Investigating Pragmatic Transfer in Interlanguage Apologies Performed by Algerian EFL 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 production of these groups is compared and contrasted to the performance of two control groups representing the mother and the target languages/cultures. Data of the study have been collected by means of a seven-item discourse completion task. The findings show that pragma transfer is operative in the wording of the strategies and word for word translation. The sociopragmatic type is at play in the use of apology strategies which appear, to a large extent, in line with the mother language/culture's assumptions as regards the evaluation of situational variables. As for linguistic proficiency, it does not give marked advantage to the high proficiency group over the low proficiency one. In addition to transfer, other factors impact the learner's interlanguage production. These are lack of pragmatic competence, interlanguage-specific features and language constraints.

ملخـــــص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في اللّغة البينية التداولية عند استعمال "الاعتذار" كفعل كلامي. إذ تم اختيار مجموعتين من طلبة اللّغة الإنجليزية الجزائريين ومقارنة أداءيهما بأخرتين تمثلان اللغة/الثقافة الأم واللغة/الثقافة الهدف. جمعت بيانات الدراسة عن طريق اختبار كتابي يحتوي على سبع مواقف تحاكي الواقع. أظهرت النتائج المحصلة رصدا لظاهرة النّقل بنوعيه: التداولي-اللّغوي الذي تجلى في توظيف العناصر اللّغوية من اللغة الأم والترجمة الحرفية والتداولي-الاجتماعي الذي تجلى في توظيف إستراتيجيات الاعتذار والتي أظهرت أن تقييم المتعلمين للمتغيرات السياقية كان الى حد كبير في اتجاه اللغة/الثقافة الأم. وبينت الدراسة كذلك أن متغير الكفاءة اللّغوية لم يعط أفضلية واضحة للمجموعة الأكثر تحكما في اللغة الهدف على حساب الأخرى. إضافةً لظاهرة النقل، أثرت عوامل أخرى في أداء المتعلمين على مستوى اللّغة البينية والتي تم تصنيفها كالآتي: ضعف الكفاءة التداولية، صفات خاصة باللغة البينية وأخطاء لغوية .

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 (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Due to such cross-cultural divergence, miscommunication and pragmatic failure are highly likely, especially for culturally-sensitive speech acts like apologies.

The study of learners' use, perception and acquisition of speech acts has come to be called Interlanguage Pragmatics (henceforth ILP). Though this discipline flourished decades ago, little has been done regarding the empirical investigation of the interlanguage (henceforth IL) of Algerian EFL learners at the pragmatic level. In this respect, the present study aims at uncovering its regularities through addressing three main questions:

a. What are the manifestations of transfer in IL apologies performed by Algerian EFL learners?

b. What are the other factors, other than transfer, which influence their IL apologies?

c. What is the correlation between linguistic proficiency and pragmatic 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' (Brown & Levinson, 1987) 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]" (Bergman & Kasper, 1993, p. 82). According to Bataineh and Bataineh (2008), among the early Arab attempts to define apologies is that of Abdi (1981) who sees apologies as "utterances or deeds that a person offers in order to lift punishment or blame due to him for malicious deeds he has committed" (pp. 4-5, as cited in Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008, p. 795).

Many factors affect the way speakers choose the linguistic items in phrasing the apologising act. In the present paper, we shed light on three factors. 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 (Scollon & Scollon, 2001). For Brown and Levinson, it is the *Relative Power* of S with respect to H (i.e. the degree to which S can impose on H) (1987, p. 74). The variable of social distance (SD) is "the degree of familiarity and solidarity [speakers] share, or might be thought to share" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 74). As for the degree of infraction (I) or severity of offence, it refers to what motivates an apology. According to the infraction's severity and nature, the form of the subsequent apology is determined (Deutschmann, 2003).

1.2.   Linguistic Proficiency and Transfer in IL Production

Kasper (2000) defines pragmatic transfer 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. 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 (p. 209). These two types of pragmatic transfer lead to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure, respectively (Thomas, 1983).

