



A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Apologies by Moroccan Native Speakers of Arabic

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Abstract

This study hypothesises that the functions of apology strategies are culture-specific. It is based on the assumption that certain contextual and cultural factors might influence the production and perception of apologies across languages and cultures. The present study investigates apology strategies in Moroccan Arabic, which has not received much attention in cross-cultural pragmatic research. This study examines data from 200 Moroccan Arabic native speakers. It adopts the more structured approach of quantitative research by using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) to elicit the production of apologies from 10 different social situations between hypothetical interactants. Although this is a pioneering study in its societal context, its main results support earlier findings suggesting the universality of apology strategies; however, the illocutionary forces assigned to these strategies and the identification of new apology strategies reinforce the culture-specific aspect of apologies.

1. INTRODUCTION

A significant number of empirical studies on speech acts have been conducted across different languages and cultures in cross-cultural pragmatics (e.g. Cohen & Olshtain, 1983; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984). Substantive studies on speech acts need further research about new languages and cultures as possible. Blum-Kulka, et al., (1989) suggested that research on speech acts should shift their focus from Western languages and incorporate other non-Western languages and cultures in their scope of research. More recently the focus has been shifted to investigate Eastern cultures, with only little research on Arabic language and culture (Nureddeen, 2008; Hussein and Hammouri, 1998; Al-Adaileh, 2007; Hammood, 2017).

Therefore, analysing the speech act of apology in Moroccan Arabic, which has not received much attention in cross-cultural pragmatic research, allows for extending the scope of pragmatic research to a non-Western language and culture and contributes to the debate on universality vs. culture-specificity of apology strategies. Through investigating the pragmatic features that govern how apologies are produced by the native speakers of Moroccan Arabic, in particular contexts of interaction, this study attempts to establish what constitute offences in Moroccan Arabic and culture, how the Moroccan subjects perceive the contextual factors of the offences, and how their perceptions are reflected in output strategies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Apology speech act

In the terminology of Leech (1983), the act of apologising is "a convivial speech act", whose purpose correlates with the social objective of preserving harmony between the speaker and the hearer, which makes it beneficial to the hearer and inherently polite (pp. 104-105). Apologies can therefore be viewed as remedial actions to restore social harmony, a definition which is typically incorporated in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, apologies are actions that convey negative politeness: they signify the speaker's recognition of having damaged the negative face of the hearer, in some way reducing the hearer's freedom of action.

When producing an apology, the speaker acknowledges that a social norm has been violated and assumes at least partial responsibility for its violation. Goffman (1971) defined apologies as remedial interchanges aimed to redress a social violation and maintain social harmony. Thus, to restore social harmony with the hearer, the speaker performs a remedial apology which is threatening to his or her own face. Therefore, apologies, by their very nature, are "face-saving for the H and face-threatening for the S" (Olshtain, 1989, p. 156) because they directly damage the positive face wants of the speaker, that is the speaker's actions be approved and liked (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In a similar vein, Holmes (1990) maintained that an apology aims to make up for the wrongdoing, and thus restore harmony to the relationship of the interactants. Goffman (1971) presented one of the most significant perspectives on classifying apologies, in which he divided apologies into two types: ritual and substantive. By doing this, Goffman distinguished between apologies that redress virtual offences, which are compensated by a simple offering of an apology, and those that remedy actual harm done to the offended person. Correspondingly, Fraser (1981) claimed that by performing an apology, the speaker aims to compensate for the harm of an offence, whereas he or she produces a ritual apology as a sort of habit correlated with social routines.

Zimin (1981) emphasised the social function of apologies when he argued that, by making an apology, a speaker is "doing what is socially acceptable and expected" (p. 41). By the same token, Tarasenko (1999) claimed that apologies are performed "to present oneself as an educated member of a society" (cited in Ogiermann, 2009, p. 48). It is primarily this feature of apologies that Coulmas (1981) referred to as "highly recurrent and routinized" (p. 69). According to Coulmas (1981), a speaker can sometimes make an apology without really being in charge of the offence. In such cases, apologies merge into sympathetic expressions, and when the speaker feels deep responsibility for an unpleasant event, apologies eventually blend into thanks.

For Ogiermann (2009), apologies appear to incorporate normative and strategic aspects of politeness. Using relevant routinized utterance in accordance with its social context could be regarded as a normative politeness aspect while it is obviously strategic to weigh the embarrassment of responsibility acceptance of an offence against the potential relationship with the offended or one's credibility. Therefore, this strategic aspect of apologies puts into play the face of both the speaker and the hearer and supports Brown and Levinson's definition of face as 'wants'. Differently put, making an apology to restore the hearer's face is at the same time costly to the speaker's face. Thus, following Olshtain (1989), apologies are "face-saving for the H and face-threatening for the S" (p. 156).

2.2. Apology strategies

A significant number of empirical studies on apologies have been conducted across different languages in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics strategies. These studies have proposed different classifications of apology strategies. The most widely cited study is the classificatory scheme developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981) and Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Olshtain and Cohen (1983) suggested a 'speech act set of apologising' based on Searle's (1975) concept of indirect speech acts and the apology strategies proposed by Fraser (1981). Their 'speech act set of apologising' involved five strategies: "an expression of an apology, an acknowledgement of responsibility, an explanation, an offer of repair, and a promise of forbearance" (Olshtain & Cohen 1983, p. 22).

Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), in their Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) project, relied on Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) speech act set strategies. The CCSARP framework helped to re-establish the set of apology strategies proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), suggesting some modifications at the level of sub-strategies. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), there is no limited set of conventional apology strategies which can be performed in linguistically mutually exclusive categories (with or without an IFID).

Furthermore, while explanation, offer of repair and promise of forbearance strategies are situation-specific, expressions of apology and acknowledgements of responsibility can be used in virtually any apology situation (Ibid).

2.3. Cross-cultural studies on apologies

Cross-cultural studies on apologies have been concerned with investigating the socio-cultural norms and values that govern apologies in a range of languages and cultures. The most widely cited study is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) project, conducted by a group of researchers (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). This team of linguists investigated the realisations of apologies and requests in five languages: English (British, Australian, and American), German, Danish, Hebrew, and Canadian French. The study used a discourse completion task, including incomplete exchanges about different social situations. The objective of this research was to make inquiries about the universality or culture-specificity of speech act performance of the native and non-native speakers of these languages. The CCSARP framework helped to establish the set of apology strategies. The findings observed cross-linguistic similarity in performing direct apologies by using the illocutionary force of the speech act of apology and taking on responsibility for the offensive act (Olshtain, 1989).

