g., *it was my mistake ...*; (ʕ alTiti);
- An explanation or account of the situation (EXPL), e.g., *the streets were jammed ...*; (ʔ af -f awareʕ muzdahima);
- An offer of repair (REPR), e.g., *I will buy you a new book ...*; (sa-af tarilakakitab-an ʒ adid-an)
- A promise of forbearance [better behaviour in the future] (FORB, e.g., *I will not do it again ...* (lanafʕ aluhamarat-an uʕra).

3. Results and Findings

This paper set out to investigate the nature of apology strategies employed among native speakers of Arabic via the use of the DCT questionnaire, i.e., how apologies are realised in Arabic. Most significantly, the paper also set out to discover whether or not gender plays a role in the respondents' preference for one strategy over another. In this section, a brief, yet relatively detailed description of how apologies are realised in Arabic and employed by Arab males and females is attempted and provided. Possibly contrary to most previous research findings, this study attests to more similarities than differences between Arab males and females in regard to their choice of apology strategies. In brief, the data analysed show that gender *per se* does not play a role in the choice of apology strategy, as no

statistically significant differences were found between the two groups. To report our findings, the following section is divided into three subsections: (1) apology expressions, (2) apology strategies and (3) overall uses.

3.1 Apology Expressions

Table 2 below presents the ten situations along with the apology expressions used by the 10 male participants in this study. Both Arabic (in italics) and English responses are given. Repeated responses were eliminated on this occasion to reduce unneeded redundancy.

Table 2: *Situations and Male Participants' Responses*

Situation/context	Frequently Used Apology Expressions
1. Borrowing a book from a friend.	<p>؟ <i>aʃ taðer</i> (I apologise);</p> <p>؟ <i>anaasefkθir</i> (I am so sorry);</p> <p>؟ <i>anaasefdʒ idan</i> (I am really sorry);</p> <p>؟ <i>anaasefktir</i> (I am really sorry);</p> <p>؟ <i>anaasefdʒ idan</i> (I am very sorry);</p> <p>؟ <i>aʃ ʃ urbelħardʒ</i> (I feel embarrassed);</p> <p><i>rahʔ aʃ tarilakkitabdʒ id</i> (I will buy a new book);</p> <p>؟ <i>alhaqmeʃ ʃ əli</i> (It was not my fault).</p>
2. Meeting with a friend at the library.	<p>I apologise; I am really sorry, <i>mumkinnetlaqamaraθanyeh</i> (we can reschedule);</p> <p>I am really sorry; <i>ʃ andʒ adʔ anaʔ asef</i> (I am genuinely sorry);</p> <p><i>ef -ʃ awareʔ zahmeh; asefʃ alaʔ attaʔ χir</i> (The streets</p>

	<p>were crowded; I am sorry for being late);</p> <p><i>kan f endihalatara? a</i> (I had to attend to a personal matter);</p> <p>I am really sorry; <i>y asbin? ani</i> (it was out of my control).</p>
3. Missing an exam.	<p>I am sorry; <i>kuntmarid</i> (I was sick);</p> <p><i>Mumkin? a f id? el? emtihan</i> (Can I still retake the exam?);</p> <p>I apologise; <i>hay waraqamenldaktor</i> (here is the doctor's note);</p> <p><i>? ard3 u? antaqbal? e f tidariwatasmahlibi? i f adat? al</i></p> <p><i>? emtihan</i> (Please accept my apology and allow me to retake the exam);</p> <p><i>Kuntmef f alaba f di</i> (I was not feeling well). I am sorry;</p> <p>I was sick and could not make it; can I retake?</p>
4. Meeting with the English professor to discuss a paper topic.	<p>I am so sorry; I am really sorry. <i>kan fi hadiθ</i> (There was an accident). Please accept my apology;</p> <p>I apologise; it was beyond my control;</p> <p>I am really sorry for being late; there was an accident:</p> <p><i>kanlazemtli f etabkar</i> (I should have left earlier);</p> <p>I did not want to miss the appointment, but the streets were blocked due to an accident; OR I would not have missed the appointment if the streets hadn't been blocked...</p> <p><i>rah? axtit? hsan? elmara? eld3 ayeh</i> (I will plan better next time);</p> <p><i>? anaasefwahab? af kuraklil? entidar</i> (I am sorry and would like to thank you for having waited for me);</p> <p>I am late because there was an accident. <i>bliz? efhamni</i> (I hope you understand).</p>
5. Failure to honour a friend's dinner	<p><i>kan f endi? amrf axsi</i> (It was something personal); I will</p>

invitation	<p>make it up to you;</p> <p>I am sorry; <i>ʃ anaasef bas kantmamati w ma ʔ dref iʔ arfudtalabha</i> (it is my mother and I cannot ignore her request);</p> <p>I hope you can understand; <i>ma kanrahʃ ali law ma kant mama</i> (I would not have missed it if it had not been my mother);</p> <p>I am sure you can understand: it is my mother;</p>
6. Missing childhood friend's wedding	<p><i>Asefasefjidanʔ axi bas ma qdretʔ adʒ i</i> (I am really (really) sorry, brother; I just could not make it);</p> <p><i>ʔ atmanaʔ enktetfahim</i> (I hope you can understand);</p> <p><i>ʔ aboykanfilmustaf fa</i> (my father was hospitalised);</p> <p><i>maqdrerʔ ahderʃ ursek</i> (I just could not attend your wedding);</p> <p><i>asef bas haditekmawdʒ odeh</i> (I am really sorry, but I still got your wedding gift);</p> <p><i>ʃ andʒ adkunthabʔ adʒ i bas</i></p> <p><i>kanlazemakunmaʃ aboyfelmustaf fa</i> (I really wanted to attend your wedding; I had to be with my father at the hospital);</p> <p><i>duxulʔ abiʔ elmaf famanaʃ ni men hudorzawadʒ ik</i> (my father's hospitalisation prevented me from attending your wedding).</p>
7. Running into an old woman while running to class.	<p><i>Blizxaliniʔ asaʒdek</i> (Please allow me to help you get up);</p> <p><i>ʔ entitamamʔ Habbanruhnʃ ufdaktoor</i> (Are you okay? Do you need to go see a doctor?)</p>

