

## Interlanguage Pragmatics

### Transfer in the production of the speech act of apology in English by Algerian learners

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#### Abstract:

The present study attempts to investigate pragmatic transfer in interlanguage apologies performed by two groups of Algerian EFL learners. The findings show that pragmatolinguistic transfer is operative in the wording of the strategies and word by word translation from learners' first language. The sociopragmatic type is at play in the use of apology strategies which reflects the mother culture's assumptions in weighing the situational variables. Linguistic proficiency does not give remarkable advantage to the high-proficient learners over the low-proficient. In addition to transfer, other factors impact the interlanguage production: lack of pragmatic competence, interlanguage-specific features and language constraints.

**Keywords:** Algerian; EFL learners; interlanguage; apologies; pragmatic transfer; pragmatolinguistic; sociopragmatic.

### اللغة البينية تداولية

## ظاهرة النقل عند استعمال تدارك فعل كلامي اللغة الانجليزية من طرف الطلبة الجزائريين

#### ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في اللغة البينية التداولية في استعمال الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية عند " الاعتذار " كفعل كلامي لمجموعتين من الطلبة الجزائريين. أظهرت النتائج رسدا لظاهرة النقل بنوعيه: التداولي-اللغوي الذي تجلى في توظيف العناصر اللغوية والترجمة الحرفية من اللغة الأم والتداولي-الاجتماعي الذي تجلى في توظيف إستراتيجيات الاعتذار التي أظهرت أن تقييم المتعلمين للمتغيرات السياقية كان الى حد كبير في اتجاه اللغة/الثقافة الأم . وبينت الدراسة كذلك أن متغير الكفاءة اللغوية لم يعط أفضلية واضحة للمجموعة الأكثر تحكما في اللغة الهدف على حساب الأخرى. إضافة لظاهرة النقل، أثرت عوامل أخرى في أداء المتعلمين على مستوى اللغة البينية: ضعف الكفاءة التداولية، صفات خاصة باللغة البينية وأخطاء لغوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الجزائريون؛ طلبة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ اللغة البينية؛ الاعتذار؛ النقل التداولي؛ التداولي-اللغوي؛ التداولي-الاجتماعي .

## Introduction

Given the fact that the production of speech acts and speech act sets vary across languages and cultures, successful communication in gate-keeping encounters for second and foreign language learners is a challenging task. Due to such cross-cultural divergence, miscommunication and pragmatic failure are highly likely, especially for culturally-sensitive speech acts like apologies. Interlanguage pragmatic (henceforth ILP) studies of learners' use, perception and acquisition of speech acts have been conducted since decades ago. The present study investigates the interlanguage (henceforth IL) of Algerian EFL learners at the pragmatic level. In this perspective, the present study aims at uncovering its regularities through addressing three main questions:

- What are the manifestations of transfer in the ILP of Algerian learners when performing apologies in English?
- What are the factors, other than transfer, that influence Algerian learners' apologies in English?
- What is the correlation between linguistic proficiency and pragmatic performance/transfer?

### 1. Literature Review

#### 1.1. Apologies and Variables Affecting their Production

The speech act of apology is among the so-called face-threatening acts which affect the 'public self-image'<sup>1</sup> of the offender as well as the victim. Bergman and Kasper define apology as a "compensatory action to an offence in the doing of which the S [the speaker] was causally involved and is costly to the H [the hearer]."<sup>2</sup>

Many factors affect the speakers' choice of the linguistic items in phrasing the apologetic formula. In the present paper, we shed light on three ones. These are power, social distance and the severity of offense or infraction. The factor of power (P) is defined as "the vertical disparity between the participants in a hierarchical structure."<sup>3</sup> The variable of social distance (SD) is "the degree of familiarity and solidarity [speakers] share, or might be thought to share."<sup>4</sup> As for the degree of infraction (I) or *severity of offence*, it has to do with *object of regret* (Coulmas, 1981:75, as cited in Deutschmann).<sup>5</sup>

#### 1.2. Linguistic Proficiency and Transfer in IL Production

Kasper (200) defines pragmatic transfer (henceforth PT) as the influence of language(s) known to the learner while trying to perform, understand or learn information in the target language (TL). It falls into two kinds.<sup>6</sup> The first type is pragmalinguistic that is related to the influence of the first language (L1) in the use of linguistic structures i.e. form-function mapping. The second type is sociopragmatic which is operative when L1's social assumptions impact the evaluation of situations in TL regarding the interpretation and the production of language acts.<sup>7</sup> These two types of PT lead to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

Based on the assumption that the linguistically more proficient learners are better able to transfer linguistic structures from L1 to TL, many studies have investigated to what extent this holds good for their test-takers. Some studies have proved this tendency while for others it has been deemed limited. As an example, Tagushi (2006)<sup>9</sup> dealt with linguistic appropriateness in the realisation of the speech act of request by Japanese learners of English. The author suggests that proficiency fosters better quality of speech act in terms of the appropriateness, grammaticality and comprehensibility of linguistic expressions. Adversely, Robinson (1992)<sup>10</sup> studied refusals as performed by ESL Japanese learners. For the author, the low-proficient learners were prone to pragmatic transfer of the Japanese style; meanwhile, the high-proficient showed an ability to approximate the American refusals.