Nakata (1989) compared apology and thanks speech acts in English and Japanese extracted from movies and TV dramas. The study found that the Japanese tended to apologise to people close to them more than the English speakers. In another study, Ogawa (1995) investigated Japanese formulaic thanks and apologies. The findings suggested that the apology expression *sumimasen* can be used to express thanks in Japanese cultures, (also confirmed by Kumatoridani 1999), but with the difference between the younger and older generations. The youngsters tended to use *sumimasen* to express simple thanks or apologies to strangers and older people, and they used more formal apology expressions with someone older for a major infraction. The older generation, on the other hand, used the expression *sumimasen* to express thanks to their friends or those younger than them.

Suszczynska (1999) has conducted a cross-cultural study of how native speakers of English, Hungarian and Polish produce the speech act of apology. Only a discourse completion questionnaire was adopted to collect data. The results showed that the speakers of the three languages and cultures perform apologies in both similar and distinct ways. Yet, there appear to be more substantial variations than similarities. According to the study, taking responsibility for the offence, which is the most commonly used strategy after the IFID, was articulated in Hungarian apologies. As for Polish speakers, the study showed that they were inclined towards

using an enhanced expression comparable to 'I am sorry' in English. The three groups of speakers used the IFIDs semantic formula to express regret 'I am sorry' or ask forgiveness 'I do apologise'. However, expressing regret seemed to be more common in English than apologies in Hungarian and Polish. The researcher concluded, therefore, that the apology speech act is culture-specific. Arguably, the findings derived from this analysis would need to be corroborated by other data collection techniques and more contextualised instances requiring apologies.

In a research study on politeness in British English and Uruguayan Spanish, Reiter (2000) investigated the similarities and differences in the realisation and perception of apologies and requests among university students in the two cultures. According to this study, the native speakers of British English appeared to use linguistic intensifiers, such as 'very', 'really', and 'awfully', in the way they produce apologies. In comparison, the native speakers of Uruguayan Spanish did not resort to apology intensifiers. Concerning the social factors, the findings showed that the native speakers of both languages interpreted the severity of the offence in a similar way, but the Uruguayans made fewer apologies than the British. Moreover, Reiter (2000) found no substantial differentiation in examining gender in the two cultures, that women's apologies are more than men's apologies.

Li and Lida (2002) investigated apology-making in Chinese. The study attempted to find out features of apology realisation and their socio-pragmatic variables in Chinese. The investigation made use of a DCT, based on the situations and categorisation in the CCSARP, and two questionnaires to elicit socio-pragmatic variables. The data showed that apology strategies are situation-specific. Interestingly, the Chinese respondents tended to use few apologies, with many of them choosing to blame the offended party instead. The findings regarding socio-pragmatic factors supported the CCSARP group's conclusion that the necessity for an apology increases with the seriousness of the offence and that the relative power and social distance strongly influence apology choice.

Based on a corpus of naturally occurring apologies gathered using the observatory technique, Chamani and Zareipour (2010) conducted a cross-cultural pragmatic study of apologies and offences in Persian and British English. The findings showed that both Persian and English speakers used relatively the same set of strategies but with slightly different preferences. The study reported different use of apology strategies to redress the same type of offence, and types of offence required different degrees of apology. Another finding displayed the British speakers' readiness to accept apologies, unlike the Persian speakers who continued

complaining until the apologisee used all apology strategies he or she knew and repeated them many times to satisfy the offended party that the offence would never be committed again.

2.4. Cross-cultural studies on Arabic varieties

Hussein and Hammouri (1998) were among the first researchers who studied the realisation of apology in an Arabic variety. They investigated apology realisation in Jordanian Arabic and American English. This study elicited the data using a Discourse Completion Test and found that Jordanian speakers of Arabic performed more apology strategies than American English speakers. Concerning social power, the Jordanian speakers of Arabic tended to use honorific address forms in their apologies with their addressees of high social rank.

In another cross-cultural pragmatic study, Al-Adaileh (2007) investigated apology speech acts in Jordanian Arabic and British English within Brown and Levinson's (1978/1987) theory of politeness. The study used a DCT of 12 distinct situations and a Semi-Structured Interview to obtain the data. The main finding of the study demonstrated that the apology speech act is differently perceived by the speakers of the two languages. Accordingly, they performed their apologies in a dissimilar way. The data analysis displayed that the main motivation behind the speech act of apology in British English is the severity of the offence, while the key motive of the apology speech act for Jordanian speakers of Arabic seemed to be the interaction between social distance and the severity of the offence. The finding showed the British tendency to use more IFIDs and intensify apologies compared to Jordanian native speakers of Arabic. Furthermore, other than the ones put forth by Cohen and Olshtain (1983), a number of new strategies seemed to be language- and situation-specific.

Nureddeem (2008) conducted a research study to investigate apology strategies and their socio-cultural attitudes and values in Sudanese Arabic culture. The study examined the apology responses of college-educated adults using a DCT of 10 distinct social situations of varying social variables between hypothetical participants. The results demonstrated the respondents' propensity for positive politeness, as evidenced by their efforts to preserve their positive face. To save their positive face, the respondents avoided using apology strategies (e.g., taking on responsibility, intensification, and promise of forbearance), and tended to use "less dangerous" strategies (e.g., IFID and explanation) to avoid explicit apologies. The researcher perceived IFIDs as ritualistic. This analysis confirmed previous studies indicating the universality of apology strategies; however, the collection of these strategies enhanced the culture-specific nature of Sudanese Arabic.

Within a cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatic approach, Hammood (2017) examined the production and perceptions of apologies by Iraqi native speakers of Arabic and Iraqi foreign

language learners (EFL). The study investigated the speech act of apology as a mirror of politeness. This study followed the mixed-method approach (a DCT, a Scale Response Task, Open Role Play, and a Semi-Structured Interview). This study's findings displayed the influence of apology strategies by the collectivistic nature and the socio-religious conceptualisation of apology in the Iraqi culture. The study also showed that the overall production and perception of apologies were determined by contextual variables. For example, Iraqi Arabic native speakers with lower social status tended to use more polite and effective apologies than those with higher social status.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. The instrument

The current study adopts the more structured approach of quantitative research using a Discourse Completion Task (DCT). This study intends to be cross-culturally and linguistically common. For this reason, some of the situations are adopted from other studies because they are considered appropriate for the frame of the most relevant contextual variables required in the study. Specifically, this research study flexibly adapts the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) for apologies by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), Eisenstein and Bodman (1993), and Trosborg (1995).