	<p><i>? abosrasek; ? anaasef</i> (Please allow me to kiss you on the forehead. I am really sorry);</p> <p><i>samhini ma kanqasdi</i> (Please forgive me; I did not mean to);</p> <p><i>? asefkuntmesta? d3 el ma f oftek</i> (Sorry; I am in hurry; I did not see you);</p>
8. Breaking a promise made to a little child.	<p><i>? ef rayak? a? tikfloos</i> (How about I just give you some money);</p> <p><i>? abaf tariklak? af erhabat? elmara? eld3 ayeh</i> (I will buy ten ice creams next time);</p> <p><i>f ura? yeknruh? elesbu? ? eld3 ai</i> (How about next week?)</p> <p><i>baw? edaknruh? elesbu? ? eld3 ai</i> (I promise we will go out next week);</p> <p><i>marah? idha</i> (I will not do it again).</p>
9. Returning an overdue book to the library.	<p>I apologise; I am sorry; <i>musta? id? adfa? ? aly aramat</i> (I will pay any overdue fine);</p> <p>I am really sorry; <i>? insittamaman</i> (I totally forgot);</p> <p>I am really sorry; <i>mes rahtetkarrarhaf f i</i> (it will not happen again);</p> <p><i>Maba?ib? akdib bas ma tzakaret? elmaw? id</i> (I hate to lie, but I just could not remember the date);</p> <p><i>Haiktabik</i> (Here is the book back) (acting indifferent!)</p>
10. Borrowing a CD from a friend.	<p>I am really sorry; <i>ruhnigibu</i> (let's go get it now);</p> <p>I apologize; <i>rahrad3 ? u fi ? asra? waqt</i> (I will give it back as soon as possible);</p> <p><i>kan? endihalehtare? arah? ard3 u fi saba?</i> (I had an</p>

	<p>emergency; I will give it back first thing in the morning);</p> <p>I feel embarrassed; I will give it back ASAP;</p> <p><i>? anaasef; f ura? yekradʒ u w ? af tarilakhadiyeh</i> (I am sorry; how about I give it back and buy you a gift);</p> <p><i>filkθirdʒ amil; f uftu? akθar men marra</i> (It was a good movie; I had to watch it over and over);</p> <p><i>basnsitu; rahruħ? el bit ? adʒ ibuhasa</i>(I just forgot; I will go home and get it now)</p>
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As can be seen from Table 2 above, responses like “*? anaasef*” (Arabic for ‘I am sorry’ and “*? aʕ taðer*” (Arabic for ‘I apologise’) are basically more dominant among male participants. In fact, in each of the above-mentioned situations, these two apology expressions have the highest frequency compared to other expressions elicited. Most noticeably, these two expressions are often used – as what I like to term – as apology initiators along with some other apology strategy (e.g., REPR, RESP, etc.). Table 3 below presents the ten situations along with the apology expressions used by the ten female participants recruited for this study.

Table 3: *Situations and Female Respondents’ Responses*

Situation/context	Frequently Used Apology Expressions
1. Borrowing a book from a friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I apologise; I am sorry; I am really sorry; I am very sorry; • I will buy a new book;
2. Meeting with a friend at the library.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I apologise; I am really sorry; • I am really sorry; I am genuinely sorry; • The streets were crowded; I am sorry for being late;

3. Missing an exam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am sorry; I was sick; • I apologise; here is the doctor's note; • Please accept my apology and allow me to retake the exam; • I was not feeling well. I am sorry;
4. Meeting with the English professor to discuss a paper topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am really sorry. There was an accident. Please accept my apology; • I did not want to miss the appointment, but the streets were blocked due to an accident OR I would not have missed the appointment if the streets hadn't been blocked...; • I am late because there was an accident. I hope you understand.
5. Failure to honour a friend's dinner invitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was something personal; I will make it up to you; • I had to attend to a personal matter; I am so sorry.
6. Missing a childhood friend's wedding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am really (really) sorry, (habibti¹); I just could not make it; • I am really sorry, but I still got your wedding gift; • I really wanted to attend your wedding; I had to be with my father at the hospital; • My father's hospitalisation prevented me from attending your wedding
7. Running into an old woman while running to class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please allow me to help you get up; • Are you okay? Do you need to go see a doctor? • Please allow me to kiss you on the

¹An expression of endearment often used among close female friends or when addressing little children.

	forehead. I am really sorry; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please forgive me; I did not mean to; • Sorry; I am in hurry; I did not see you;
8. Breaking a promise made to a little child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habibi²: I will buy as much ice cream as you want; • I am sorry, habibti; I promise we will go out next week; • I apologize habibi: I will not do it again
9. Returning an overdue book to the library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I apologise; I am sorry; • I am sorry; It is totally my fault.
10. Borrowing a CD from a friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am really sorry; let's go get it now; • I apologise; I will give it back as soon as possible; • I had an emergency; I will give it back first thing in the morning; • I feel embarrassed; I will give it back ASAP;