ILP studies have attempted to explore the influence of linguistic proficiency on pragmatic transfer. Based on the assumption that the linguistically proficient learners are better able to transfer linguistic structures from L1 to TL, scholars seek to investigate the extent to which 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) dealt with linguistic appropriateness in the realisation of the speech act of request by Japanese learners of English. The two proficiency groups (low and high) performed role-plays in response to two scenarios. The author supported previous studies suggesting that proficiency fosters better quality of speech acts in terms of the appropriateness, grammaticality and comprehensibility of linguistic expressions. Adversely, Robinson (1992) studied Japanese ESL refusals, gathered by means of a discourse completion task. For

the author, the low proficiency group was prone to pragmatic transfer of the Japanese style; meanwhile, the high proficiency one 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 sufficed with reference to transfer in interpreting their data. Jung (2004) 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. Furthermore, native speakers 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 native speakers, but often with inappropriate linguistic forms. 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 attributed this to the influence of L1 and, more frequently, the uncertainty about L2 sociolinguistic rules.

Sabaté and Curell i Gotor (2007) dealt with the apologising act from developmental perspective. The authors focused on *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 group (P) did not. Learners had the same access to strategies as NSs. In addition, linguistic proficiency may lead to overuse of 'lexical transparent' *IFIDs* (*I'm sorry* and *excuse me*, as they are acquired first). It was noted 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 *formality* 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 (2011) investigated apologies realisation in Arabic, English and in learners' production. Pragmatic transfer was evident in the use of 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 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 Arabic and English native speakers differed linguistically in responding to the three situations due to disparity in estimating the severity of offense. Moreover, Arabs, as reported by the author, were more inclined to admitting their deficiency in order to set things right without embarrassment. In contrast, in the Anglo-Saxon culture this was discredited because people believe in "the immunity of one's private self." (p. 28); in the Arab culture "people are more publically available to each other" (ibid).

2. Methodology
2.1. Data Collection

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 blanks 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 his book at home	low	close	low
2	Apologising to a young sister for not helping in homework	high	close	low
3	Apologising to a classmate for forgetting a novel	equal	close	low
4	Apologising to a close friend for forgetting a get-together for a second time	equal	close	high
5	Apologising for stepping on a lady's foot	equal	distant	low
6	Apologising for fallen bags from a rack on a passenger	equal	distant	high
7	Apologising for dialling a wrong number	equal	distant	low

Table 1: Description of the Scenarios and Variables

As all the other data collection methods (role-plays, naturally occurring data, verbal reports), 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 (2006) 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" (2005, p. 283). 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 which 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" (2005, p. 283). Nonetheless, this technique has its share of criticism due to certain shortcomings. For instance, Garcés-conejos (2006) questions the authenticity of data collected by DCTs and considers them as rather intuitively-based.

2.2 Participants

In order to prove the existence of transfer, we need the collection of three types of data (Ellis, 1994). These are apologies performed by native speakers in both L1 and TL and apologies performed by learners of the TL. Table 2 provides details about the four groups that have taken part in the present study. Respondents who provide Arabic and interlanguage data are students from the Department of Arabic and the Department of English respectively (University of Constantine 1). No one of the learners has ever been in a country where English is spoken as a native language. As for ENSs, they are Americans and British who have been contacted by e-mails. By chance, in all groups, females outnumber males.

	Number	Language Used	Label	Background
Group 1	32	Arabic as a native language	ANSs: Arabic Native Speakers	Students of Arabic
Group 2	20	English as a native language	ENSs: English Native Speakers	From various backgrounds
Group 3	36	English as a foreign language	Freshmen	First year Licence students
Group 4	32	English as a foreign language	Seniors	First year Master students

Table 2: Participants of the Study

2.3. The Coding Scheme

        The coding scheme used in the present study is based on the models developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), Olshtain and Cohen (1983), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) and Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989). Illustrations are taken from our English data whenever possible.

- o **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*
- o **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*.
- o **Taking on responsibility**
  - a. Explicit self-blame: *Ii is my fault*.
  - b. Lack of intent: *Ii 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*.
- o **Concern for the hearer:** *are you alright?*
- o **Offer of repair:** *I will definitely bring it to you tomorrow*.
- o **Promise of Forbearance:** *I promise it won't happen again*.

3. 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 (Larson-Hall, 2010).