3.2. Administration

The first version of the DCT consisted of 8 social situations, and it was given to three Moroccan professors in linguistics to check the validity and reliability of the slightly modified cross-cultural apology situations in eliciting apologies in Moroccan Arabic. The pilot study revealed the need for some linguistic and pragmatic modifications. Furthermore, two new situations, situation 9 and situation 10, were added to combine the variables +D and +P where the apologisers are anticipated to view themselves as subordinate to people who are strangers to them. The combination of the variables +D and +P offers a new approach that could enhance the main study. A systematic distribution of social distance and relative power is made up of five categories, including two social situations in each category.

The resulting version of the DCT, which consisted of 10 situations, became the master version for the main study and was filled out by 200 native Moroccan Arabic-speaking students of different subjects from different Moroccan universities. The DCT briefly described the purpose of the research study without disclosing that the researcher is researching Moroccan Arabic apologies, as this might influence the respondents' production and thus invalidate the findings and results of the study.

Table 1. Contextual variables embedded in the DCT situations

Category	Situation	Social status (P)	Social distance (D)
I	1. Stained book	=P (S=H)	Low
	2. Late friend	=P (S=H)	Low
II	3. Forgetting a professor's book	+P (S<H)	Medium
	4. Forgetting to wash father's car	+P (S<H)	Low
III	5. Forgetting a student's term paper	-P (S>H)	Medium
	6. Disturbing a little sister	-P (S>H)	Low
IV	7. Occupied library seat	=P (S=H)	Medium
	8. Wrong suitcase	=P (S=H)	High
V	9. Bumping into a well-dressed man	+P (S<H)	High
	10. Security guard	+P (S<H)	High

3.3.Data coding scheme

The present research study adopted the coding scheme developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981) and Olshtain and Cohen (1983) as well as the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) coding scheme used by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), which is the most widely cited study in cross-cultural pragmatics. Following these models, therefore, the linguistic realisation of apologising can take five semantic formulas or any combinations of them (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), Taking on responsibility, Explanation or account of the cause, Offer of repair, and Promise of forbearance), and the several sub-strategies reported under these universal formulas (Cohen & Olshtain 1981, p. 119; Olshtain & Cohen 1983, pp. 22-23; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, pp. 207-208). In addition to that, a category of "new apology strategy/sub-strategy" (any new strategy or substrategy appearing in the Moroccan Arabic data, outside this coding scheme) will be included since Moroccan Arabic is hypothesised to be culturally and pragmatically different from the languages and cultures studied in the aforementioned cross-cultural studies.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1.The overall use of strategies in the coding scheme

2000 valid responses made up the corpus obtained for this study. To identify the apology strategies, each response was examined separately. Since the study is descriptive, the objective is to determine the frequencies and percentages of the apology strategies used. Table 2 illustrates the frequencies of the overall strategies elicited by the Discourse Completion Test (DCT).

Table 2. Frequencies of Overall Apology Strategies

Strategy	Situation										n
	I		II		III		IV		V		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
IFIDs	137	128	182	96	84	75	154	167	160	60	1243
Taking on responsibility	251	120	135	119	23	41	58	125	152	146	1170
Explanation	33	103	44	75	162	0	78	72	28	139	734
Offer of repair	154	13	112	107	83	66	126	39	53	82	835
Promise of forbearance	21	27	43	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	91

4.1.1. Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)

Illocutionary Force Indicating Device is a ritualised formulaic expression when an apology is made explicitly through a performative verb. Searle (1969) coined this term to refer to an explicit apology, and it was also used as a technical expression in the CCSARP as a category of "An Expression of Apology" (Olshain & Cohen, 1983, p. 22).

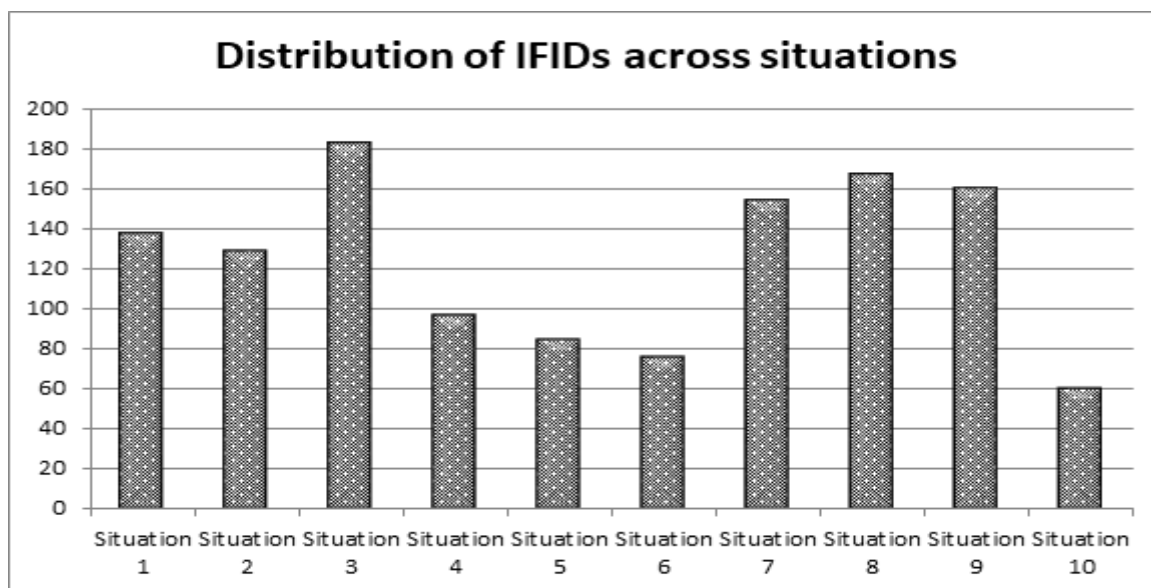


Figure 1. Distribution of IFIDs across situations

A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Apologies by Moroccan Native Speakers of Arabic

In my data, the use of IFIDs by the Moroccan subjects ranges from a high percentage of 91% in situation 3 (Forgetting a professor's book) to only (30%) in situation 10 (Security guard). While situation 3 illustrates how the subjects apologise to people of high social status and medium social distance, situation 10 combines the variables high social status and high social distance, featuring a legal offence in which the offended person is presented as one who has an official function, making this status inequality apparent.

The extensive performance of IFIDs in scenario 3 is mainly accredited to the recognition of the Moroccan respondents of the professor's social status and the importance of maintaining harmony with their professor, thus displaying a strong tendency towards positive face needs of both parties. However, explicit IFIDs were avoided in situation 10 confirming the risk involved in accepting responsibility in such a legal context. Furthermore, what varies situation 10 from situation 3 is that the former involves no direct face threat to the security guard, leading to an avoidance of face-threatening IFIDs. Ultimately, the extensive production of IFIDs in situation 3 and their avoidance in situation 10, for example, confirms this research claim, namely that factors other than social distance and social status play a decisive role in the subjects' preference for apology strategies in cross-cultural contexts.