The female participants used similar apology expressions to males, with “I am sorry” and “I apologise” being the most frequent in the majority of the situations. Nevertheless, a few differences can be seen between males’ and females’ responses in certain situations. These are as follows: (a) in situation 5, male participants were more reserved in their responses than women were. Both males and females offered an explanation (EXPL) for missing the dinner. However, women did not seem to clearly state the reason behind their failure to attend, while men referred to it as a “personal matter” saying that their mother had been involved and (b) in the next situation, (6), although both groups of participants used similar apology expressions and strategies, female participants said relatively more in their responses than they had done in the previous situation,

²An expression of endearment often used among close male friends or when addressing little children.

i.e., they attributed their failure to attend their childhood friend's wedding to their father's hospitalisation, as opposed to a "personal matter" in the case of their mother. This state of affairs may be explained in terms of social norms and cultural expectations, with mothers being considered sacred and no one else's business. Despite this, no significant differences were found. All in all, similarities between Arab males and females were more prevalent than differences as far as their choice of apology expressions was concerned.

3.2 Apology Strategies

In accordance with the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP; Blum Kulka and Olshtain 1984, 1989), we will try in this subsection to show how the data collected were categorised into the five distinct strategies: (IFID, RESP, EXPL, REPR, and FORB) Each of these five categories encompasses several other subcategories, which will be briefly visited whenever applicable. Below are the results of each of these categories.

3.2.1 IFIDS

In line with the majority of literature on this subject, the Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (henceforth IFID) is found to be the most common category of apology strategy among both groups. This strategy includes frequently used apology expressions such as "I am sorry", "I apologise", etc. Despite falling under one umbrella term (namely IFIDs), these expressions can also be further divided into three subcategories:

- a. An expression of regret, e.g., I am sorry (*? ana? asef*);
- b. An offer of apology, e.g., I apologise (*? aʃ taðer*);
- c. A request for forgiveness, e.g., forgive me (*samehni*).

The total number of IFIDs reported in this study is 126 occurrences, which constitutes 36% of all apology strategies ($n = 350$). As Table 4 below demonstrates, participants of both genders employed IFIDs in almost all of the ten situations, with males scoring 33% ($n = 56$) and 39% for female participants ($n = 70$).

Table 4: *Frequencies and Percentages of IFIDs in All Situations*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
IFIDS	18	5	16	5	11	3	20	6	12	3	13	4	10	3	10	3	13	4	2	1

Table 5 below presents the frequencies and percentages of IFIDs used by male participants. It is evident that while situations 1 (borrowing a book from a friend) and 4 (meeting with the English professor) represented the highest number of instances ($n = 20$; 12%), situation 10 (borrowing a CD from a friend) had the lowest frequency ($n = 1$; 1%). This may be explained in terms of the damage caused to the addressee (situation 1) and status along with power (situation 4). In situation 1, the speaker's (S) child had drawn on several pages of the borrowed book. This damage was perceived as serious and face-threatening to S, which demanded the highest number of IFIDs. The same can be said of situation 4, but this may be explained differently, in terms of power (and status) exercised over the apologisee on the part of the addressee (i.e., the English professor). Additionally, situation 4 probably incurred higher instances of IFIDs as a result of the apologisee's desire to maintain good relations with the English professor. As for situation 10, both damage and status are minimum, hence the low instances of IFIDs.

Table 5: *Frequencies and Percentages of IFIDs among Males*

Situation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
IFIDS	10	6	8	5	6	4	10	6	5	3

Table 6: *Frequencies and Percentages of IFIDs among Females*

Situation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10										
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%				
IFIDS	8	4	9	5	5	3	10	6	7	4	10	6	7	4	7	4	6	3	1	1

Table 6 above summarises the use of IFIDs by female participants. As with male participants (see Table 5 above), situation 4 (meeting with the English professor) had the highest number of IFIDs ($n = 10$; 6%). Unlike male participants ($n = 3$; 2%), in situation 6 (attending childhood friend's wedding) female participants had 10 instances of IFIDs ($n = 10$; 6%). Both groups of participants exhibited similarities in situations 2 and 10. The groups differed in their use of IFIDs in situations 6, 7 and 8 as well. The differences may be attributed to the seriousness and severity of the offence as perceived by the apologisee. In other words, situation 6, for example, constituted a face-threatening situation for females, but was probably perceived as less threatening on the part of male participants, hence the variance in the number of instances observed.

In general terms, two observations regarding the use of this strategy by our participants are in order here. Firstly, the use of IFIDs among participants (males as well as females) represented the second highest category after EXPL. Secondly, it has become clear that the use of IFIDs often co-occurs with other apology strategies. In other words, participants often used multiple apology strategies along with IFIDs.

3.2.2 *Taking Responsibility*

Another common apology strategy employed by our participants is acceptance of responsibility (RESP) on the part of the apologisee (or speaker). This simply refers to the apologisee admitting their responsibility for the offence committed or damage caused to the addressee. These include accepting the blame (e.g., ‘*? elhaqqi ali*’ it was my fault), embarrassment (e.g., ‘*? anamuhradz*’ I

feel embarrassed), lack of intention (e.g., ‘*γ asbinʿ ani*’ it was beyond my control), and so on.

Of the 350 strategies employed, the RESP category had a frequency of 23 instances (7%) over the ten situations. Of the 23 occurrences, 13 instances were employed by male participants (56%) and the remaining 10 (44%) were by female participants. Table 7 below presents the frequencies and percentages of RESP among males.