### 1.3 Studies on Interlanguage Apologies

Numerous studies dealt with IL production of the apologising act, though few of them focused on transfer and only made reference to it in interpreting their data. Jung<sup>11</sup> investigated IL apologies of Korean ESL learners using the role-play for data collection. The results suggested that proficiency did not seem to positively correlate with L2 (second language) performance. Further, English NSs and IL-users differed in the use of lexico-grammatical and pragmatic appropriateness. In other words, Korean learners showed 'verbose' transfer of L1 linguistic and pragmatic knowledge and lack of awareness of the appropriate social norms as well as language means related to the apologetic behaviour. For instance, they used the *apology* strategy as frequent as NSs, but with inappropriate linguistic forms often. In addition, they could not use the *explanation* strategy 'succinctly and affectively' in L2 and, thus, fell in 'verbosity' (violated the maxim of quantity). As for the *acknowledgement* strategy, it was underused; the author related this to the influence of L1 and, more frequently, the uncertainty about L2 sociolinguistic rules. Sabaté and Curell i Gotor<sup>12</sup> dealt with the apologising act with a focus on the developmental issues in terms of *IFIDs* and *intensification* with reference to transfer and TL behaviour of three Catalan learner groups: Advanced (A), proficient (P) and intermediate (I). The findings suggested that the increase in the proficiency level led to decrease in 'non-L2-like' pragmalinguistic performance, but it was not linear or straightforward as group (A) might face difficulties the group (P) did not. Learners have the same access to strategies as NSs. Further, linguistic proficiency may lead to overuse of 'lexical transparent' *IFIDs* (the overuse of *I'm sorry* and *excuse me*, as they are acquired first). It was noticed that group (A) moves toward more newly acquired formulae, while (P) overuses ones like *forgive me*. It was only (A) group that marked politeness by *informality* and *register*; they also showed awareness toward intensification. As for transfer, group (P) exhibited more sociopragmatic transfer, while (A) and (I) exhibited more pragmalinguistic transfer. Al-Zumor<sup>13</sup> investigated apologies realisation in Arabic, English and in learners' production. Pragmatic transfer was evident in the use more than one *IFID*, the employment of various terms of address and the avoidance of certain semantic formulae. This, for the author, was also a by-product of a lack of exposure to L2. Learners, for instance, used forms like *I am very very/really really/so so sorry*. This resembled their use of the

repeated form *jiddan* (*very/so/really*) in L1. As for the cross-cultural part of the study, the author reported that Arabs and English NSs differed linguistically in responding to the three situations due disparity in estimating the severity of offense. It was also noticed that Arabs were more inclined to admitting their deficiency in order to set things right without embarrassment. On contrary, in the Anglo-Saxon culture this was discredited as they believe in “the immunity of one’s private self.” (p. 28); in the Arab culture “people are more publically available to each other” (p. 28).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. The Tool

In order to collect data related to apologies’ production, we have employed a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). The DCT is a written instrument which provides test-takers with descriptions of real situations with spaces to respond using would-be appropriate apologies. The Arabic and the English versions of the DCT include seven situations which are designed so as to measure the effect of the already-mentioned variables (Table 1):

SITUs	Descriptions	P (S/H)	SD	I
1	Apologising to a university professor for forgetting a book at home	<i>low</i>	close	low
2	Apologising to a young sister for not helping in homework	<i>high</i>	close	low
3	Apologising to a classmate for forgetting a novel	<i>equal</i>	close	low
4	Apologising to a close friend for forgetting a get-together for a second time	<i>equal</i>	<i>close</i>	high
5	Apologising for stepping on a lady’s foot	<i>equal</i>	<i>distant</i>	low
6	Apologising for fallen bags from a rack on a passenger	<i>equal</i>	<i>distant</i>	<i>high</i>
7	Apologising for dialling a wrong number	<i>equal</i>	<i>distant</i>	<i>low</i>