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 (1998) stating that ENSs (American) seem to use concise apologies with single expression of apology; in contrast, 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 (Ghawi, 1993). 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 %(N)	ANSs *M*	ENSs %(N)	ENSs *M*	Freshmen %(N)	Freshmen *M*	Seniors %(N)	Seniors *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 (Al-Zumor, 2011). Freshmen were as liable to take on responsibility as in L1; meanwhile, seniors relatively underused this strategy. *Concern* and *Repair* strategies were more prevalent 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 (2009), 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 strategies are called 'canonical strategies' (Bergman & Kasper, 1993, p. 98). 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 male and female speakers respectively), asking for forgiveness (e.g. *saamihnii/samihiini=forgive me*, addressed to male and female speakers and requesting the acceptance of the apology (e.g. *a3thirnii=excuse me*). In contrast, 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 since this *IFID* was judged as transparent, following Trosborg (1995) who attributed the frequent use of this pragmalinguistic form by Danish learners to accessibility. Moreover, the use of *excuse m*e 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 English, this *IFID* was only employed for attention cues than as a real apology. It was apparent that learners utilised *IFIDs* they know whether formal or informal rather than to accommodate them in accordance with the situational variations.

	ANSs		ENSs		Freshmen		Seniors	
	%(N)	*M*	%(N)	*M*	%(N)	*M*	%(N)	*M*
(I'm) sorry	37.55(89)	0.38	87.68(121)	0.88	70.28(201)	0.70	83.25(174)	0.83
Forgive me	31.22(74)	0.31	5.07(7)	0.05	8.04(23)	0.08	6.22(13)	0.06
Excuse me	15.19(36)	0.15	3.62(5)	0.04	11.89(24)	0.12	2.87(6)	0.03
(I beg your) Pardon	11.81(28)	0.12	0.72(1)	0.01	3.50(10)	0.03	0.48(1)	0.00
I apologise	2.53(6)	0.03	2.17(3)	0.02	1.40(4)	0.01	1.44(3)	0.01
(Accept) My apologies	0.42(1)	0.00	0.72(1)	0.01	4.20(12)	0.04	3.83(8)	0.04
Don't blame me	0.84(2)	0.01	0.00(0)	0.00	0.70(2)	0.01	0.48(1)	0.00
I'm afraid	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00	0.00(0)	0.00	0.48(1)	0.00
Others	0.42(1)	0.00	1.45(2)	0.01	0.00(0)	0.00	0.96(2)	0.01
Total	100(237)	1.00	100(138)	1.00	100(286)	1.00	100(209)	1.00

Table 4: Overall Use of *IFIDs*

Intensification was usually centred on *IFIDs* primarily. Given the ritualistic nature of English *IFIDs*, intensifiers were more frequently used in TL than L1 (*M*=0.25 vs. 0.13) as a warrant of sincerity (Bergman & Kasper, 1993). 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 noted 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). In contrast, 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)	M	%(N)	M	%(N)	M	%(N)	M
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* are the main means of intensification in L1. In TL, *adverbials* (*so*, *really*, *terribly*, *very* and *truly*) and *emotional expression*s are the major ones. 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* 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]

Table 6 shows the 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 seemed 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*. The high frequency of these choices was not an influence of L1 or TL. Seemingly, learners are 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* 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 for 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, we presently consider how the perception of the three variables under question affected the strategies' selection.

3.2. Apology Strategies and Situational Variables

Starting with the P-variable, we noted that in both L1 and TL fewer excuses (*Explanation* strategy) were offered in status-equal (SITU 3) and status-high contexts (SITU 1), unlike in status-low context (SITU 2). *Responsibility* strategy remained constant across the three scenarios in L1; whereas, in TL apologisers opted for acknowledging guilt with status-equal than with status-high and status-low interlocutors. In Arabic, *Repair* strategy was employed across the three scenarios with varied degrees (status-equal, -high and -low, ordered by frequency). In TL, *Repair* strategy was favoured in status-high/equal contexts. As for intensification, in L1, more intensifiers were employed in status-high context than in status-equal/low contexts. In TL, the amount of intensifiers employed varied in accordance with P-balance; more intensifiers were offered in status-high, status-equal than status-low contexts. To that end, it could be said that both Arabic and English cultures seem to value the factor of dominance, to a large extent, in the same way; with the exception that, in TL, apologisers are unlikely to admit responsibility in status-high contexts. As for IL apologies, in SITU 1, 2 and 3, freshmen resembled L1 regarding the preference of *Explanation* in status-low context more than in status-high/equal contexts. Also, *Responsibility* remained constant across the three scenarios. As for intensification, it seemed to increase in accordance with the interlocutors' status; it was more frequent in status-high, status-low than status-equal, once again, in agreement with L1. The only strategy that followed TL distribution is that of *Repair*. As far as seniors are concerned, they were in line with L1 in the employment of *Explanation*, *Responsibility* and *intensification*. Seniors were inclined to using *Explanation* in status-low context than status-high/equal contexts. *Responsibility* almost remained constant in that only relative decrease was noted when apologising to status-equal/low interlocutors. Like in the control groups, intensity varied in accordance with the interlocutor's status. As for the *Repair* strategy, its distribution was in line with TL. Like freshmen, the employment of apology