Table 7: *Frequencies and Percentages of RESP (Males)*

Situation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
RESP	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0

With male participants, the category of RESP was not observed in situations 2, 4, and 5. This may be attributed to the participants’ perception of such situations as not constituting face-threatening situations; they are perhaps perceived as minor offences that do not require the admission of responsibility on the part of the apologise(s). Put differently, participants had the opportunity to evade responsibility by choosing other apology strategies deemed as more appropriate in these situations. Situation 7 (running into an old woman) had the highest number of RESP instances ($n = 5$; 3%), followed by situation 10 ($n = 4$; 2%) and situation 9 ($n = 3$; 2%), in that order. One logical explanation for situation 7 incurring the highest number of RESP may be the severe degree of guilt felt on the part of the apologise. It is possible (and plausible) that participants accepted more responsibility due to the woman’s age, which intensified their feeling of guilt; thus, they accepted more responsibility.

Female participants reported very similar responses. As can be seen from Table 8 below, situations 1 through 6 did not involve responsibility responses from female participants. Situation 7 (running into an old woman) had the highest

number of instances ($n = 8$; 4%), followed by situation 9 ($n = 4$; 2%) and situation 10 ($n = 2$; 1%). Situation 7 (running into an old woman) constituted a face-threatening situation for both groups of participants, with females accepting more responsibility than males (males: 3%; females: 4%). Further information may be found in the table below.

Table 8: *Frequencies and Percentages of RESP (females)*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
RESP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	0	0	4	2	2	1

A point worthy of mention here is that taking responsibility is the “most explicit, most direct and strongest apology strategy” (Nureddeen 2008:290). Nevertheless, RESP can also embrace the opposite; that is, denial of or refusal to acknowledge guilt or responsibility. In the data analysed, one of the male participants refused to acknowledge responsibility for the damage his child caused to the book he had borrowed. Rather, he blamed it on his own child; “*? elhaqmesh li ali*” (Arabic for ‘it was not my fault’) was the response elicited in regard to situation 1.

3.2.3 Explanations

Another apology strategy employed by both groups of participants involved the furnishing of explanations (henceforth EXPLs) communicated from speaker (S) to hearer (H) to minimise the impact of the violation committed. The explanation provided gives an account of the violation, i.e., why it happened. “*kan fi hadiθ*” (there was an accident) and “*kan ? endihalehtari ? a*” (I had an emergency) are two examples of the apology strategy of EXPL reported in the data analysed (see Tables 2 and 3 for further examples). The former example represents

a direct/explicit EXPL, while the latter is an indirect/implicit account of the offence.

Of the 350 apology exchanges analysed in this study, the EXPL category constituted the highest frequency of instances ($n = 135$) and percentages (39%). Both groups of participants exhibited similar results in their use of this very particular apology strategy: the number of EXPLs was 67 occurrences (40%) for males and 68 occurrences (38%) for females. Table 9 summarises the frequencies and percentages of EXPLs among male participants in all 10 situations.

Table 9: *Frequencies and Percentages of EXPLs (males)*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
EXPLs	4	2	8	5	9	5	8	5	10	6	9	5	4	2	2	1	9	5	4	2

As can be seen from Table 9 above, EXPLs were employed in all 10 situations. Situation 5 (failure to honour a friend's dinner invitation) had the highest number of occurrences ($n = 10$; 6%) followed by situations 3 (missing an exam), 6 (missing childhood friend's wedding), and 9 (failure to return a library book on time), in that order ($n = 9$; 5%). Situation 1 (borrowing a book from a friend) and situation 10 (borrowing a CD) had equal numbers of frequencies and percentages ($n = 4$; 2%) in each case. Of the 10 male participants, only two (1%) explained to the child why they had broken their promise in situation 8. This may be accounted for in terms of the child's age; the speaker (S) may have assumed that the child would not understand the reason(s) and possibly these would not matter to the child. Alternatively, it can be interpreted in terms of the child's status; it could be that the young child is lower-status and is not viewed as deserving an explanation. In either case, the use of EXPLs was evaded and the speaker (S) chooses to use a different strategy (such as REPR), as we will see later.

The use of EXPLs among females was also found to be similar to that of males. As Table 10 below demonstrates, female participants furnished a considerable number of EXPLs in almost all of the 10 situations. Just like males, female participants perceived situation 5 (failure to attend dinner: $n = 10$; 6%) as requiring an explanation to reduce the impact of the offence committed. Similarly, situations 2 (meeting a friend at the library: $n = 10$; 6%), 3 (missing an exam: $n = 10$; 6%), and 6 (missing childhood friend's wedding: $n = 10$; 6%) also constituted serious offences, demanding EXPLs on the part of female participants. Of the 10 female participants, only one participant furnished an explanation to the child as to why she could not keep her promise. Again, the lowest frequency of EXPLs in situation 8 may be attributed to the child's age and therefore respondents sought other alternatives (e.g., REPR). Unlike males, some of whom gave a reason, female participants did not feel they needed to provide an explanation for situation 7 (running into an old woman) but instead employed other apology strategies (i.e., RESP and REPR).

Table 10: *Frequencies and Percentages of EXPLs (females)*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
EXPLs	5	3	10	6	10	6	9	5	10	6	10	6	0	0	1	1	6	3	7	4

4.2.4 Offer of Repair

Offer of Repair (REPR) is another apology strategy observed in the apology exchanges ($n = 350$) analysed in this study. In this strategy, the speaker (S) wishes to repair the situation through offering some course of action in the form of compensation either instantly or in the near future (to be arranged). In situation 1 (borrowing a book from a friend) for example, one of the participants responded, as “*rah-? af tarilakakitab-an d3 adid*” (JA for ‘I will buy you a new book’). This example constitutes an offer of repair (REPR), in which the apologisee offers the addressee the opportunity of being compensated for the damage caused by the

apologiser's child (i.e., drawing on several pages of the book). “*taʃ aniroohnef taribuzahal?* ” (JA for let's go get an ice cream now') is another example of instant REPR as opposed to 'in the near future' (to be arranged) for the previous example.