**Table 1: Description of the Scenarios and Variables**

As all the other data collection methods, DCTs have their own merits as well as shortcomings. On the positive side, they allow researchers to access large quantity of data in a reasonable time. Cohen<sup>14 15</sup> is among the defendants of the DCT as a suitable speech act data collection tool. For him, “as long as the elicitation [via the DCT] yields data that could reflect appropriate native-speaker performance, such data can make a contribution.<sup>16</sup>” Furthermore, Cohen argues that if we attempt to seek natural data for apology, as an example, we are likely to have apologies extended to several moves that may also co-occur with other speech acts like requests and compliments, while “none of these speech acts is direct enough to be readily perceptible, even to the native interlocutor.<sup>17</sup>” Nonetheless, this technique has its share of criticism due to certain shortcomings. For instance, Garcés-conejos questions the authenticity of data collected by DCTs and considers them as rather intuitively-based.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.2 Participants

In order to prove the existence of transfer, we need the collection of three types of data (Ellis, 1994).<sup>19</sup> These are apologies performed by native speakers in both L1 and TL and apologies performed by learners of the TL (Table 2). Respondents who provide Arabic and English Interlanguage data are students from the Department of Arabic and the Department of English respectively (University of Constantine 1). As for ANSs, they are Americans and British who have been contacted by e-mails. By chance, in all groups, females outnumber males. As for the learner groups, they have never been in a country where English is spoken as a native language.

Number	Label	Background
32	ANSs: Algerian Native Speakers of Arabic	Students of Arabic
20	ENSs: Native Speakers of English	From various backgrounds
36	Freshmen	First year Licence students
32	Seniors	First year Master students

**Table 2: Participants of the Study**

## 2.3. The Coding Scheme

The model used in the present study is based on the models developed by Cohen and Olshtain,<sup>20</sup> Olshtain and Cohen,<sup>21</sup> Blum-Kulka and Olshtain<sup>22</sup> and Blum-Kulka et al.<sup>23</sup> The following strategies are the speech act sets of the apology in English. Illustrations are taken from our English data whenever possible.

- **Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs):** formulaic routinised expressions that are used to explicitly indicate the intent of the apologiser. IFIDs fall into two sub-types:
  - a. An expression of regret: *I am sorry, excuse me and I apologise*
  - b. A request for forgiveness and accepting the apology: *forgive me and accept my apology*
- **Explanation or account:** the apologiser may opt for expressing reasons and/or the circumstances of his violation trying to get the hearer to accept his apology. It can be:
  - a. Explicit: *I was in rush this morning and forgot your book at home.*
  - b. Implicit: *I had to take care of something.*
- **Taking on responsibility**
  - a. Explicit self-blame: *It is my fault.*
  - b. Lack of intent: *It just went right out of my mind.*
  - c. Expression of self-deficiency: *I completely forgot.*
  - d. Expression of embarrassment: *I feel terrible about this.*
  - e. Self-dispraise: *I am an idiot. Forgot the book. Didn't make myself a note.*
  - f. Justify hearer: *it is understandable that you are upset.*
  - g. Refusal to acknowledge guilt. This is in turn divided into three sub-types:
    - i. Denial of responsibility: *It wasn't my fault.*
    - ii. Blame hearer: *you are standing in the way.*
    - iii. Pretend to be offended: *I'm the one to be offended.*

- **Concern for the hearer:** *are you alright?*
  - **Offer of repair:** *I will definitely bring it to you tomorrow.*
3. Promise of Forbearance: *I promise it won't happen again.*

## Results and Discussion

### 3.1. The Overall Use of Apology Strategies

Given the fact that we have unequal sample sizes in language groups, we relied on the mean ( $M$ ), i.e. *average*, in interpreting our statistics, since the  $M$  shows what score is typical to the group as a whole. Starting with the overall use of apology strategies, ANSs were inclined to using more apology semantic formulae than ENSs ( $M=0.26$  and  $0.17$  respectively). This in line with the findings of Hussein and Hammouri<sup>24</sup> stating that ENSs (American) seem to use concise apologies, with single expression of apology; on contrary, Arabs (Jordanians) were likely to opt for more elaborate apologies, using combinations of three strategies (p. 46). As for IL-users, freshmen employed more strategies than ENSs and seniors seem to approximate L1 ( $M=0.33$  and  $0.24$  respectively). This was understood as a concern about explicitness.

As can be seen from Table 3, *IFIDs* are the most used across the four groups; ANSs opted for more ones than ENSs due to the frequent use of more than one (+1)*IFID* (e.g. *I beg your pardon (astasmihuka 3uthran) my teacher, I've forgotten to bring you the book, so excuse me (3uthran) once again*, SITU 1). The relative overuse of this strategy by IL-users was also attributed to transfer of this strategy (e.g. *hello sir, I am really sorry, because I forgot the book at home. I hope you forgive me and I promise I'll bring it tomorrow morning*, freshmen, SITU 1). *Explanation* strategy was relatively higher in Arabic data; this partially supports the claim stating that this semantic formula is L1-typical.<sup>25</sup> So far as the learner groups are concerned, freshmen opted for as many explanations as in L1 and seniors approximated TL.

