A Contrastive Study of Apologizing Strategies Between Native Speakers of Jordanian Arabic and Native Speakers of American English

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Abstract

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This is a contrastive study of apologizing strategies which are employed by speakers of American English and speakers of Jordanian Arabic. The study aims at answering the following questions:

1- What is the most frequent strategy of apology in the target languages of the subjects?

2- To what extent do the type of offence and the relationship between the interlocutors govern the way people in each language apologize?

3- Can we detect any cultural implications by analysing the strategies which speakers employ in each language?

4- Are there any differences in the speaker's choice of a certain strategy due to his/her sex?
5- What are the similarities and the differences between the Jordanian and the American ways of apology?

To answer the above mentioned questions, a questionnaire was designed. American subjects of the study included both sexes and were of different educational backgrounds. The Jordanian subjects, males and females, were either undergraduate or graduate students at Yarmouk University.

The data collected from both samples were analyzed separately, but the procedures followed were identical. After collecting the questionnaire, the strategies employed by the American and the Jordanian subjects were categorized into twelve strategies. The first eight strategies were developed by a number of researchers (Fraser 1981; Owen 1983; Trosborg 1987). The last four strategies were developed by the present researcher. The responses to each item in the questionnaire were categorized according to strategy and sex. This enabled the researcher to establish a relationship between the strategy chosen and the type of offence, the relationship between the interlocutors and the sex of the apologizer. Then the percentage of each strategy in the questionnaire as a whole was calculated to see how different or similar the use of these super strategies is in the two languages under investigation.

The findings of the study showed that the most frequent strategy of apology in both societies is combining more than one
strategy of apology. It was also found that the type of offence most of the time caused certain strategies to occur most. The strategies employed were also affected by the relationship between the interlocutors. With regard to the impact of gender, statistics have shown that there is no correlation between the sex of the apologizer and the strategy adopted. Differences between the way Jordanian and American people apologize indicated that apologizing strategies are culture-specific. Similarities, on the other hand, mirror the universality of functional patterns of speech acts.