Of the 350 apology exchanges analysed, REPR was found to have a frequency of 44 occurrences, which constitutes 13% of the five apology strategies proposed by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns. Twenty-three occurrences (14%) were employed by males and the remainder ($n = 21$; 12%) by female participants. Table 11 below presents the frequencies and percentages of the use of REPR among male participants.

Table 11: *Frequencies and Percentages of REPR (males)*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
REPR	6	4	3	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	3	2	0	0	6	4

Male participants offered more REPRs in situation 1 (borrowing a book from a friend) and situation 10 (borrowing a CD from a friend), each of which had a frequency of six occurrences (4%) evenly. Next came situations 2 (meeting a friend at the library), 7 (running into an old woman), and 8 (breaking a promise made to a child), each of which recorded three occurrences (2% each). Noticeably, male participants did not offer REPR in situations 3 (missing an exam), 5 (missing a dinner invitation), 6 (missing a friend's wedding) and 9 (borrowing a book from the library). This indicates that REPR may be described as time-dependent. In other words, the situations observed to have elicited the highest number of frequencies are those in which the violation had already taken place, so that repair would not have reduced its impact; other strategies (e.g., EXPL) may be more beneficial and plausible in such situations.

For female participants, situation 8 (breaking a promise to a little child) had the highest number of REPR instances ($n = 6$; 3%). Females also offered more REPR in situation 1 (borrowing a book from a friend: $n = 5$; 3%) and situation 10 (borrowing a CD from a friend: $n = 5$; 3%). Next came situations 7 (running into an old woman: $n = 3$; 2%), 2 (meeting a friend at the library: $n = 1$; 1%), and 4 (meeting with the English teacher: $n = 1$; 1%). Interestingly enough, female participants, just like male participants, did not offer any type of REPR in situations 3, 5, 6 or 9. In fact, this finding (i.e., absence of repair in these four situations) confirms our intuition that REPR is time-sensitive. Further information can be gathered from Table 12 below.

Table 12: *Frequencies and Percentages of REPR (females)*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
REPR	5	3	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	2	6	3	0	0	5	3

4.2.5 Promise of Forbearance

The last apology strategy observed in the participants' responses consisted of a promise of forbearance [better behaviour in the future] (henceforth FORB); that is, a promise made by the apologisee not to repeat the offence. FORB indicates remorse on the part of the apologisee and further assures the addressee (or hearer H) that the violation committed is less likely to happen in the future. In the data analysed, "*ma rah ? aſ id-ha*" (I will not do it again; see situation 8) constitutes an example of FORB in which the speaker (S) promises/commits to the hearer (H) that the offence will not happen in the future.

By contrast with the apology strategy of EXPLs, which constituted the highest number of occurrences ($n = 135$), the FORB type apology had the lowest frequency ($n = 22$), constituting only 6% of the total of the five apology strategies proposed by CCSARP (Blum Kulka and Olshtain 1984). Female participants had

12 instances of FORB, while males had only 10 such exchanges. Table 13 below demonstrates the use of FORB by male participants across all 10 situations.

Table 13: *Frequencies and Percentages of FORB (males)*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
FORB	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	4	1	1	2	1

Thus, the use of FORB among male participants could be seen in only four situations, with situation 8 (breaking a promise to a little child) displaying the highest number of instances ($n = 6$; 4%), followed by situations 10 (borrowing a book from the library: $n = 2$; 1%), 4 (meeting with the English professor: $n = 1$; 1%) and 9 (borrowing a book from the library: $n = 1$; 1%). FORB was not observed in any of the remaining situations. This situation (i.e., lowest frequency of occurrences) suggests that the speaker(s) avoids the use of FORB due to fear of causing damage to his/her own face. That being so, avoiding FORB is probably deemed optimal in such situations for male participants.

Table 14 below displays the frequencies and percentages of FORB among female participants.

Table 14: *Frequencies and Percentages of FORB (females)*

Situation	1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8		9		10	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
FORB	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	4	0	0	4	2

Female participants also seemed to have utilised FORB the least, exhibiting similar tendencies to those of males (compare Table 13 with Table 14). Of the 10 situations, females employed FORB in only three: 8 (breaking a promise to a little child: $n = 7$; 4%), 10 (borrowing a CD from a friend: $n = 4$; 2%), and 4

(meeting with the English professor: $n = 1$; 1%). In all other situations (i.e., 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9), female participants did not employ the apology strategy of FORB. The highest number of instances in situation 8 may be accounted for in terms of the degree of guilt being intensified due to the child's age. It is possible that participants (of both genders) would have employed a smaller amount of FORB had the addressee been an adult.

3.3 Overall Uses: General Remarks

Figure 1 below summarises the overall frequencies and percentages for individual apology strategies analysed in this study.

