PRAGMATIC TRANSFER IN ARABIC LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

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This study investigates socio-pragmatic transfer in Arabic learners of English. Following Olshtain (1983), the researcher attempted to assess the extent to which learners of English might transfer into L2 some of their first language (L1) socio-pragmatic rules concerning apologizing. The closed role play instrument used by Olshtain (1983) to study the speech act of apology was employed. Findings suggest that L1 socio-pragmatic norms were sometimes transferred to L2. There was also found some accommodation to L2 norms. The study also indicates that the extent of pragmatic transfer for certain apology strategies may be related to the learners' perception of the universality or the language-specificity of the speech act of apology. Furthermore, the study contributes to the understanding of the possible generalizability of pragmatic transfer phenomena across different native and target languages.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a revival of interest on the part of second language researchers in studying the role of first language (L1) in second language (L2) learning. This renewed interest stems from the "overwhelming evidence that language transfer is indeed a real and central phenomenon that must be considered in any account of the second language acquisition process" (Gass & Selinker, 1992, p. 7). In Selinker's most recent model of the interlanguage hypothesis, language transfer is viewed as central to the development of interlanguage (Selinker, 1992).

However, Selinker stresses the linguistic aspects of L1 influence (syntax, phonology, morphology, lexicon). Socio-pragmatic competence has been under-represented in the early as well as recent models of the interlanguage hypothesis (for example, see Corder, 1978, Selinker & Lamendella, 1981, Selinker, 1992) . Most of the research in the area of pragmatics has been influenced by Hymes' (1972) work on communicative competence, wherein Hymes points out that language speakers acquire not only grammatical competence, but also competence as to the appropriateness of language use within the speech community, this being a kind of "tacit cultural knowledge " (Hymes, 1972, p. 279). A basic research question in the last two decades has been to investigate how L1 socio-pragmatic competence affects the process of learning L2, hence the term *pragmatic transfer* appears.

Kasper (1992) defines pragmatic transfer as "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension and production and learning of L2 pragmatic information" (Kasper, 1992, p. 207). She subsumes studies in this area under a sub-discipline of second language acquisition (SLA) research known as interlanguage pragmatics. In an earlier work, Kasper and Dahl (1991) offered a narrower definition of interlanguage pragmatics as the study of "the nonnative speakers' (NNSs') comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2-related speech act knowledge is acquired" (Kasper, 1991, p. 216).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) analyzed the utterance length of requesting strategies in Hebrew. Discourse Completion task data were collected from native speakers of Hebrew and nonnative speakers from seven different languages at three proficiency levels. The researchers

were surprised to find that the utterances of high-intermediate subjects were longer than the utterances of low-intermediate, advanced, and even native subjects. The verbosity of the high intermediate subjects was interpreted as a pragmatic failure because it violated Grice's (1975) maxim of quantity. In an earlier study, Blum-Kulka (1982) also used the Discourse Completion task to examine the use of the requesting strategies by American and Canadian learners of Hebrew at intermediate and advanced levels. Her findings showed that the L2 speakers developed an interlanguage for performance in this speech act that was different from both L1 and L2 norms.

Trosberg (1987) used role plays to investigate the apology strategies of Danish learners of English at three proficiency levels. The performance of the subjects in L2 demonstrated fewer explanations and minimizing strategies, which was attributed to transfer from L1. As their proficiency level in L2 increased, the Danish subjects used more modality markers to improve the politeness of their apology strategies.

Wolfson (1989) adopted a naturalistic approach for researching interlanguage pragmatics. She collected observational data on compliments from authentic interactions between native and non-native speakers over a period of two years. Her findings showed that L2 speakers did not seem to understand the function of compliments as a social lubricant in the American culture. The non-native subjects also had difficulty in responding appropriately to compliments.