strategies concurred with the control groups, except for *Responsibility* that was L1-driven. Thus, it could be claimed that positive transfer was operative in using apology strategies by learners, since we concluded that the control groups were, to a large extent, alike in their perception of the dominance variable, except for the *Responsibility* strategy which was negatively transferred.

As regards the SD-variable, the examination of the control groups' performance in SITU 3 and 5 revealed that, in L1, apologisers were prone to admit responsibility with distant interlocutors (SITU 5) than with close ones (SITU 3), while *Explanation* remained largely constant in both contexts. Quite the opposite, in TL, *Responsibility* decreased and more explanations were provided with close interlocutors. Since SITU 5 does not require *Repair*, this strategy is inapt for measuring perception. As for *Concern*, Anglo-Americans were more inclined to express it than Algerians. In both groups, more intensifiers were offered in apologising to a stranger. In SITU 4-6, in both groups, no or fewer *Explanation* and *Repair* strategies were utilised in apologising to a stranger (SITU 6). In L1, apologisers were more inclined to admit responsibility in front of distant people (SITU 4); meanwhile, *Responsibility* strategy was less frequently employed with a stranger in TL. In both cultures, apologisers opted for more intensifiers when interacting with strangers. 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, while, in TL it is someone who should not be offended by our mistakes.

From the above remarks, we conclude that, 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. As far as IL-users are concerned, in the first pair (SITU 3-5), in freshmen's corpus, *Explanation* remained almost constant in apologising to a close (SITU 3) or strange interlocutor (SITU 5). As for *Responsibility*, it increased in apologising to a distant interlocutor; meanwhile, the *Concern* strategy was hardly ever offered to a stranger. The distribution

of the aforementioned strategies is, a great deal, in line with their employment in L1 rather than TL. Regarding intensification, intensifiers employed decreased in apologising to a stranger in disagreement with both control groups. Turning to seniors, we noted that *Explanation* was only relatively increased and *Responsibility* sharply increased in apologising to a distant person. *Concern* strategy was hardly ever employed in apologising to a distant person, while, intensifiers increased by half in disagreement with both control groups. Overall, employing *Responsibility* and *Concern* strategies appears to be L1-driven, while, *Explanation* followed the TL distribution.

So far as the second pair (SITU 4-6) is concerned, the two learner groups' performance seemed identical. We observed the employment of fewer *Explanation* strategies, relative increase in *Responsibility* strategies, tendency to express *Concern* and offer fewer *Repair* strategies in apologising to distance interlocutors (SITU 6). The employment of these strategies appears to, remarkably, follow L1 distribution. As for intensification, it agrees with both control groups in the sense that more intensifiers were used in apologising to a distant apologee. The above discussion suggests that IL-users evaluated SD-variable in TL contexts by means of social assumptions from L1. It is then clearly indicated that negative sociopragmatic transfer was operative in IL-apologies.

So far as the I-variable is concerned, in SITU 3-4, both cultures tend to employ *Repair* strategies (the offense in SITU 4 does not require repair) and offered more *Explanation* ones, with absence of *Concern* strategies (the offense in SITU 3 does not require expressing concern) in high-I context (SITU 4). Apologisers in English employed *Forbearance,* too, in high-I context. Respondents in both groups offered more intensifiers in low-I context (SITU 3), because, we assume, the interlocutor is distant. Apologisers in TL were prone to admitting responsibility in high-I context (SITU 3), because, presumably, the interlocutor is close; meanwhile, Algerians were prone to admitting responsibility in low-I context (SITU 3), since the interlocutors are distant. Except for 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 assigned the same value to the I-variable; they