Figure 1: *Overall Usage of Apology Strategies*

Overall, participants of both genders employed five apology strategies (IFID, RESP, EXPL, REPR, and FORB), but to different degrees, probably indicating their preference for one strategy (or set of strategies) over another. As can be seen from Figure 1 above, the use of EXPLs was seen in the highest number of exchanges ($n = 135$; 39%) followed by IFIDs ($n = 126$; 36%). This probably suggests that participants often associate the use of IFIDs with some other strategy – in this study, with EXPLs. It was observed that most participants used IFIDs along with giving a reason for the offence committed. This tendency to combine these two apology strategies was visible throughout the data. “I am sorry for being

late; there was an accident” brings together two apology strategies. The first statement “I am sorry” is an instance of an IFID and the second statement “there was an accident” functions as an explanation (EXPL) as it gives an account for the violation committed. The third most frequently used apology strategy was observed to be the use of an offer of repair (REPR). The overall number of occurrences was 44 instances, making up 13% of all apology exchanges reported. Admitting responsibility (RESP) had a frequency of 23 instances (7%). A promise of forbearance had the lowest frequency ($n = 22$; 6%) in all the 350 apology exchanges analysed. Thus, it is probably safe to assume that Arabic speakers have a tendency to apologise through the use of IFIDs along with EXPLs.

Another general remark about the behaviour of Arabs subjects regarding apology is that they tended to avoid accepting responsibility and making promises of forbearance. This is probably due to the fact that these two strategies cause them to lose more face than any of the other strategies. These findings are in harmony with the majority of the studies cited in this paper and provide further confirmatory evidence to support the notion that apology strategies are universal: they are basically the same cross-culturally and cross-linguistically and differences are not significant. For example, Nureddeen (2008:290) notes that taking responsibility is “most explicit, most direct and strongest apology strategy”.

In order to see whether gender has a role in choice of type of apology strategy, the frequencies and percentages need to be calculated for each gender. As seen in Table 14 below, male participants had the highest number of exchanges involving the use of EXPLs ($n = 67$; 40%) followed by IFIDs ($n = 56$; 33%). Offer of repair (REPR) came in third place ($n = 23$; 14%), followed by RESP ($n = 13$; 8%). The apology strategy of FORB came in last, scoring only 6% of all the apology exchanges analysed ($n = 10$).

Table 15: *Overall Usage of Apology Strategies among Arab Male Participants*

Type of Strategy	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
Explanation (EXPL)	67	40
IFID	56	33
Offer Of Repair (REPR)	23	14
Responsibility (RESP)	13	8
Forbearance (FORB)	10	6
Total	169	100

The female participants exhibited results similar to those of the males. As Table 16 demonstrates, the use of IFIDs along with EXPLs constituted 77% of all apology exchanges observed. Apparently, female participants had more instances of IFIDs ($n = 70$; 39%) than EXPLs ($n = 68$; 38%). REPR came in third ($n = 21$; 12%), followed by FORB ($n = 12$; 7%) and RESP ($n = 10$; 6%). The results are given in Table 16 below.

Table 16: *Overall Usage of Apology Strategies among Arab Female Participants*

Type of Strategy	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
IFID	70	39
Explanation (EXPL)	68	38
Offer Of Repair (REPR)	21	12
Forbearance (FORB)	12	7
Responsibility (RESP)	10	6
Total	181	100

It is worth noting that the use of IFIDs along with EXPLs (or vice versa), irrespective of the difference in the number of occurrences between the two genders, still gave the same percentage (i.e., 77%). In the case of male participants, the frequency of EXPLs was 76 and that of IFIDs was 56, both of which constitute 77% of the five strategies. Similarly, females employed 70 instances of IFIDs and

68 instances of EXPLs, both of which still make up 77% of the five apology strategies employed by females. This seemingly true match may be significant, yet deceptive, as one might assume that the use of IFIDs and EXPLs is identical as between males and females. Or, even worse, one might conclude that women apologise more than men, arguing from a higher number of occurrences of the use of IFIDs by females ($n = 70$) compared to men ($n = 67$).

To eliminate the possibility of any wrong assumptions, three statistical measures were performed: (1) means (M s) were calculated, (2) standard deviations (SD s) were examined (i.e., compared) for both genders to see if the two sets of data could be effectively compared and (3) a t-test was performed. The results of these statistical measures are reported in Table 17 below.

Table 17: *Means and Standard Deviations of Male and Female Respondents*

Males	F	%	Females	F	%	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	P -Value
IFIDs	56	33%	IFID	70	39%	63	7	0.95
RESP	13	8%	RESP	10	6%	11.5	1.5	0.81
EXPLs	67	40%	EXPL	68	38%	67.5	0.5	0.65
REPR	23	14%	REPR	21	12%	22	1	0.75
FORB	10	6%	FORB	12	7%	11	1	0.75

* $P < .05$

As Table 17 clearly presents, the use of EXPLs had the highest frequency ($M = 67.5$; $SD = 0.5$), followed by the use of IFIDs ($M = 63$; $SD = 7$). The use of REPR had a greater frequency ($M = 22$) than the use of REPS ($M = 11.5$). Nevertheless, the standard deviation of RESP was higher ($SD = 1.5$) than the standard deviation of REPR. The use of FORB had the lowest mean and standard deviation of all the five strategies employed ($M = 11$; $SD = 1$). Most significantly, no statistically significant results ($p < .05$) were established for the use of IFIDs and

EXPLs as between males and females. It is probably a matter of ranking, with the two strategies competing for the first place. In other words, the strategy EXPLs is ranked higher than IFIDs for males than it is for females. By contrast, the use of IFIDs is ranked higher than EXPLs among females than it is for males. Additionally, differences in the categories REPR, RESP and FORB were also found to be statistically insignificant. In a word, gender was not found to affect the responses elicited by male and female respondents in this study.