In their 1991 article, Kasper and Dahl provided an extensive review of 39 studies in the area of interlanguage pragmatics. The studies covered a wide range of languages, speech acts, and research instruments. Some of the many independent variables included in those studies were age, sex, native language, proficiency level, length of stay, learner's perception, context, and developmental factors. The dependent variable was always related to the performance strategies of speech acts. Kasper and Dahl were especially interested in assessing the validity of the research instruments used in the studies they reviewed.

Pragmatic competence was also assessed by studies outside the scope of speech acts. For example, Bartelt (1992) re-examined his 1983 findings of rhetorical transfer in Apachean English based on subsequent research in the area of processing and nativization. In the original study, Apachean speakers transferred the rhetorical strategy of redundancy into their written compositions in English. As in L1, lexical and phrasal redundancy in L2 was intended to serve the function of emphasis, especially for persuasion purposes. Looking at the phenomenon of transfer from a procedural/declarative processing perspective, Bartelt maintained that transfer was attributed to "an L1 procedural constraint in an L2 production system" (Bartelt, 1992, p. 103). He also added that this rhetorical transfer could be seen as part of a nativization process of "cultural syncretism in which generic schemata act as constraints in selecting compatible features to fill in gaps in new knowledge structures" (Bartelt, 1992, p. 107).

Another example of research that investigated pragmatic competence outside the scope of speech acts was Scarcella's (1992) study of "discourse accent" in videotaped inter-ethnic conversations. Her experimental group included ten proficient Spanish speaking subjects. She found evidence of transfer in conversational features such as topic selection, back channel cues (for instance, repetition of the interlocutor's previous utterance), and pause fillers. In her interpretation of the findings, Scarcella provided two possibilities: (a) pragmatic fossilization, (b) interlanguage evolving into a fully developed dialect.

THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study will use as a model Olshtain's (1983) research to investigate the case of pragmatic transfer in L2 spoken discourse--specifically, with regard to the apology speech act. The research questions to be developed parallel Olshtain's:

1. To what extent is there a tendency on the part of the language learner to transfer socio-cultural rules from L1 to L2?

2. Can such a tendency be predicted from the learner's perception of language specificity or language universality in relation to a certain socio-cultural situation?

3. How can these questions be investigated with respect to the act of apologizing?

(Olshtain, 1983, p. 233)

In addition, this study replicates Olshtain's (1983) research in all essential aspects in order to contribute to understanding of the possible generalizability of pragmatic transfer phenomena across different native and target languages.

Eight apology situations were first used in the 1981 Cohen-Olshtain study to collect data from native speakers of English and Hebrew that would establish acceptable norms of apology in the two languages. These data were then compared with the responses elicited from Hebrew speakers learning English, using the same eight apology situations, as a measure of their communicative competence.

In Olshtain's 1983 study the target language was Hebrew; the two groups of subjects were native speakers of English and native speakers of Russian, both learners of Hebrew. The aim of the study was to gauge communicative competence by comparing non-native responses to the same eight apology situations, used in the earlier study, with native speaker responses (Israeli speakers of Hebrew).

As in Olshtain's study, the present study is designed to assess socio-pragmatic competence by describing non-native deviations in the specific socio-cultural context of apologizing, this being a significant element of the learner's overall communicative competence. Olshtain stipulated the need to address language transfer problems in terms of the interrelations among language-specific, cross-linguistic, and situation-specific features of a given type of speech act.

Cohen and Olshtain (1981) proposed the notion of a speech act set in order to account for such interrelations inherent in the speech act of apology. It was Austin (as cited by Olshtain, 1983) who first delineated the various ways a speech act can be performed: using the appropriate performative verb (e.g., apologize), using another explicit verb (e.g., be sorry), or using a simple statement that indirectly performs the speech act within a specific context (e.g., an excuse or an explanation). The apology speech act set served as the basis for cross-cultural research and comparative data in the 1981 Cohen-Olshtain and the 1983 Olshtain study, as well as the present study. The use of one or more formulas for the speech act in question will depend more on socio-cultural rules and the specific discourse situation, than on individual preferences (Olshtain, 1983, p. 235).