N (Number) $M$ (Mean)	ANSs		ENSs		Freshmen		Seniors	
	% (N)	$M$						
IFIDs	58.23(237)	0.58	50.55(138)	0.51	55.25(284)	0.55	53.11(205)	0.53
Explanation	14.00(57)	0.14	10.62(29)	0.11	14.01(72)	0.14	9.59(37)	0.10
Responsibility	13.76(56)	0.14	10.26(28)	0.10	13.62(70)	0.14	7.51(29)	0.08
Concern	2.46(10)	0.02	7.33(20)	0.07	1.56(8)	0.02	14.77(57)	0.15
Repair	11.55(47)	0.12	20.15(55)	0.20	13.42(69)	0.13	13.73(53)	0.14
Forbearance	0.00(0)	0.00	1.10(3)	0.01	2.14(11)	0.02	1.30(5)	0.01
Total	100(407)	1.00	100(273)	1.00	100(514)	1.00	100(386)	1.00

**Table 3: Overall Use of Apology Strategies**

Turning to *Responsibility* strategy, it was relatively higher in Arabic data; this partially supports the claim that Arabs are more inclined to acknowledging responsibility as the immunity of one's self is not as highly valued as in the Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>26</sup> Freshmen were as liable to take on responsibility as in L1; meanwhile seniors relatively underused this strategy. *Concern* and *Repair* strategies were much more attested in English-native data than Arabic. This means, the Anglo-Saxons were more supportive to the H's face. So far as IL apologies are concerned, freshmen fell back on their L1 guidelines and so did

seniors, with the exception of *Concern* semantic formula that were overrepresented by freshmen. The influence of L1 on IL is clearly manifested in *Repair* strategy as learners underused this strategy. Conversely, as reported by Murphy,<sup>27</sup> American learners of Modern Standard Arabic tend to keep this strategy in their Arabic apologies at higher levels. *Forbearance* strategy was the least used.

Having considered the overall use of apology strategies, we currently shed light on type. We are not going to tackle all strategies, but only the ones in which variability has been apparently observed i.e. *IFIDs* and *Responsibility*. These ones Bergman and Kasper called 'canonical strategies'.<sup>28</sup> As it is displayed in Table 4, ANSs tend to use varied *IFIDs* striking balance between expressing regret (e.g. *aasif/aasifa=sorry*, uttered by a male and female speakers respectively), asking for forgiveness (e.g. *saamihni/samihiini=forgive me*, addressed to male and female speakers and requesting acceptance of the apology (e.g. *a3thirni=excuse me*). On the contrary, ENSs opted extensively for expressing regret using the conventionalised formulaic form (*I'm/I am*) *sorry*. Though IL-users extensively used *I'm sorry* to express regret, this was not understood as a sign of pragmatic competence as this *IFID* was judged as transparent. In a similar vein, Trosborg<sup>29</sup> attributed the frequent use of this pragmalinguistic form by Danish learners to accessibility. Moreover, the use of *excuse me* and *pardon me* by freshmen, mainly, was attributed to deficiency in pragmalinguistic competence i.e. confusion between *sorry* and *excuse me* (e.g. *Excuse me sir. I forgot your book at home. I will bring it tomorrow*, freshmen, SITU 1; *Excuse me, I've confused the numbers*, seniors, SITU 7). In L1, this *IFID* was only employed for attention cues than as a real apology. It was apparent that Learners tend to use *IFIDs* they know whether formal or informal than to accommodate them in accordance with scenarios.

	ANSs		ENSs		Freshmen		Seniors	
	%(N)	M	%(N)	M	%(N)	M	%(N)	M
(I'm) sorry	37.55(89)	0.38	87.68(121)	0.8	70.28(201)	0.70	83.25(174)	0.83
)			)	8	)		)	
Forgive me	31.22(74)	0.31	5.07(7)	0.0	8.04(23)	0.08	6.22(13)	0.06
)			)	5	)		)	
Excuse me	15.19(36)	0.15	3.62(5)	0.0	11.89(24)	0.12	2.87(6)	0.03
)			)	4	)		)	
(I beg your)	11.81(28)	0.12	0.72(1)	0.0	3.50(10)	0.03	0.48(1)	0.00
pardon	)		)	1	)		)	
I apologise	2.53(6)	0.03	2.17(3)	0.0	1.40(4)	0.01	1.44(3)	0.01
)			)	2	)		)	
(Accept)	0.42(1)	0.00	0.72(1)	0.0	4.20(12)	0.04	3.83(8)	0.04
My			)	1	)		)	
apologies			)		)		)	
Don't blame	0.84(2)	0.01	0.00(0)	0.0	0.70(2)	0.01	0.48(1)	0.00
me			)	0	)		)	
I'm afraid	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.0	0.00(0)	0.00	0.48(1)	0.00
)			)	0	)		)	
Others	0.42(1)	0.00	1.45(2)	0.0	0.00(0)	0.00	0.96(2)	0.01
)			)	1	)		)	
Total	100(237)	1.00	100(138)	1.0	100(286)	1.00	100(209)	1.00
)			)	0	)		)	