4. Conclusion

The overall purpose of this study was to achieve two objectives: (1) to provide a brief, yet detailed account of how apologies are realised by native speakers of Arabic and (2) to determine whether or not gender plays a role in the use of apology strategies employed by native speakers of Arabic. As for the first objective, the data analysed have shown that native speakers of Arabic (of three representative varieties: JA, SA and EA) tend to employ a diverse range of strategies when apologising. Some strategies were used more frequently than others. As per the data analysed, five major categories were observed. These were as follows:

- (1) Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFIDs): *ʔ anaʔ asef (I am sorry);*
- (2) Explanations (EXPLs): *kan fi ʔadiθ (There was an accident);*
- (3) Taking Responsibility (RESP): *ʔ al-ʔaqʔ ali (it was my fault);*
- (4) Offer of Repair (REPR): *sa-ʔ af tarilakakitaḅ-an ʔ adid-an (I will buy a new book);*
- (5) A Promise of Forbearance (FORB): *lanafʔ aluhamarat-an uʔra (I will not do it again).*

As for the second goal of this paper, the researcher initially hypothesised that there would be more differences than similarities between males and females in their use of apology strategies due to gender-related issues and in light of previously conducted research that claimed more differences than similarities. Upon analysing the data collected, no statistically significant differences were found between males' and females' responses in terms of apology and apology strategies employed in all 10 apology situations collected via the DCT questionnaire. Accordingly, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. Put differently, the data analysed exhibited more similarities than differences, contrary to the researcher's hypothesis and previously conducted research in Arabic (e.g., Bataineh and Bataineh 2006; Abu Humeid 2013). This is not to say that differences between the two groups (males and females) were non-existent. Indeed, respondents exhibited differences in their perception of the 10 situations presented, but such differences are minimal and do not constitute sufficient evidence to accept the null hypothesis as true. Thus the findings of this study lead us to adopt the view that similarities were more prevalent than differences among all participants irrespective of their gender. The similarities can be summarised here as follows:

- Arab males and females employ a wide array of apology strategies such as IFIDs, EXPLs, REPR, etc.;
- Arab males and females tend to combine several apology strategies when expressing their apologies;
- The most frequently used strategy is a combination of IFIDs and EXPLs, with males ranking EXPLs higher than IFIDs and the opposite being true for females;
- Arab males and females tend to offer little repair in situations that have already taken place and therefore seek other apology strategies (e.g., EXPLs);
- Arab males and females are similar in offering more repair (REPR) when dealing with children;

- Arab males and females equally avoid the use of RESP and FORB, as they are perceived as more face-threatening than other apology strategies.

4.1 Significance

The study is deemed significant for at least three reasons. First, the study adds to the volume of research dealing with the pragmatic phenomenon of apology cross-culturally. Second, the study has furnished confirmatory evidence that use of apology strategies seems to be universal cross-culturally. Finally and most significantly, no other studies, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, have tackled three varieties of Arabic in one single work. This can thus be regarded as a modest contribution to the subject of apology within the rigorous field of cross-cultural pragmatics.

4.2 Limitations & Recommendations

Despite its significance, this study may be limited in the following aspects. First, the sample ($n = 20$) is rather limited and therefore the results cannot be generalised to all native speakers of Arabic. Another limitation concerns the use of the DCT in terms of its effectiveness in capturing naturally occurring speech. Further research is therefore needed in this area. It is highly recommended that future studies employ a combination of methods (e.g., DCT, role-play interviews and naturally observed instances) to arrive at better and more accurate results concerning the realisation of apology and apology strategies among native speakers of Arabic. Moreover, the researcher recommends that further research be conducted to examine other social variables such as age.

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Appendix A

(English version of the Discourse Completion Task)

Please read the following situations carefully, imagine yourself in such situations and write down as exactly as possible how you would react to each of the situations described below. There are no correct or incorrect responses. Please be assured that all responses to this survey are completely confidential. The results of the questionnaire will be used only in my personal research and will not be published.

Section I: Demographic Information (Please circle one)

Age	Gender	Degree (Highest Earned)
1. 18-29	1. Male	1. High School (or lower)
2. 30-39	2. Female	2. Bachelor
3. 40-49		3. Master
4. 50-older		4. PhD

Section II: Imagined Life Situations (Please respond to the best of your abilities)

1. You borrowed a book from your classmate. Your child (or little brother, sister, niece, nephew) drew on several pages of it. *What would you say to your friend when you returned the book?*
.....
.....
2. You were supposed to meet your classmate at the library at noon. You did not get there till 12:30pm. What would you say to your classmate?
.....
.....
3. You had an exam scheduled on Monday. You were ill and could not make to class. What would you say to your professor when you saw him/her next time?
.....
.....

4. You had an appointment at 10:30am with your English teacher to discuss the topic for your final paper. Because of a traffic jam (caused by an accident on the interstate), you were 25 minutes late. Luckily, your English teacher was still waiting for you in his/her office. What would you say to your teacher?
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5. A friend of yours called to invite you over for dinner and you accepted the invitation. Right before you were about to head out to his/her place, your mother called for an urgent matter that demanded your physical presence. *How would you apologize to your friend?*
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6. Your best friend (from childhood) was getting married on Friday. You had arranged to attend the ceremony, but unfortunately your father was hospitalised hours before the ceremony. *What would say (i.e. apologize) to your childhood friend?*
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7. Your math class starts at 8am sharp. It took you a while to find a parking spot. Luckily, you found a spot, but it was too far from your classroom. While rushing to the classroom, you pushed an old lady in the parking lot and unfortunately she fell to the ground. How would you apologise to her?
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8. You promised your little brother/sister (nephew or niece) to take them out for ice cream on Saturday between noon and 5pm, since you are off work on Saturdays and Sundays. However, your work supervisor called and requested that you work on that particular Saturday because two of your co-workers had called in sick. You honoured your supervisor's request and totally forgot your promise to your little brother/sister (nephew or niece). What would you say to them?
-
-
9. You checked out a book from the library that was due (to be returned) on Monday. You totally forgot and did not remember till Wednesday – the day you got an email reminder from the librarian. To avoid late fee charges, what would you say to the librarian?