Cohen and Olshtain (1981) acknowledged the possibility of both an acceptance and a denial of responsibility on the part of the perceived transgressor. In the case that the transgressor perceives the need to apologize, the following semantic formulas may potentially be utilized:

1. An expression of apology (I'm sorry)
2. An explanation or account of the situation (I've been busy)
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility (It was my fault)
4. An offer of repair (Can I help you?)
5. A promise of forbearance (It won't happen again)

Olshtain (1983) proposed a number of possible deviations that might occur in L2 learners' performance of an apology as a result of inappropriate application of socio-cultural rules:

1. The learner might deviate from the accepted norm when choosing a semantic formula for a specific situation.

2. The learner might choose a combination of semantic formulas which is inappropriate for a specific situation.

3. The learner might perform the speech act at a level of intensity inappropriate in relation to a particular offense. (Olshtain, 1983, p. 237)

The present study takes as its focus these same semantic formulas and potential deviations as applied to the case of speakers of Arabic learning English.

Subjects

The L2 subjects were international students taking intermediate level courses in Spring 1992[1] and Spring 1993 at the Center for English as a Second Language (CESL), located at the University of Arizona. A total of 17 Arabic speakers volunteered, 16 males and 1 female. Their average age was 22 (range = 18-28 years). Concerning the educational levels of the participants, 12 graduated from high school, and 5 had at least two years at the university or technical college in their home countries. Nine of the participants were from the United Arab Emirates, two from Qatar, two from Kuwait, and one each from Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Oman. The average length of stay in the US for the group was six months (range = 2-12 months). The participants had studied English as a Foreign Language in their home countries for at least six years and most of them had traveled to foreign countries where English was the primary medium of communication.

Like the subjects in Olshtain's (1983) study, the subjects of this study were intentionally chosen from intermediate levels of L2 instruction. The choice of intermediate-level students was made because this seemed to be the most likely level of proficiency at which one might expect both transfer of L1 sociopragmatic rules and accommodation to L2 rules.

In addition, a control group of 17 native English speakers participated in the study. Members of the control group were 12 females and 5 males, all of whom were undergraduates at the University of Arizona during Spring 1992 and Spring 1993. Their average age was 21 (range = 18-22 years).

Instrument

As in Olshtain (1983), the basic instrument used for collecting data on the speech act of apologizing was closed role plays. This data collection technique involves audio-taping role play situations between the researcher and the participant. The eight role plays involving apology were performed both in L1 (by native Arabic-speaking and native English-speaking subjects) and in L2 (by native Arabic-speaking subjects only) (see Appendix A). Another instrument used, after both L1 and L2 role plays were completed, was a short interview with each Arabic participant for collecting personal data and information on the participant's perception of the specificity or universality of apology across languages (see Appendix B). This interview was conducted in L1 for the purpose of collecting as much valid information as possible from the subjects.

Procedure

Each participant was given a written description of each role play situation on an index card, so that he or she could read the description and come to an understanding of what was being asked of his or her performance. The first session with each participant involved performing the role play situations in the first language. Once the participant signalled his or her readiness to begin the role playing, the tape recorder was used to record the dialogue. The same procedure was used for each situation and in both L1 and L2 sessions. A week interval was used between the two sessions. All the role plays with the Arabic speakers, both in L1 and L2, were conducted with the researcher, a native speaker of Arabic. In addition, eight of the role plays with the English speaking control group were conducted with the researcher himself, whereas the other nine were conducted by two native speakers who were teachers of the two classes from which the control group was chosen. Both teachers were familiar with the instrument.

After the role play situations were recorded in L2, the participant was interviewed to collect personal data and was questioned about his or her perception of apology, as noted above. The two questions used to elicit this information are:

1. Do you think that speakers of English apologize more or less than speakers of your native language?
2. Do you feel that a native speaker of English might apologize differently from a speaker of your language for any of the eight situations? (Based on Olshtain, 1983, p. 239)

The two questions were orally translated by the researcher into Arabic in order to make sure that the participants clearly understood the questions. They were given as much time as they needed to write down the answers in their native language. A recorded oral discussion of the written answers followed between the participant and the researcher. If a participant said that English speakers apologized differently from speakers of their native language, this response was interpreted as registering a language specific perception of the speech act of apology. If a participant stated that it was the situation which determined how they apologized, not the language, then this response was interpreted as representing a universal perception.