**Table 4: Overall Use of IFIDs**

Intensification was usually centred on *IFIDs* than any other strategy. Given the ritualistic nature of English *IFIDs*, intensification was more frequently used in TL than L1 ( $M=0.25$  vs.  $0.13$ ) as a warrant of sincerity.<sup>30</sup> Learners overused intensifiers, as they employed both L1-proper intensifiers, namely, *swearing*, +1*IFID* and *please* and TL-proper ones, namely, *adverbials*. It was also noticed that L1 and IL-users were more prone to intensifying strategies other than *IFIDs* (e.g. *Oh lady! I'm sorry. I really didn't see you*, seniors, SITU 5). On contrary, intensification in TL was centred on *IFIDs* (e.g. *I'm so sorry; I am terribly sorry; I'm really sorry*). We explained this as a concern about the circumstances of the offense and a concern about the illocution respectively.

	ANSs		ENSs		Freshmen		Seniors	
	%(N)	<i>M</i>	%(N)	<i>M</i>	%(N)	<i>M</i>	%(N)	<i>M</i>
Very	13.85(9)	0.14	2.46(3)	0.02	6.41(10)	0.06	2.00(3)	0.02
So	0.00(0)	0.00	37.70(46)	0.38	25.00(39)	0.25	30.67(46)	0.31
Really	6.15(4)	0.06	8.20(10)	0.08	15.38(24)	0.15	22.00(33)	0.22
Truly	0.00(0)	0.00	0.82(1)	0.01	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00
Deeply	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00	0.64(1)	0.01	0.00(0)	0.00
Terribly	0.00(0)	0.00	3.28(4)	0.03	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00
I'm afraid	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00	0.66(1)	0.01
Thousand	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00	0.67(1)	0.01
Swearing	6.15(4)	0.06	1.64(2)	0.02	3.21(5)	0.03	1.33(2)	0.01
(+1) IFID	58.46(38)	0.58	7.38(9)	0.07	26.92(42)	0.27	16.00(24)	0.16
Please	26.15(17)	0.26	4.10(5)	0.04	12.82(20)	0.13	14.67(22)	0.15
Emotional	1.54(1)	0.02	30.33(37)	0.30	8.33(13)	0.08	10.00(15)	0.10
Believe me	1.54(1)	0.02	0.00(0)	0.00	1.28(2)	0.01	2.67(4)	0.03
I Can't believe	0.00(0)	0.00	3.28(4)	0.03	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00
You have no idea	0.00(0)	0.00	0.82(1)	0.01	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00
Total	100(65)	1.00	100(122)	1.00	100(156)	1.00	100(150)	1.00

**Table 5: Overall Use of Intensifiers**

As it is shown in the above table, the use of +1 *IFID*, *lexical softeners* (equivalent of *please*), *adverbials* and *swearing* were the main means of intensification in L1. In TL, *adverbials* (*so*, *really*, *terribly*, *very* and *truly*) and *emotional expressions* are major means for intensification. As for *I can't believe* (or *you can't believe*) and *you have no idea*, they were considered TL-specific. As for learners, they favoured accessible ones: *adverbials* (*so*, *really* and *very*) and the marker *please*. They also opted for +1 *IFID*, *swearing* and *believe me*, we assume, under the influence of L1. In addition, they attempted to utilise emotional expressions. Given the fact that IL-intensifiers did not usually modify *IFIDs*, sincerity in IL-*IFIDs* was not always carried over.

**Examples: L1:** *By God/I swear (wallahii) I forgot it.* [SITU 1]

*?aasif jiddan/I'm very sorry* [SITU 1]

**TL:** *Oh my goodness. I completely forgot to bring it!* [SITU 3]

*Oh my gosh, I can't believe I forgot AGAIN.* [SITU 3]