10. You borrowed a CD from your friend. You were supposed to give it back in exactly one week (i.e., seven days). Two weeks (14 days) went by and you had not returned the CD. Your friend saw you at a local community gathering and asked for his/her CD. *How would you apologise?*

Appendix B

(Arabic version of the Discourse Completion Task)

يرجى قراءة الحالات التالية بعناية فائقة. تخيل نفسك/نفسكي في مثل هذه السيناريوهات وأكتب/اكتبي تماما كيف سيكون الرد في مثل هذه الحالات المُمبنة أدناه. لا توجد اجابات صحيحة أو اجابات خاطئة. سيتم استخدام نتائج الاستبيان فقط لأبحاثي الشخصية ولن يتم نشرها.

القسم الأول: معلومات ديموغرافية (يرجى وضع دائرة)

الدرجة العلمية العليا: (1) الثانوية (أو أقل) (2) بكالوريوس (3) ماجستير (4) دكتوراه.
العمر: (1) 18-29، (2) 30-39، (3) 40-49، (4) 50 أو أكبر.

القسم الثاني: مواقف مُتخيلة من الحياة اليومية

- كنت/كنتي اقترضت/اقترضتي كتابا من زميلك/زميلتك. لسوء الحظ، قام طفلك (أو أخوك/أخوكي الصغير أو ابن أخوك كنت/كنتي أختك ... الخ) بالرسم على عدد من صفحات الكتاب. ماذا ستقول/ستقولين لصديقك/صديقتك عندما ستعيد/ستعيدين الكتاب؟
- كان من المفترض أن تلتقي زميلك/زميلتك في المكتبة في تمام الساعة الثانية عشرة ظهرا. لم تستطع/تستطيعين الوصول للمكتبة حتى الساعة 12:30. ماذا ستقول لزميل/زميلتك؟
- . كان لديك/لديكي امتحان يوم الاثنين. للأسف كنت/كنتي مريضا/مريضة، ولم تستطع/تستطيعين الحضور. ماذا ستقول/ستقولين لأستاذك عندما تراه في المرة القادمة؟

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4. كان لديك/ لديكي موعد الساعة 10:30 صباحا مع معلم اللغة الإنجليزية لمناقشة موضوع البحث الخاص بك. بسبب أزمة مرورية خانقة (ناجمة عن وقوع حادث على الطريق السريع)، تأخرت/تأخرتي 25 دقيقة. لحسن الحظ، مدرس اللغة الإنجليزية كان لا يزال في انتظارك/انتظارك في مكتبه. ماذا ستقول/ستقولين لمعلمك؟
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-
5. اتصل بك/بكي صديق/صديقة ودعاك/دعتكي لتناول العشاء وأنت/أنتي قبلت الدعوة. عندما كنت/كنتي على وشك الخروج لتلبية الدعوة، تلقيت/تلقيتي اتصالا من والدك/والداتكي لأمر مهم يتطلب حضورك/حضوركي الشخصي. كيف ستعذر لصديقك أو صديقتك؟
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6. صديقك أو صديقتك (منذ الطفولة) سيتزوج/ستتزوج يوم الجمعة. كنت قد رتب/رتبت لحضور الحفل، ولكن للأسف كان والدك/والدكي قد أدخل المستشفى قبل الحفل بساعات محدودة. كيف ستعذر لصديق/صديقة طفولتك؟
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7. يبدأ درس الرضيات في تمام الساعة 8:00 صباحا. استغرق الأمر منك/منكي بعض الوقت للعثور على مكان لتصطف/لتصطفي سيارتك. لحسن الحظ، وجدت/وجدتي مكانا لكن المسافة بعيدة عن الصف. تطلب الأمر منك/منكي أن تهرع/تهرع لي للصف مما تسبب أن دفعت/دفعني امرأة مسنة وسقطت على الأرض. كيف ستعذر/ستعذرين منها؟
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8. وعدت/وعدتي أخوك/أخوكي الصغير (أو ابن أو ابنة أخوك/أخوكي) بشراء الآيس كريم (البوظة) يوم السبت بين الظهر والخامسة مساء كونه يوم عطلة لديك/لديكي. صادف أن اتصل مديرك في العمل وطلب منك القيام بمهام موظف آخر تغيب عن عمله. من غير قصد، قمت بتلبية طلب مديرك ونسيت تماما وعدك لأخوك الصغير (أو ابن أو ابنة أخوك/أخوكي). ماذا ستقول له أو لها؟
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9. استعرت كتابا من المكتبة وكان من المقرر أن تعيده يوم الاثنين. لانشغالك بأمر آخر، فقد نسيت تماما ولم تتذكر اعادته حتى يوم الأربعاء -وهو نفس اليوم الذي تلقيت فيه رسالة تذكير من أمين المكتبة. لتجنب غرامات التأخير، ماذا ستقول لأمين المكتبة؟
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10. من صديقك وكان من المفترض عليك أن تعيده خلال أسبوع واحد (أي سبعة أيام). مر أسبوعين (14 CD اقترضت . كيف ستعذر/ستعذرين منه أو CD يوما) ولم تقم باعادته. بالصدفة رآك صديقك في السوق وطلب منك إعادة ال منها؟

.....
.....