The most explicit IFID realisation in Moroccan Arabic, which fits the felicity conditions required for a successful apology, is the expression of regret *smaHli* 'I'm sorry'. The Moroccan data display a strong preference for this strategy, whose data exhibit a frequency of 98% of all the IFIDs used by the Moroccan respondents in all situations, amounting to (n=1218) instances in total. The remaining IFID realisations in the Moroccan data are quite marginal. There are few instances of the offer of apology ²اعتذر *a3tadhir* / تتعتذر *tana3tadhr* 'I apologise'.

Contextual factors and IFIDs distribution

Analysing the distribution of IFIDs in different social categories is expected to provide insight into culture-specific perspectives of relative power and social distance. In this study data, these contextual factors, characterising the speaker-hearer relationship, are obviously correlated with the distribution of IFIDs in Moroccan Arabic.

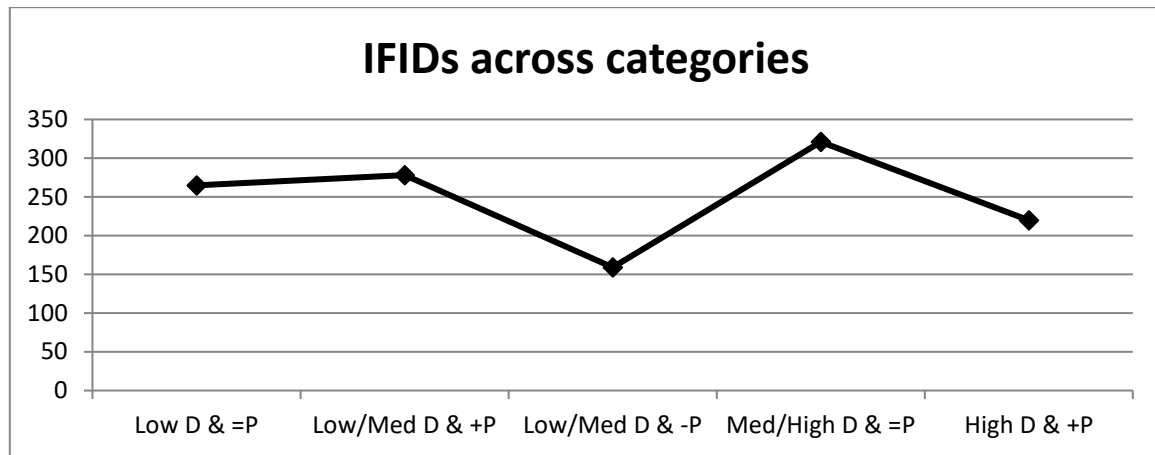


Figure 2. Preferences for IFIDs across categories

As shown in Figure 1, a big proportion of IFIDs were used as direct apologies to stranger people, with the fewest being used in apologies to acquaintances of lower social power ($n=159$ vs. $n=321$). The native speakers of Moroccan Arabic, therefore, exhibited a remarkable difference in IFIDs use in category III and category IV ($t(1242)=13.64$, $p=0.00$), indicating a marked effect of social distance factor. There was also a disparity in the quantity of IFIDs supplied to friends and strangers among Moroccan respondents ($n=265$ vs. $n=321$) ($t(1242)=7.65$, $p=0.00$). This finding also suggests that when apologising to strangers, Moroccan Arabic speakers value explicit apologies far more than when apologising to friends. The data analysis of the effect of social distance on apologising in Moroccan Arabic also exhibits that the use of IFIDs is lower with decreased social distance and is likely to increase in offences where the apologiser and the offended are of unequal social status.

Additionally, the Moroccan Arabic data exhibit a significant disparity between the numbers of IFIDs offered in situation 5 (Forgetting a student's term paper) and situation 6 (Disturbing a little sister) and the IFIDs offered to strangers in superior positions in scenario 9 (Bumping into a well-dressed man) and scenario 10 (Security guard). In my data, the number of IFIDs tends to rise with higher social distance and fall with both lower relative power combined with low social distance, and growing relative power combined with high social distance.

In $-P$ category, the major preference for IFIDs use is low compared with the categories based on $+P$ in my data. In other words, the Moroccan Arabic respondents with high relative power apologised less to people with low social power than vice versa. The rationale behind this result, however, could be attributed to the culture-specific perception of social power in the Moroccan context, which acknowledges the social differences in interaction. Furthermore, whereas apologies to strangers with the same social status include the most IFIDs in the data, apologies offered to high-status strangers include the fewest ($n=321$ vs. $n=220$). The native

A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Apologies by Moroccan Native Speakers of Arabic

speakers of Moroccan Arabic, therefore, exhibited a remarkable difference in the use of IFIDs in category IV and category V ($t(1242)=10.48, p=0.00$), demonstrating the varied functions IFIDs serve in legal circumstances. This finding provides evidence that increasing the use of IFIDs in legal offences is perceived as risky in the Moroccan context because it could be perceived as a responsibility acknowledgement for the legal offence committed.

Likewise, IFIDs were used more frequently with acquainted status superiors than they were with authority figures. In the Moroccan Arabic data, ($n=220$) IFIDs were offered to acquaintances compared with authority figures who were offered ($n=278$) explicit apologies. The Paired Samples T-Test indicates that the means for Category II and Category V are highly statistically significant ($t(1242)=7.79, p=0.00$). Correspondingly, explicit apologies, for the Moroccan Arabic respondents, appear to be useful in maintaining social harmony with status superiors but harmful in legal circumstances.

4.1.2. Taking on responsibility

Despite the fact that an IFID designates an apologetic aspect to an utterance, the use of the Moroccan Arabic routine formula *smaHli* reveals little about the speaker's intention and weightiness of the contextual conditions of the offence. The remaining alternative apologetic strategies might communicate the speaker's intention clearly towards the offence by acknowledging responsibility for its outcome. In any context, the expressions of accepting responsibility can express direct apologies. Acknowledgements of responsibility, according to Kasper and Bergman, highlight the "substantive nature" of the provided apology (1993, p.96).