Data Analysis

The researcher transcribed the tape recordings and then coded for the five apology strategies. Coding for the use of a strategy was based on presence or absence of the strategy. Therefore, the data reported in the following analysis will be based on the presence or absence of strategy coding only. After the coding was completed for the native English (NE), native Arabic (NA), and Arabic in English (AE) groups, comparisons were made between the responses of the three groups. In addition, the responses to the two interview questions on a participant's perception of apologizing were also used in interpreting the data. For instance, if a participant's use of apology strategies incorporated any L1 sociopragmatic rules, then, in accordance with Olshtain's previous findings, the present researcher predicted such a participant would have a universal perception of apology, regardless of the language used.

RESULTS

Situation #1: Insulting someone at a meeting

The data in Table #1 show that the three apology strategies used by speakers of the three language groups were: direct apology, explanation, responsibility. Repair and forbearance didn't seem to be appropriate for apologizing to a person who felt insulted at a meeting. Only one native speaker offered to repair saying, "I'd like to repeat myself and explain it more clearly."

Native English (NE) speakers demonstrated a higher rate of apology and responsibility than native speakers of Arabic (NA). The native English norm was 94% for apology and 82% for responsibility, whereas the native norm for Arabic speakers was 71% for apology and 76% for responsibility. Arabic speakers felt a lesser need to express apology or acknowledge responsibility. For example, some explained that in a meeting, individuals should not feel insulted. In addition, their use of explanation of the offense occurred at a higher rate than the explanation strategy of the NE speakers (NA = 71%; NE 29%). As one Arabic speaker put it, "My talk was general in nature. If you thought you were insulted, this indicates that you were guilty of something."

Table #1 Percentage of Each Strategy for Situation #1

	NE	NA	AE
Apology	94	71	71
Explanation	29	71	76
Responsibility	82	76	53
Repair	6	0	0
Forbearance	0	0	0

NE = Native English, n = 17; **NA** = Native Arabic, n = 17; **AE** = Arabic in English, n = 17

The Arabic speakers' performance in L2 was identical to the L1 norm in the use of the apology strategy (NA = 71; AE = 71) and a little higher than the L1 norm in the use of explanation (NA = 71; AE = 76). However, their rate of use of the responsibility strategy was far less than both NE and AE norms. The similarity in strategy use between L1 and L2 for apology and

explanation might be attributed to L1 influence, whereas the dissimilarity of the responsibility strategy use from both L1 and L2 norms could be due to developmental factors in the interlanguage pragmatics of the learners.

Situations #2, 3, and 4: Forgetting a meeting with the boss; forgetting a meeting with a friend; forgetting a meeting with your son

These three situations were designed to formulate a continuum of formality in the relationship between the person apologizing and the person apologized to. To interpret the data in situations 2, 3, and 4, I compared the native data within each native language and then across the two native languages before studying the similarities and differences between native and non-native responses (see Table #2).

Table #2 Percentage of Each Strategy for Situations 2+3+4

	NE	NA	AE
Situation #2-Forgetting a meeting with the boss:			
Apology	100	76	82
Explanation	76	88	100
Responsibility	76	24	53
Repair	47	18	29
Forbearance	29	18	12
Situation #3-Forgetting a meeting with a friend:			
Apology	94	76	82
Explanation	65	76	82
Responsibility	65	41	41
Repair	47	24	24
Forbearance	24	12	6
Situation #4-Forgetting to take your son shopping:			
Apology	100	59	82
Explanation	53	71	47
Responsibility	18	35	35
Repair	94	88	88
Forbearance	6	18	12

NE = Native English, n = 17
NA = Native Arabic, n = 17
AE = Arabic in English, n = 17

For NE speakers, the data show that they maintained a very high percentage of apology across the three situations (100%; 94%; 100%). Only one NE speaker failed to use a direct apology strategy when apologizing to a friend. Instead, she explained the reason and acknowledged her responsibility by saying, "I have a lot going on right now. I just totally forgot about the meeting I had with you." The other strategies were much less frequently used except for repair to a child (94%). The use of both explanation and responsibility strategies gradually increased with the increase in the level of formality (53%, 18% to a child; 65%, 65% to a friend; 76%, 76% to a boss).