**Freshmen:** *Sorry sir, I swear to bring it tomorrow.*

*Sorry ... Believe me I didn't notice you were behind me [SITU 5]*

**Seniors:** *Please, forgive me for forgetting the book. [SITU 1]*

*Believe me. I was busy ... I'm so sorry. [SITU 3]*

By way of summary, Table 6 shows sub-types of *Responsibility* strategy employed. ANSs tend to protect their own face through opting mostly for *lack of intent* (e.g. *I didn't pay attention; it wasn't my intention*, literal translation) and *denial of responsibility* (*the fault wasn't my fault*, literal translation). Conversely, ENSs seem to be more considerate to the offended party's face through *self-deficiency* (e.g. *I didn't see you there; I am very clumsy*), *self-dispraise* (e.g. *I'm a shitty sister; I'm such a @#%! head*) and *removal of misinterpretation* (e.g. *I promise it has nothing to do with you; it is just bad luck that I forgot*). The latter categories are of stronger apologetic force as they are H-supportive. Regarding the other categories, they were, to a large extent, equally supplied. Turning to IL-users, they were more liable to employing *self-blame*, *lack of intent* and *self-deficiency*. We would argue that the higher frequency of these choices was not an influence of either L1 or TL. Seemingly, learners were inclined to using strategies which are less demanding, syntactically speaking. Learners employed transparent expressions like *it's my fault*, *I didn't pay attention* and *I completely forgot*, respectively, to realise them. This interpretation is supported by the fact that in wording other strategies like *expression of embarrassment*, *justifying the H* and *self-dispraise* learners resorted to word-by-word translation from L1 to cope with the linguistic difficulty (e.g. *I am embarrassed from you; please don't cry; how stupid I am*).

	ANSs		ENSs		Freshmen		Seniors	
	%(N)	M	%(N)	M	%(N)	M	%(N)	M
Self-blame	16.07(9)	0.16	16.67(5)	0.17	28.57(20)	0.29	37.93(11)	0.38
Lack of intent	53.57(30)	0.54	0.00(0)	0.00	27.14(19)	0.27	20.69(6)	0.21
Self-deficiency	14.29(8)	0.14	56.67(17)	0.57	25.71(18)	0.26	24.14(7)	0.24
Embarrassment	1.79(1)	0.02	3.33(1)	0.03	5.71(4)	0.06	6.90(2)	0.07
Self-dispraise	0.00(0)	0.00	10.00(3)	0.10	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00
Justify H	5.36(3)	0.05	6.67(2)	0.07	8.57(6)	0.09	6.90(2)	0.07
Denial	8.93(5)	0.09	0.00(0)	0.00	2.86(2)	0.03	3.45(1)	0.03
Removal	0.00(0)	0.00	6.67(2)	0.07	1.43(1)	0.01	0.00(0)	0.00
Total	100(56)	1.00	100(30)	1.00	100(70)	1.00	100(29)	1.00

**Table 6: Overall Use of Responsibility Sub-Strategies**

Having considered the employment of the apology strategies and their wording disregarding any situational variation, presently we consider how the perception of the three variables under question affected the strategies' choice.

### 3.2. Strategy Choice and Situational Variables

Starting with the P-variable, the juxtaposition of the strategies used in SITUs 1, 2 and 3 by the four groups has revealed the following conclusions:

Both Arabic and English cultures seem to value the factor of P, to a large extent, in the same way; with the exception that, in TL, apologisers are unlikely to admit responsibility in status-high contexts. *Responsibility* strategy remained constant across the three scenarios in L1, whereas in TL apologisers opted for acknowledging guilt with status-equal (SITU 3) than with status-high (SITU 1) and status-low interlocutors (SITU 2). As for the learner performance, it could be claimed that positive transfer was operative in using the speech act sets of apology, since we concluded that the control groups were, to a large extent, alike in their perception of the dominance variable. The exception is that the *Responsibility* strategy was negatively transferred, given the fact that learners tend to freely admit responsibility in the three SITUs following the mother culture sensibilities.

As regards the SD-variable, the examination of the control groups' performance in SITU 3-5 and SITU 4-6 (in which the S and the H are close-distant in both pairs of scenarios) has revealed:

With reference to *Responsibility* and *Explanation* strategies mainly, TL stands to assign higher value to SD-variable, since ENSs avoided taking on responsibility and opted for more excuses with distant interlocutors (SITU 5 and 6). From the descriptions provided by ENSs (e.g. *I should be under a lot of stress to be so forgetful; this could not be a 'close friend' I would not forget. The first time 'maybe', but surely not the second*), it seems that L1 and TL cultures are dissimilar in weighing apologies to a *close* friend. In L1, it is someone who is likely to understand our mistakes, but in TL is someone who should not be offended by our mistakes. Overall, in IL production the employment *Responsibility* and *Concern* strategies appears to be L1-driven, while *Explanation* followed the TL distribution in SITU 3-5. Learners tend to express *Concern* and offer fewer *Repair* strategies in apologising to distance interlocutors in SITU 4-6. These conclusions suggest that IL-users evaluated SD-variable in TL contexts by means of social assumptions from L1. It is then apparently indicated that negative sociopragmatic transfer was operative in IL-apologies.