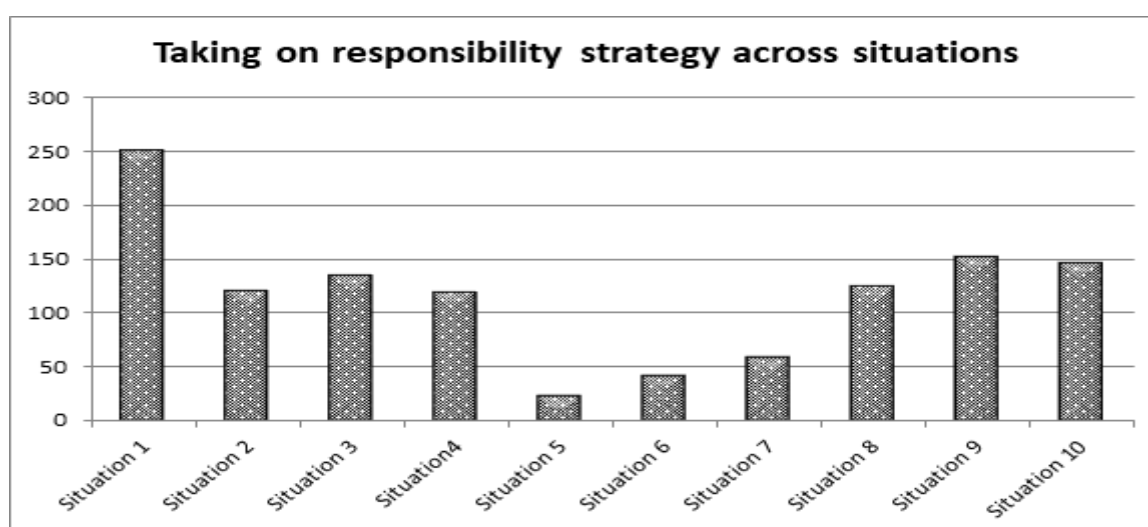


Figure 3. Distribution of taking on responsibility strategy across situations

In cross-cultural pragmatics, empirical studies on apologies suggested numerous subcategories falling under taking on responsibility supra-strategy to convey one's responsibility for the

committed offence, and they are ranked on a scale that ranges from full acceptance to a total denial of responsibility, suggested in the CCSARP coding scheme (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984, pp. 207-208). In the analysis of taking on responsibility sub-formulas, providing frequencies for every sub-strategy are likely to give important insight into apology behaviour in the examined culture.

Explicit self-blame

Self-blame is generally viewed as a direct apology strategy because it displays a high face-threat and responsibility acceptance. In my data, Moroccan Arabic respondents used self-blame strategy relatively infrequent, except for situation 1 (Stained book) and situation 9 (Bumping into a well-dressed man), where it was used (n=77) times, amounting to (79%) and (20%) of all self-blame responses in all situations, respectively. The high frequency of explicit self-blame in scenario 1 is accredited to the high severity of the offence that the participants assigned to this offence, and that they are concerned about maintaining social harmony with the offended friend.

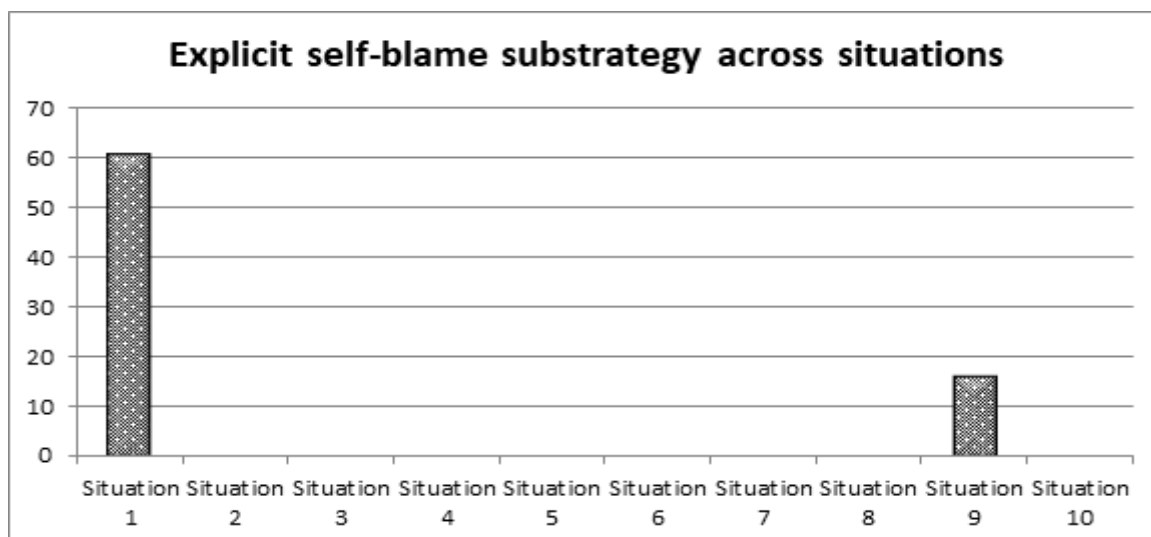


Figure 4. Distribution of explicit self-blame substrategy across situations

Lack of intent

Lack of intent sub-formula of taking on responsibility is not meant to downgrade the apologiser's responsibility by emphasising the non-intentionality of the offence rather it assumes the speaker's admission of the occurrence of the offence and thus accepting some degree of responsibility. Lack of intent expressions can either be expressed with a neutral realisation or be accompanied by mentioning the offence. In the Moroccan Arabic data, most of the responses assigned to lack of intent refer to the offence committed.

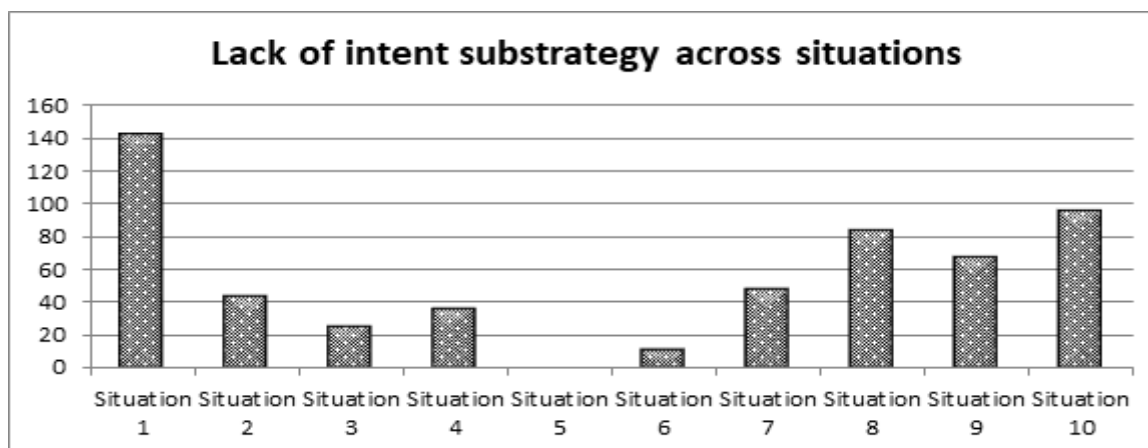


Figure 5. Distribution of lack of intent sub-strategy across situations

Statement of the offence

Statement of the offence sub-strategy of taking on responsibility was realised in four situations, namely situation 1 (Stained book) (n=15; 15.62%), situation 2 (Late friend) (n=31; 32.29%), situation 4 (Forgetting to wash father's car) (n=42; 43.75%), and situation 6 (Disturbing a little sister) (n=8; 8.33%). Thus, for the native speakers of Moroccan Arabic, the most appropriate context for the statement of offence sub-strategy is where low social distance exists between the interlocutors.