NA speakers used fewer apology strategies than NE speakers in the three situations. Their apology strategy was the same to a boss and to a friend, but was much less when apologizing to a son (76%; 76%; 59%). Their use of the responsibility strategy was also lower than the NE group in two of the three situations (24% to a boss; 41% to a friend). As in Situation #1, explanation seemed to be a very commonly used strategy in Arabic. The use of this seemingly basic apology strategy in Arabic also increased with the increase in the level of formality (71% to a son; 76% to a

friend; 88% to a boss). As in L1 English, repair and forbearance were not frequently used except for repair to a child (88%).

The performance of the Arabic speakers in English showed similarity to native Arabic norms, accommodation to native English norms, and sometimes dissimilarity from the two native languages. For example, their use of apology strategies in Situations #2+3 (82%; 82%) were 6% higher than L1, but 18% and 12% lower than L2, indicating similarity to L1. Furthermore, use of repair and responsibility in Situations #2+3 were at percentages identical to those of L1 (41%, 35% for responsibility; and 24%, 88% for repair, respectively). However, when apologizing and explaining to a son, the AE group demonstrated considerable accommodation to L2 norms (82% for apology and 47% for explanation).

Like the norms of the two native languages, Arabic and English use of explanation and responsibility strategies once more increased with the increase along the formality continuum (47%, 35% to a son; 82%, 41% to a friend; 100%, 53% to a boss, respectively). Interestingly, not only did the AE speakers maintain high use of explanation strategies in Situations #2+3, but also they increased them to 100% in Situation #2, which was 12% higher than in L1.

Situation #5: Backing into someone's car and causing damage

This situation, as in Olshtain (1983), was included to provide an appropriate context for the repair strategy. The data in Table #3 show that the native speaker norms for repair in the two languages were the same (82%), whereas the use of responsibility was higher for NA speakers (NE = 65%; NA = 82%). However, Arabic speakers demonstrated less propensity to make both offers of repair and acknowledgement of responsibility when speaking in L2 (65% for repair; 59% for responsibility). Expressions of apology for Arabic speakers did show an increase from 53% in L1 to 94% in L2, which put them very close to the target language of 100% for this situation.

Table #3 Percentage of Each Strategy for Situation #5

	NE	NA	AE
Apology	100	53	94
Explanation	24	24	35
Responsibility	65	82	59
Repair	82	82	65
Forbearance	0	0	0

NE = Native English, n = 17
NA = Native Arabic, n = 17
AE = Arabic in English, n = 17

Situations #6, 7, and 8: bumping into a lady and hurting her; bumping into a lady and shaking her up a bit; bumping into a lady-her fault

These three situations were related, and were meant to elicit a continuum of intensity of regret dependent on the gravity of the offense, with Situation #6 constituting the most serious infraction, Situation #7 a less serious offense, and Situation #8 requiring perhaps no apology (see Table #4).

Native speakers of English were fairly consistent in expressing apology for each of the three situations (94%; 100%; 100%). Only one NE speaker failed to use a direct apology form. Instead, she chose to inquire about the well-being of the lady and offered to help her saying, "Oh, are you O.K.? Let me help you pick up your bags. Do you want me to help you? Are you O.K.?" The use of the responsibility strategy seemed to increase as the severity of the offense increased (29%; 41%; 65%). Offers of repair were also high for Situation #6, which involved the strongest offense (76%), compared to Situations #7+8 (6%; 12%, respectively) which involved less serious offenses.