So far as the I-variable is concerned, the analysis has made available the following remarks:

Except from the utilisation of the *Responsibility* strategy in which cross-cultural variation was apparent, the employment of the other strategies suggests that, to a certain extent, the two languages seem to give the same value to I-variable; considering offense in SITU 4 of higher degree than in SITU 3.

Apologisers in TL were prone to admitting responsibility in high-I context (SITU 4), because, presumably, the interlocutor is close; meanwhile, Algerians were prone to admitting responsibility in low-I context (SITU 3), since the interlocutors are distant. As for the second pair (SITU 5-6), on the whole, the perception of the I-variable was, to a certain extent, identical in L1 and TL, except from the fact that L1 seems to favour *Responsibility* and TL favours *Concern*. As far as IL apologies are concerned, it is assumed that positive sociopragmatic transfer was at play, given the fact that we suggested that the control groups seem to assign the same value to the I-variable. Still noticeable, in SITU 3 and 4, the distribution of the *Responsibility* strategy appears to match that of L1. In addition, positive sociopragmatic transfer was operative in the employment of apology strategies in the second pair too (SITU 5-6), since the performance in L1 and TL was earlier deemed so identical. Again, IL-users, like in L1, favoured *Responsibility* strategies in both contexts, unlike ENSs who rather favoured *Concern* ones.

#### 4. Summary of the Findings

##### 4.1. The Wording of Strategies

At the level of *IFIDs*, IL-users, often times, opted for more than one *IFID* in phrasing the apology formula or the repetition of the expression of apology singled by hedges like *again* in *sorry again sir* and the verb *to repeat* like *it I repeat my apology* (freshmen). Furthermore, the employment of *excuse me*, *forgive me* and *don't blame me* appears to be L1-driven or word by word translation from Arabic. Most probably, under the influence of L1, Algerian EFL learners heavily supplied terms of address, before or after *IFIDs*, in conjunction with possessive forms (e.g., freshmen: *I am so sorry sir; I'm sorry my sweet sister; Sorry my friend; I'm sorry miss*; seniors: *sir, please forgive me; Oh! My sister ... I regret; I'm sorry honey; Sorry ma'am*). We explained this tendency in the light of the fact that terms of address are part and parcel of the communicative and politeness systems in L1. In the context of apology, they help in appeasing the offended person and, in case he/she is a stranger, seeking distance minimisation.<sup>31</sup> Another related aspect to *IFIDs* is intensification. L1 affected IL intensifiers in three main ways. First, learners used L1-proper intensifiers, namely, +1 *IFID*, *swearing*, the marker *please* and *believe me*. Second, they employed intensifiers to reinforce strategies other than *IFIDs* i.e. *IFID*-external. Third, they utilised the intensifier *very* or the repetitive use of intensifiers (e.g. *so so/very very/really really sorry* and *please please accept my apologies*). Using such intensifiers by IL-users means that sincerity is not always conveyed in their expressions of apology taking into consideration that intensifiers function as a conflict avoidance strategy in English apologies.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, we should not ignore that they, in many cases, used a couple of TL intensifiers appropriately, namely, *so*, *really* and *deeply*. Turning to *Explanation* strategy, it was observed that learners, following L1 guidelines, were liable to providing explicit accounts (mainly in SITU 4). Also, they seemed to use *sickness* as a non-negotiable justification. As far as *Responsibility* strategy is concerned, thanks to positive transfer of linguistic means, in SITU 2 and 6, IL-users showed a good command in admitting responsibility, in terms of frequency. However, *Responsibility* was expressed awkwardly by IL-users, especially freshmen, owing to word for word translation (e.g. *I am shy for you; I am ashamed from you; I am embarrassed from you*,

freshmen; *I don't know what to tell you*, seniors). Learners also showed their deep bounds to their religious faith through fatalistic expressions (e.g. *it is not by my hand*, freshmen). As for the *Concern* strategy, there are more grammatical and discourse deviations than pragmatic ones. We noticed that learners well-worded this strategy, but not necessarily as a sign of pragmalinguistic competence. They employed syntactically transparent utterances (e.g. *are you ok/alright?*) or translated literally from L1 (e.g. *don't cry; I hope that you are fine; I wish I didn't hurt you*). As far as the *Repair* strategy is concerned, We have not many things to say; we only mention that learners may refer to the *God's will* in phrasing the future repair (e.g. *Sorry for doing this, I won't forget next time God willing*). The *Forbearance* strategy is the least used across the four language groups and, thus, its employment did not reveal insightful conclusions.