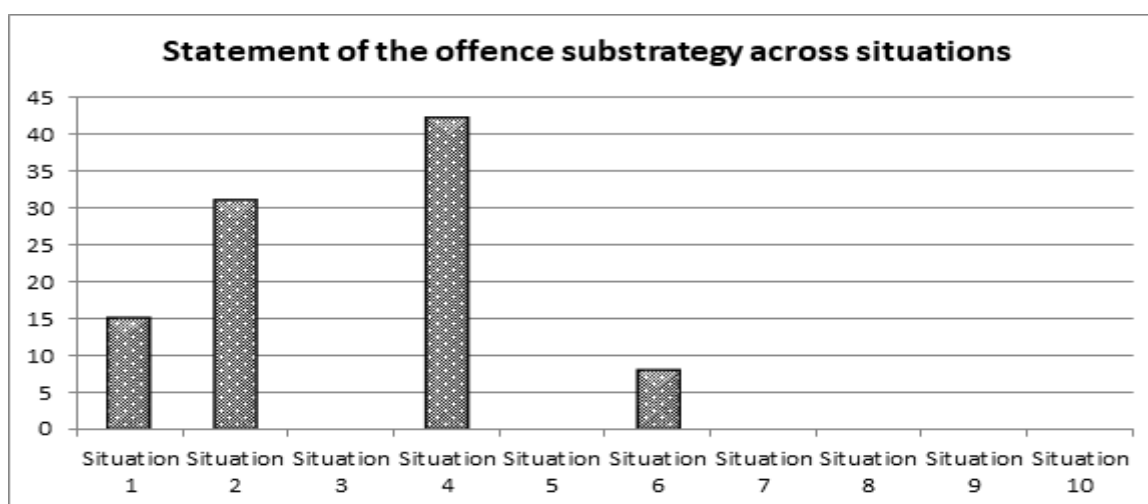


Figure 6. Distribution of statement of the offence sub-strategy across situations

However, in the Moroccan Arabic data, this sub-strategy is not solely dependent on low social distance. The most frequent realisation of the statement of the offence sub-strategy amounts to 43.75% in situation 4 (Forgetting to wash father's car) of (n=96) occurrences of this strategy in my data. Even though scenario 4 combines low social distance and high social status, the participants do not perceive or pretend not to interpret this family situation as an offensive act.

This reflects the idea that a statement of the offence is a favourable subformula of taking on responsibility among the native speakers of Moroccan Arabic, especially when the offence committed is perceived to have a low degree of severity of the offence combined with low social distance regardless of the social dominance of the offended party. Furthermore, the speaker's responsibility is so clear in the description of scenarios 1, 2, 4, and 6 that the face-threat associated with stating the offence in these situations is relatively minimal, which may also justify the preference for this strategy.

Expressing embarrassment

Expressing embarrassment is generally associated with a high face-threat as the speaker feels discomfort of having done something offensive. Embarrassment is frequently expressed through conventionalised utterances that stress the apologiser's humiliation as a result of a serious offence, though they do not explicitly acknowledge responsibility for the offence. This sub-formula of taking on responsibility was not used in all situations by the Moroccan Arabic respondents except in situation 1 (Stained book) and situation 10 (Security guard), where they amount to only (n=18) and (n=3) cases, respectively.

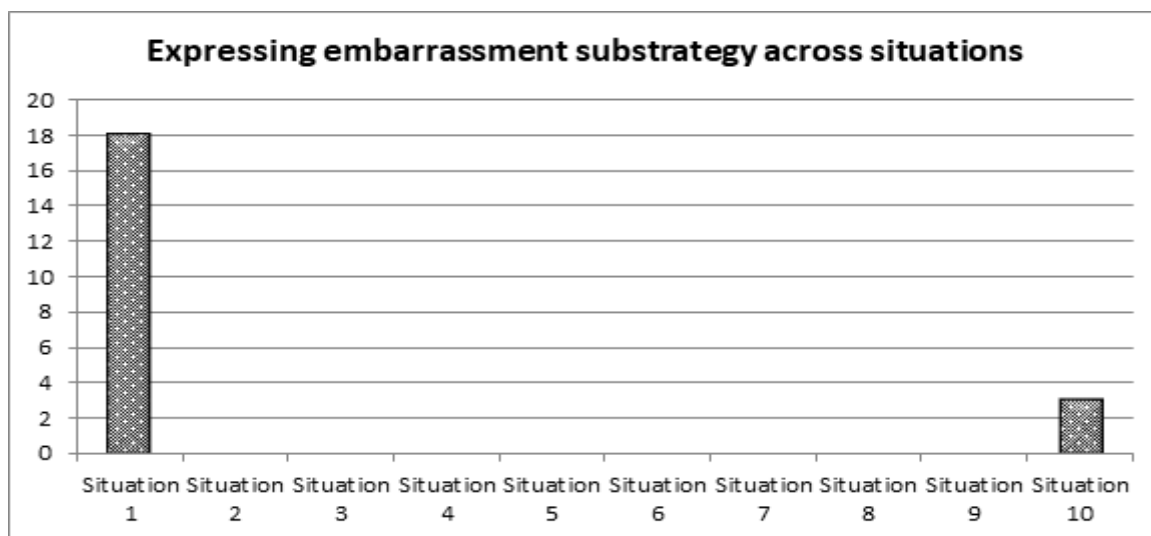


Figure 7. Distribution of expressing embarrassment sub-strategy across situations

The fact that the Moroccan subjects used this substrategy in only two situations indicates that it is a situation-specific strategy, associated with offences of a high degree of severity. Moreover, the sporadic employment of expressing embarrassment could be linked to the relatively high face-threat of this sub-strategy for the apologiser. Correspondingly, the responses of embarrassment found in my data implicitly admit having done something that the hearer may find offensive, without explicitly referring to the offensive act.