considered the offense in SITU 4 of higher degree than in SITU 3. Moreover, in SITU 5-6, in L1, *Explanation* was not used in high-I context (SITU 6) and *Concern* relatively increased in high-I context too. As for *Responsibility*, it remained almost constant, while, intensifiers increased in high-I context. In TL, we noticed relative increase in *Responsibility*, increase in *Concern*, employment of *Repair* in high-I context. Meanwhile, *Explanation* remained constant and intensifiers increased in high-I context. In these two scenarios, on the whole, the perception of the I-variable was, to a certain extent, identical in L1 and TL, except for the fact that L1 seems to favour *Responsibility* and TL favours *Concern*.

Turning to the traits of IL-apologies, in the first pair, SITU 3-4, the two learner groups were, to the greatest extent, identical. We noted an increase in *Explanation*, relative increase in *Responsibility*, fewer/absence of *Repair* strategies and the utilisation of *Forbearance* in high-I context (SITU 4). As for intensity, intensifiers remained constant in freshmen's corpus and increased in seniors' one in high-I context (the latter agrees with L1 and TL). Since we suggested that the control groups assigned the same value to the I-variable, it is plausible to assume that positive sociopragmatic transfer was at play. Still noticeable, in these two scenarios, the distribution of the *Responsibility* strategy appears to match that of L1. In the second pair, SITU 5-6, in freshmen's corpus, a decrease in *Explanation* and intensifiers in high-I context (SITU 6) is observed. Both *Repair* and *Concern* strategies almost remained constant in high- and low-I contexts. These propensities were much more in agreement with L1 distribution, but intensification seems to agree with both control groups. As for seniors, we observed a relative increase in *Repair* strategies and a sharp increase in intensifiers in high-I context. In addition, we noted an absence of *Explanation* strategies and a decrease in *Responsibility* strategies in high-I context; meanwhile *Repair* was only employed in high-I context. These tendencies agree, a good deal, with L1 regarding *Explanation*, *Responsibility* and *Concern* and with TL regarding *Repair*. As for intensification, it was in line with both control groups. In this respect, positive sociopragmatic transfer was operative, since the performance in L1 and TL was earlier deemed so identical. Still apparently enough, IL-users, like L1, favoured *Responsibility* in both contexts, unlike ENSs who favoured *Concern*.

4. Summary of the Findings
4.1. The Wording of Strategies

At the level of *IFIDs*, IL-users, oftentimes, 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 *forgive me* and *don't blame me* appears to be L1-driven, i.e. word for word translation from Arabic. The utilisation of *excuse me* as a real apology rather than an attention-getter could be an influence of French, the first foreign language to the majority of Algerian university students. Under the influence of L1, Algerian EFL learners heavily supplied terms of address, before or after *IFIDs*, in conjunction with possessive pronouns (e.g., freshmen: *I am so sorry <u>sir</u>; I'm sorry <u>my sweet sister</u>; Sorry <u>my friend</u>; I'm sorry <u>miss</u>;* seniors*: <u>sir</u>, please forgive me; <u>Oh! My sister</u> … I regret; I'm sorry <u>honey</u>; Sorry <u>ma'am</u>*). We explained this tendency in the light of the fact that terms of address are part and parcel of the politeness system 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 (Maalej, 2010).[1] Another related aspect to *IFIDs* is intensifiers. L1 affected IL intensifiers in three main ways. First, learners used L1-proper intensifiers, namely, +1 *IFID, swearing,* the marker *pleas*e 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 (Márquez Reiter, 2000). Nevertheless, we should not ignore that they, in several 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. Linguistically speaking, this strategy was well-structured, but not necessarily as a sign of pragmalinguistic competence since learners 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 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' Selection

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. Moreover, they continuously employed terms of address either before or after the expression of apology under the influence of L1, assuming that such linguistic items carrying the same force in the target context. At the level of intensification, learners tend to intensify strategies other than *IFIDs*. It means that learners' apologies reflect the mother language's 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. Furthermore, the presence of the mother culture's preconceptions is evidenced in *Responsibility* strategy in the sense that learners freely admitted responsibility in interacting with a person of higher authority or with a stranger 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 regarding the SD-variable.