#### 4.2. *Apology Strategies*

IL-users tend to use certain apology strategies following L1-guidelines. They used more than one *IFID* in phrasing the apology assuming that this would give more apologetic force. Also, they continuously employed terms of address either before or after the expression of apology under the influence of L1, assuming that like in their mother culture, they would appease the offended party. At the level of intensification, learners tend to intensify strategies other than *IFIDs*. It means that learners' apologies reflect the mother language sensibilities which give much attention to the circumstances of the apology than the illocutionary force or the propositional content. Therefore, when using a ritualistic expression of apology in TL without proper intensification, sincerity is not ensured in IL apologies if other strategies are intensified. Furthermore, *Responsibility* strategy evidenced the presence of the mother culture preconceptions in the sense that learners freely admitted responsibility in interacting with a person of higher authority or with stranger one as well as in high-I contexts. Meanwhile in such scenarios, ENSs favoured *Concern* and *Repair* strategies than *Responsibility*. As for the perception of the situational variables, sociopragmatic transfer was judged positive regarding the P-variable and I-variable, but negative as regards the SD-variable.

#### 4.3. *Other Features*

Apart from Transfer, IL production is, additionally, characterised by other features. First, lack of pragmatic competence is one factor. As an example, at the level of *IFIDs*, learners confused between the expression of apology *I'm sorry* used for real apologies and ones like *pardon me* and *excuse me* employed as attention-getters, in freshmen apologies mainly (e.g. *excuse me sir, I let your book at home and it is too late to go back to home. Sorry again sir*). Also, lack of pragmatic competence is manifested in the underuse of certain intensifiers like emotional expressions, the absence of others (e.g. *I can't/you won't believe, you have no idea*) and non-native-like intensifiers (e.g. *too sorry; I am really sorry for this stupid forget*).

Second, IL-specific phenomena are another feature. For instance, learners tend to overuse particular linguistic materials like certain intensifiers (*very, so, really*). This behaviour has come to be known as *waffling*.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, verbosity was apparent in freshmen's performance, especially, regarding the overall use of apology strategies as well as in individual scenarios.

Third, Language constraints are an outstanding feature in IL production. The number of these errors is proportionate with the decrease in linguistic proficiency i.e. freshmen committed most of them. Deviations related to the lack of linguistic competence were encountered in almost the wording of all the strategies (e.g., *IFIDs: would you forgive me; accept my apologised*, freshmen; *in order to apologise me; accept my apology; may I have your excuse*, seniors; *Explanation: I didn't find time for that*, freshmen; *I could not find time*, seniors).

#### 4.4 The Correlation between Linguistic Proficiency and Pragmatic Transfer

In general terms, the high-proficient learners did not remarkably outperform the low-proficient ones, since both language groups' production was almost identical across the seven scenarios. That is to say, both groups were affected by the same factors (transfer and other features). Table 7 shows that, over all, freshmen were relatively prone to transfer than seniors. This suggests that LP does not necessarily encourage the exhibition of more pragmatic transfer. At the pragmalinguistic level, freshmen, again, exhibited more transfer; meanwhile at the sociopragmatic one, both the groups showed close resemblance.

Types of Transfer	Freshmen %(N)	Seniors %(N)	Total
Pragmalinguistic <i>M</i>	59.09(26) 0.55	52.50(21) 0.45	34 1.00
Sociopragmatic <i>M</i>	40.91(18) 0.49	47.50(19) 0.51	22 1.00
Total <i>M</i> (both types)	100(44) 0.52	100(40) 0.45	56 1.00

**Tables 7: Occurrences of the Two Types of Transfer in Apologies**

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## Conclusion

Deviations in learners' IL apologies are likely to be a source of pragmatic failure/communication breakdown in gatekeeping encounters. These deviations affect all the chunks of the apologising formula (*IFIDs*, *intensifiers* and other strategies) at the level of the wording as well as the distribution of strategies. Therefore, we should be thoughtful of the possible ways of teaching and learning speech acts in general. First, the Algerian EFL textbooks should be enriched with empirical speech acts data that cover the pragmalinguistic and the sociopragmatic dimensions as well as metapragmatic information. Many studies show that the EFL/ESL textbooks offer inadequate pragmatic input in terms of quality and quantity (e.g. Vellenga,<sup>34</sup> Salazar Campillo,<sup>35</sup> Neddar<sup>36</sup> and Dendenne<sup>37</sup>). Second, instructors should design creative activities which give learners an opportunity to analyse, discuss and comment on speech acts instead of only associating speech acts' production/comprehension to decontextualised linguistic structures. For instance, Usó-Juan (2007)<sup>38</sup> suggests a three-step procedure for learning and practicing speech acts: presentation, recognition and collaborative practice. In a similar vein, Martinez-Flor sees that films could be an efficient pedagogical means that may be implemented in the EFL classroom by means of deductive and inductive approaches.<sup>39</sup> Third, learners' efforts should be taken into account. This can be achieved by styles- and strategic-based instruction which covers both strategies for learning and practicing speech acts as well as metapragmatic points (Cohen, 2005).<sup>40</sup>

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