Justifying the hearer

A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Apologies by Moroccan Native Speakers of Arabic

The fifth sub-formula justifying the hearer is generally regarded as an implicit apology strategy acknowledging a low level of responsibility for the offence, thus considered to be relatively low face-threatening to the speaker. Although expressions of justifying the hearer do not explicitly acknowledge responsibility, they demonstrate the apologiser's care for the apologiser's feeling to minimise the impact of the offence committed. Justifying the hearer sub-strategy was exclusively used in situation 1 (Stained book) with a low frequency of (n=14) responses. This could be related to the lower social distance and lower social status characterising this scenario.

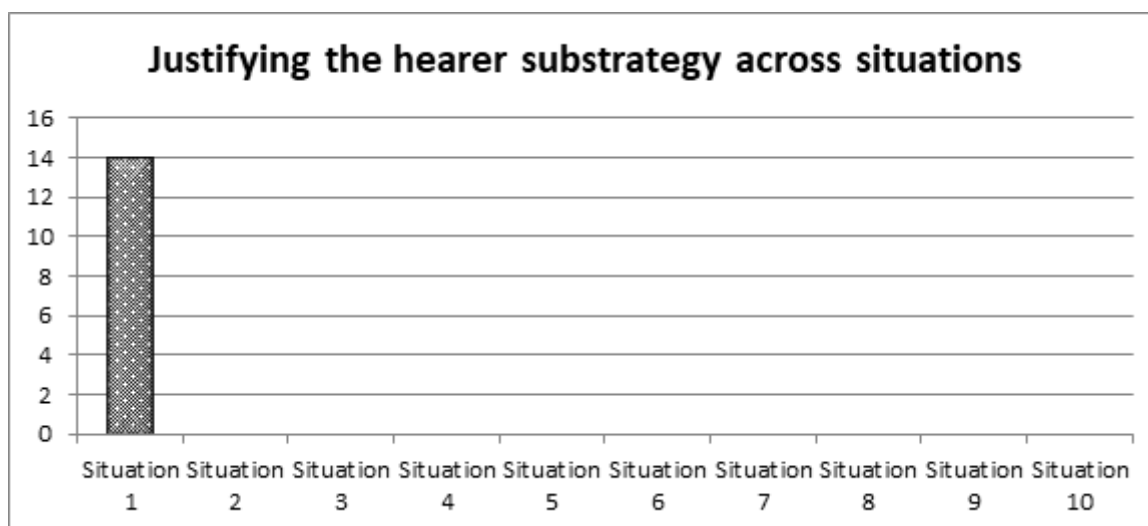


Figure 8. Distribution of justifying the hearer sub-strategy across situations

Expressing trait of self-deficiency

Expressing the trait of self-deficiency as a sub-strategy of taking on responsibility was frequently used by the Moroccan Arabic respondents to acknowledge the responsibility for the offence. This could be traced back to the implicit aspect of this sub-formula in assuming the responsibility of the committed offence. Thus, it is less likely than the other sub-strategies of responsibility acceptance to threaten the positive face of the apologiser.

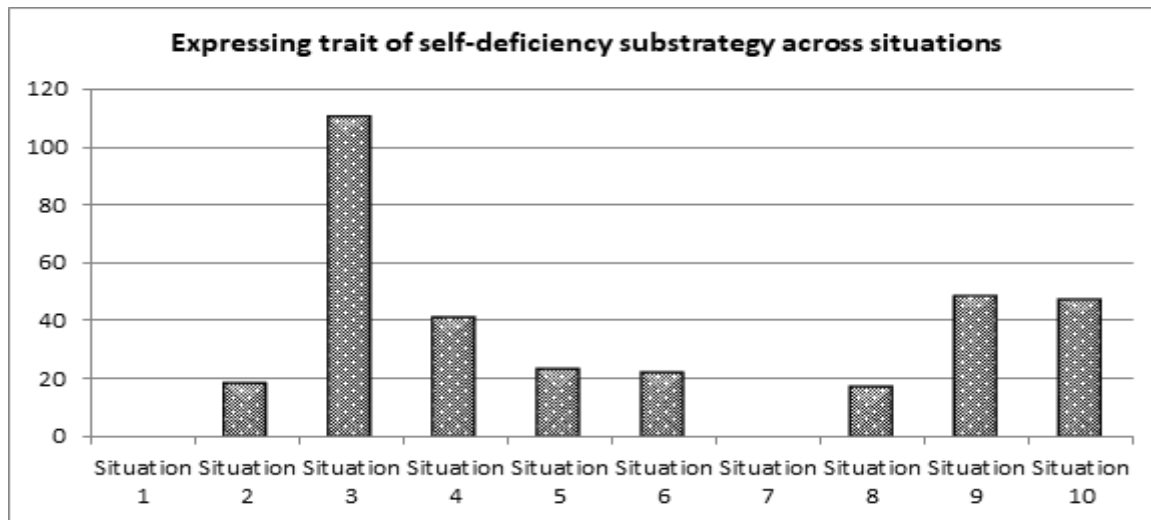


Figure 9. Distributing of expressing trait of self-deficiency substrategy across situations

In my data, the Moroccan subjects showed a marked preference for this substrategy, particularly in situation 3 (Forgetting a professor's book), where it was used (n=110) times, which largely adhered to the description provided in the scenario (forgetting), making up 33% of all instances of expressing trait of self-deficiency in the current study. This type of acknowledging responsibility aimed to strengthen the IFID and was usually accompanied by an offer of repair to emphasise the apologise's attempt to re-establish harmony with the offended and/or emphasise the non-intentionality of the offence.

Concern for the hearer

The function of this sub-strategy aims to "reinforce the sincerity of the apology presented and to show the apologise's concern for the offended person" (Lubecka 2000, 170). It aims at restoring social equilibrium by repairing the damage caused by the offence. This sub-strategy was infrequent among Moroccan Arabic native speakers. In the data, there are only (n=48) cases of this strategy. All the cases were identified in the time offence in situation 2 (Late friend) and the space offence described in situation 9 (Bumping into a well-dressed man), which could result in physical damage to the offended.