4.3. Other Features

In addition to transfer, IL production of Algerian EFL learners is characterised by other features. First,the lack of pragmatic competence is one factor. At the level of *IFIDs*, learners confused between the expression of apology *I'm sorry* used for real apologies and other expressions 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*). It was evident that learners know a host of TL *IFIDs* (e.g. *I regret, I apologise, I beg your pardon, I apologise)* but they employed them randomly; i.e. in informal and formal situations. At the level of intensification,the 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 ones (e.g. *too sorry; I am really sorry for this stupid forget*) by freshmen. At the level of *Concern* strategy, a learner (from freshmen group), confusingly, employed *how do you feel* used for asking about somebody's health to express concern about the victim.

Second, IL-specific phenomena are another feature. Learners overused particular linguistic materials. This behaviour has come to be known as *waffling* (Edmondson & House, 1991). For instance, learners overused the expression of regret *I'm sorry*. Though this trend agreed with TL distribution, it was regarded an outcome of overlearning than a pragmatic competence. The same thing could be said about the intensifiers which were over-supplied (*very*, *so*, *really*). Verbosity was apparent in freshmen's performance, especially, regarding the overall use of apology strategies as well as in individual scenarios. Moreover, certain *Responsibility* sub-strategies, namely, *self-blame, lack of intent* and *self-deficiency* were interpreted in the light of linguistic accessibility than pragmatic choice and, thus, meant as an avoidance technique.

Third, Language constraints are an outstanding feature in IL production. The number of these errors is proportionate to 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: *IFIDs* (e.g. *would you forgive me; accept my apologised*, freshmen; *in order to apologise me; accept my apology; may I have your excuse*, seniors), *Explanation* (e.g. *I didn't find time for that; but I didn't get time*, freshmen; *I could not find time,* seniors), *Responsibility* (e.g. *I know this is a lot; I do not see your foot; it is my entire fault*, freshmen; *this is a false; I didn't expect the fall of the bag,* seniors) and *Repair* (e.g. *please remember [remind] me*, freshmen), *Concern* (*are you fine*, freshmen; *I wish I didn't hurt you,* seniors). It goes without saying that some discourse errors could also be an outcome of transfer from L1.

4.4 The Correlation between Linguistic Proficiency and Pragmatic Transfer

In general terms, the high proficiency group did not remarkably outperform the low proficiency one, since both language groups' performance was almost identical across the seven scenarios. The learner apologies in both groups were impacted by the same factors (transfer and other features). Over all, Table 7 shows that freshmen were relatively prone to transfer than seniors. This suggests that linguistic proficiency does not necessarily encourage the exhibition of more pragmatic transfer. At the pragmalinguistic level, freshmen, again, exhibited more transfer; meanwhile at the sociopragmatic one, the two groups showed close resemblance.

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

Tables 7: Frequency of the Two Types of Transfer in IL Apologies

The analysis reveals that the high proficiency group appears to be more pragmalinguistically competent regarding the employment of *IFIDs* (e.g. *sorry* vs. *excuse me/pardon me*). In a similar vein, it was judged to be less affected by the violation of the maxim of quantity as

well as language barriers. Additionally, seniors were rather tactful as they employed linguistic structures/strategies they have overlearned. In contrast, freshmen attempted to use as many strategies as possible despite the lack of pragmatic and linguistic competence; this explains the prevalence of transfer of linguistic items and the verbose style as well.

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 strategies comprising the apology speech act set (*IFIDs*, *intensifiers* and other strategies) at the level of the wording as well as the selection of strategies. Therefore, we should be thoughtful of the possible ways of teaching/learning speech acts in general. First, Algerian EFL textbooks should be enriched with empirical speech act 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 (e.g. Vellenga, 2004; Salazar Campillo, 2007; Neddar, 2010; Dendenne, 2014). Second, instructors should design creative activities which give learners an opportunity to analyse, discuss and comment on speech acts instead of associating speech act production/comprehension with decontextualised linguistic structures. For instance, Usó-Juan (2007) suggests a three-step procedure for learning and practicing speech acts: presentation, recognition and collaborative practice. In a similar vein, Martinez-Flor (2007) sees that films could be an efficient pedagogical means which may be implemented in the EFL classroom through deductive and inductive approaches. 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 issues (Cohen, 2005).

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