Native Arabic speakers demonstrated a fairly high and consistent use of the apology strategy (100%; 88%; 100%) across the three situations. The two subjects who did not offer direct apology seemed offended by the lady's relatively rude reaction to the offense: "Hey, look out!" One of them responded sarcastically, "I should have been more careful, but your beauty distracted my attention," whereas the second responded angrily, "Okay, Okay. I didn't see you. How many eyes do I have?"

Table #4 Percentage of Each Strategy for Situations #6+7+8

	NE	NA	AE
Situation #6- Bumping into a lady and hurting her:			
Apology	94	100	100
Explanation	0	6	12
Responsibility	65	71	65
Repair	76	76	76
Forbearance	0	0	0
Situation #7-Bumping into a lady and shaking her up a bit:			
Apology	100	88	100
Explanation	24	29	18
Responsibility	41	82	65
Repair	6	6	6
Forbearance	0	0	6
Situation #8-Bumping into a lady-her fault:			
Apology	100	100	100
Explanation	12	71	71
Responsibility	29	65	35
Repair	12	6	12
Forbearance	0	0	6

NE = Native English, n = 17
NA = Native Arabic, n = 17
AE = Arabic in English, n = 17

The use of the repair strategy by the Arabic speakers seemed to have been influenced by the gravity of the offense. It was considerably high in Situation #6 (76%) compared to Situations #7+8 (6% for each one). Acknowledgement of responsibility did not appear to be influenced by the severity of the offense continuum. Actually, Situation #7, which involved less offense than Situation #6, elicited more responsibility strategies (82%; 71% for Situations #7+6 respectively). Explanation, which appeared to be a basic apology strategy in the first five situations, was rarely used in Situations #6+7 (6%; 29%, respectively). It was in Situation #8 when explanation was used again by the NA speakers, probably because these subjects had to explain to the lady that she was at fault--standing in the way. As one of the subjects said, "Sorry...sorry aunt. I swear to God, there is no other way. I tried to avoid you, but I couldn't."

When using English, all Arabic speakers used the apology strategy in all three situations. In fact, their rate of use of this strategy was higher than both NE and NA speakers. In Situation #8, involving the least responsibility on the part of the apologizer, Arabic speakers showed a decrease in offers of responsibility from 65% in NA to 35% in AE--nearly parallel to the NE norm of 29%. A similar, but lesser, decrease in the use of responsibility took place in Situation #7 from 82% in NA to 65% in NE. This decrease did not bring the AE subjects close to the NE norm of 41%. However, the use of explanation as an apology strategy in AE was identical to the NA norm (71%) and much higher than the NE norm of only 12%.

Average Use of Strategies Across the Eight Situations:

To provide a clearer picture of the similarities and differences among the three language groups in the use of the five strategies, I will follow Olshtain's (1983) example of summarizing the average use of each strategy across the eight situations.

When comparing the overall frequency of strategy use across the eight situations for the three language groups (see Table #5), one finds that the native English speakers tended to use the direct apology strategy with more frequency than Arabic speakers in both L1 and L2 (NE = 98%; NA = 75%; AE = 89). They also had a slightly higher rate of use of the repair strategy than the other two groups (NE = 46%; NA = 38%; AE = 38%). Arabic speakers, on the other hand, used more explanation strategies, probably in compensation for the fewer offers of apology and repair, when they spoke in both L1 and L2 (NE = 35%; NA = 55%; AE = 55%). Two of the L2 apology strategies of the Arabic speakers, explanation and repair, were identical to those in L1 (55% for explanation; 38% for repair), whereas one of the strategies, responsibility, was lower than both L1 and L2 (NE = 55%; NA = 60%; AE 51%).

Table #5 Average Frequency (%) of Strategies Across the 8 Situations

	NE	NA	AE
Apology	98	75	89
Explanation	35	55	55
Responsibility	55	60	51
Repair	46	38	38
Forbearance	7	6	5

NE = Native English, n = 17
NA = Native Arabic, n = 17
AE = Arabic in English, n = 17

To further ascertain the relations holding between strategy use and language group, the Yates Corrected Chi-Square test was used (see Table #6).

Table #6 Yates Corrected Chi-Square Results Across the 8 Situations

Strategy (Lang. Grps.)	Chi-square Value	DF	Prob.
Apology (NE*NA)	23.313	1	.000*
Apology (NE*AE)	7.199	1	.007*
Explanation (NE*NA)	9.290	1	.002*
Explanation (NE*AE)	10.033	1	.002*
Responsibility (NE*NA)	.376	1	.540
Responsibility (NE*AE)	.369	1	.544
Repair (NE*NA)	1.827	1	.176
Repair (NE*AE)	1.827	1	.176
Forbearance (NE*NA)	.059	1	.807
Forbearance (NE*AE)	.251	1	.616

Null Hypothesis:	There is no relation between language group and use of strategy.
Alternative Hypothesis:	There is a relation between language group and use of strategy.
Dependent Variable:	Apology Strategy (presence and absence).
Independent Variable:	Language Group (NE;NA;AE)

*Significant at p<.05

The results of this statistical procedure suggest the following:

(1) Use of the apology strategies Direct Apology and Explanation in L1 English and in L1 Arabic are statistically significantly different (Alternative Hypothesis accepted).

(2) Use of the apology strategies Direct Apology and Explanation in L1 English and in L2 English are statistically significantly different (Alternative Hypothesis accepted).

(3) Use of the apology strategies Responsibility, Repair, and Forbearance in L1 English and in L1 Arabic are not statistically significantly different (Failure to reject Null Hypothesis).

(4) Use of the apology strategies Responsibility, Repair, and Forbearance in L1 English and in L2 English are not statistically significantly different (Failure to reject Null Hypothesis).

DISCUSSION

The examination of the speech act of apology through the use of closed role plays has provided some interesting insights into the extent of pragmatic transfer in the interlanguage of these Arabic learners of English.

The data from the role plays and short interviews has helped to assess the extent to which pragmatic transfer might be related to the learners' perception of language specificity or universality. The native Arabic speakers in this study all remarked in their interviews that they felt Americans apologized differently from Arabs, specifically that Americans apologized more frequently and at times unnecessarily. For instance, some of the Arab participants stated that Americans even apologized to their children, implying that this was less common in Arabic. Many of the Arab participants felt that although Americans apologized more, they actually meant it less; that is, the apologies were less sincere.

The Arab participants all felt that the strategies of apology were dependent on language specificity. Olshtain suggests that the more the speaker perceives apology as being language specific, the more the speaker will be able to accommodate to the pragmatic norms of the second language. The data in Table #5 show that the Arab participants seemed to accommodate in the direct apology strategy only, with a 14% increase in strategy usage toward the native English norm. Still, Table #6 shows that the use of the direct apology strategy in L2 English was nevertheless significantly different from L1 English norms.

The Arabic learners' perception of language specificity did not seem to have influenced them in their use of the explanation strategy because their use of the strategy was identical to that of L1 Arabic (55%), which proved to be significantly different from L1 English norms (see Table #6). Interestingly, the frequencies for the responsibility strategy in L2 were lower than those of both native languages (NE = 55%; NA = 60%; AE = 51%) , which indicated that factors other than either L1 or L2 might influence the development of interlanguage pragmatics. In comparing the use of the apology strategies Responsibility, Repair, and Forbearance in L1 English with both L1 Arabic and L2 English it was found that there was no statistically significant difference (see Table #6).

CONCLUSIONS

To my knowledge, there has not been any research involving the speech act of apology in native Arabic or Arabic speakers in English. This study suggests that pragmatic transfer phenomena may be generalized across different native and target languages. In addition, the results of this study might have some important cultural and pedagogical implications. Since miscommunication sometimes occurs between native speakers of the same language, it may not be unreasonable to assume that miscommunication is likely to take place even more often in intercultural communication. One example from this study is the Arabic speakers' interpretation of the frequent use of the direct apology strategy by native English speakers. During the short interview sessions that followed the role plays, the majority of the Arabic subjects wrote on the interview form or told me orally that "sorry" or "excuse me" in English does not mean much to them in terms of the sincerity of apology. It seems to me that most of them understood (or

probably I should say misunderstood) this basic apology strategy in English, as can be seen from the results of this study, as a meaningless routine. Similarly, during an oral presentation of the preliminary results of this study in one of my classes, I was surprised to hear similar misunderstandings on the part of some native English speakers with respect to Arabic usage. At least three members of the audience commented that the frequency of using the explanation strategy by Arabic speakers, which appears to be a basic apology strategy in the Arabic culture, is an avoidance tactic.

As for the pedagogical implications of the study, the researcher would like to stress the significance of integrating culture into L2 instruction. Lack of socio-pragmatic teaching and error correction could have been the reason for what Scarcella (1992) called a fossilized "discourse accent" in advanced L2 speakers of English. Omaggio (1986) reminds us that in addition to being acquainted with the linguistic aspect of a language, the L2 learner should have knowledge of "the patterns of living, acting, reacting, seeing, and explaining the world of the target country as well" (p. 359). If communicative competence is a major goal of L2 learning, learners should not only know the forms of L2, but also they should understand the socio-cultural contexts for using them.

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NOTES

[1]Research conducted in Spring 1992 was part of a larger research project on the same topic involving native Spanish speaking learners of English as well as the native Arabic speaking learners mentioned here. Besides the author, the other researchers of the larger study included Shelley O'Mahony and Phillip Elliott.

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APPENDIX A
Apology Instrument

Instructions
You will be asked to read eight brief situations calling for an apology. I will role play this person. Respond as much as possible as you would in an actual situation. Your responses will be tape-recorded. Indicate when you've finished reading. (The following situations were presented on cards in random order.)

Situation 1

You are at a meeting and you say something that one of the participants interprets as a personal insult to him.
>He: "I feel that your last remark was directed at me and I take offense."
>You:

Situation 2

You completely forget a crucial meeting at the office with your boss. An hour later you call him to apologize. The problem is that this is the second time you've forgotten such a meeting. Your boss gets on the line and asks:
>Friend: "What happened to you?"
>You:

Situation 3

You forget a get-together with a friend. You call him to apologize. This is already the second time you've forgotten such a meeting. Your friend asks over the phone:

 Friend: "What happened to you?"
 You:

Situation 4

You call from work to find out how things are at home and your son reminds you that you forgot to take him shopping, as you had promised, and this is the second time that this has happened. Your son says over the phone:

 Son: "Oh, you forgot again and you promised!"
 You:

Situation 5

Backing out of a parking place, you run into the side of another car. It was clearly your fault. You dent in the side door slightly. The driver gets out and comes over to you angrily.

 Driver: "Can't you look where you're going? See what you've done!"
 You:

Situation 6

You accidently bump into a well-dressed elderly lady at an elegant department store causing her to spill her packages all over the floor. You hurt her leg, too. It's clearly your fault and you want to apologize profusely.

 She: "Ow! My goodness!"
 You:

Situation 7

You bump into an elderly lady at a department store, shaking her up a bit. It's your fault, and you want to apologize.

 She: "Hey, look out!"
 You:

Situation 8

You bump into an elderly lady at a department store. You hardly could have avoided doing so because she was blocking the way. Still, you feel that some kind of apology is in order.

 She: "Oh, my!"
 You:

APPENDIX B

Short Interview Form

Name:

Age:

Male/Female:

Country:

Native Language:

Education Level:

Class Level at CESL:

Languages Spoken:

Length of Stay in US:

Travel Experience:

Learners' Perception of Apology

1. Do you think that speakers of English apologize more or less than speakers of your native language?

2. Do you feel that a native speaker of English might apologize differently from a speaker of your language for any of the eight situations?