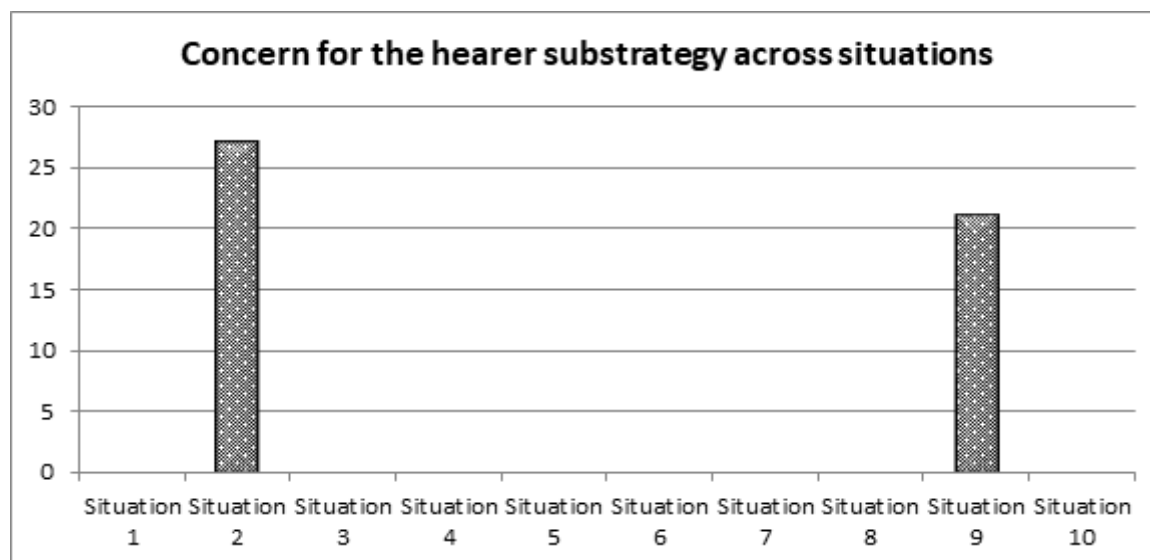


Figure 10. Distribution of concern for the hearer sub-strategy across situations

All the realisations of concern for the hearer were found in my data aimed at maintaining a good future friendship with the offended party in situation 2 and that no physical harm is caused in situation 9. The Moroccan Arabic respondents' low preference for expressions of concern for the hearer is divided into two categories. Negative form questions characterise the first category of this sub-strategy. However, the Moroccan Arabic realisations of handling time and space offences tend to be face-threatening in the second category because they give the speaker a stake in the outcome of the offence. That is to say, the apologisee is explicitly represented as the agent responsible for the potential damage.

4.1.3. Explanation or account of the cause

In the CCSARP, explanation or account of the cause apology strategy is seen as a form of “self-justification by explaining the source of the offence as caused by external factors over which the speaker has no control” (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 21). Hence, an explanation or account of the cause is viewed as a less face-threatening apology strategy requiring the acknowledgement of responsibility for committing an offence.

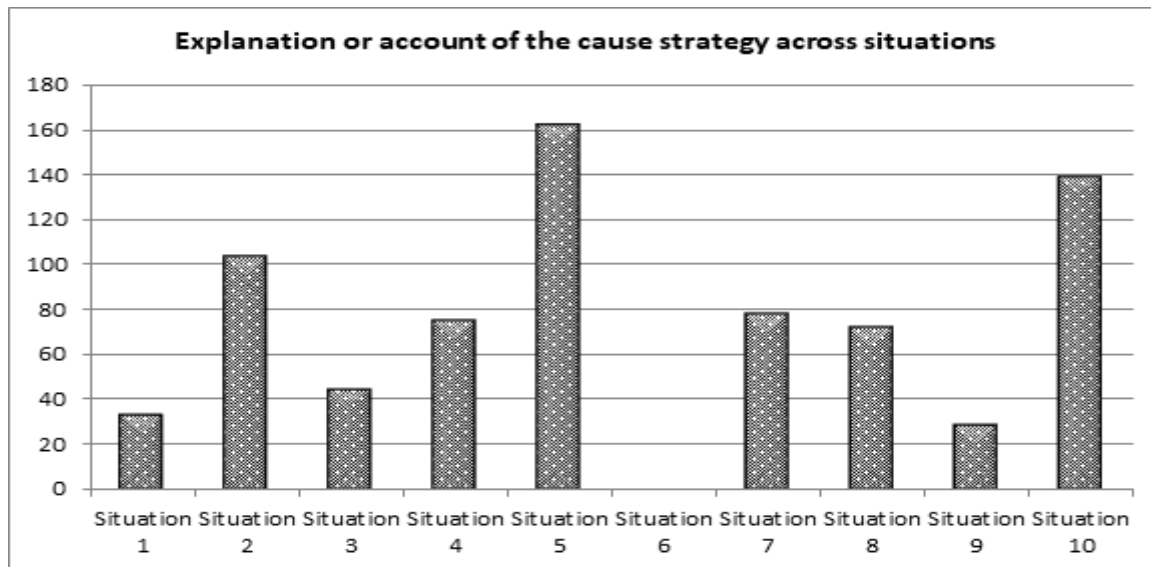


Figure 11. Distribution of explanation or account of the cause strategy across situations

In my data, three scenarios exhibit a high frequency of 55% of all the explanation or account of the cause apology occurrences, namely: situation 5 (Forgetting a student's term paper) (n=162; 22%), situation 10 (Security guard) (n=139; 18%), and situation 2 (Late friend) (n=103; 14%). In scenario 5, for example, the professor's own duties and academic obligations are frequently mentioned as the most common factors causing the offence.

The marked preference for explanation or account of the cause strategy can also be attributed to the speaker's tendency to provide some plausible justifications or excuses for their action, thus showing a strong desire to save their face. Providing an explanation or account of the cause and claiming non-awareness is also a similar method of justifying one's behaviour, emphasising the non-intentionality nature of the offence. Furthermore, the Moroccan Arabic respondents tended to highlight more pressing commitments when making an apology for failing to keep a promise.

In some other instances, the Moroccan subjects named some external factors, and thereby made their responsibility for the offence appear minor. The apologise assigns the responsibility for the offence to an external factor by using the passive voice, sometimes without having to mention it. Alternatively, the external factor can be explicitly specified.

Whereas several realisations of explanation or account of the cause strategy appeared in almost all scenarios with varying frequencies, situation 6 (disturbing a little sister) was the only context which lacked this apology strategy. This can be attributed to the Moroccan Arabic respondents' preference for denying responsibility, indicating a careless attitude towards the little sister's lower social status, without having to justify their offensive behaviour in this scenario.

4.1.4. Offer of repair

According to Cohen and Olshtain (1994), when performing an offer of repair, the offender "makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage that resulted from the infraction" (1994, p. 144, cited in Ogiermann, 2009, p. 180). The Moroccan Arabic respondents used (n=847) instances of this strategy, which is equivalent to 18% of the total strategies found in my data. A total of (n=83; 10%) responses consist solely of an offer of repair.

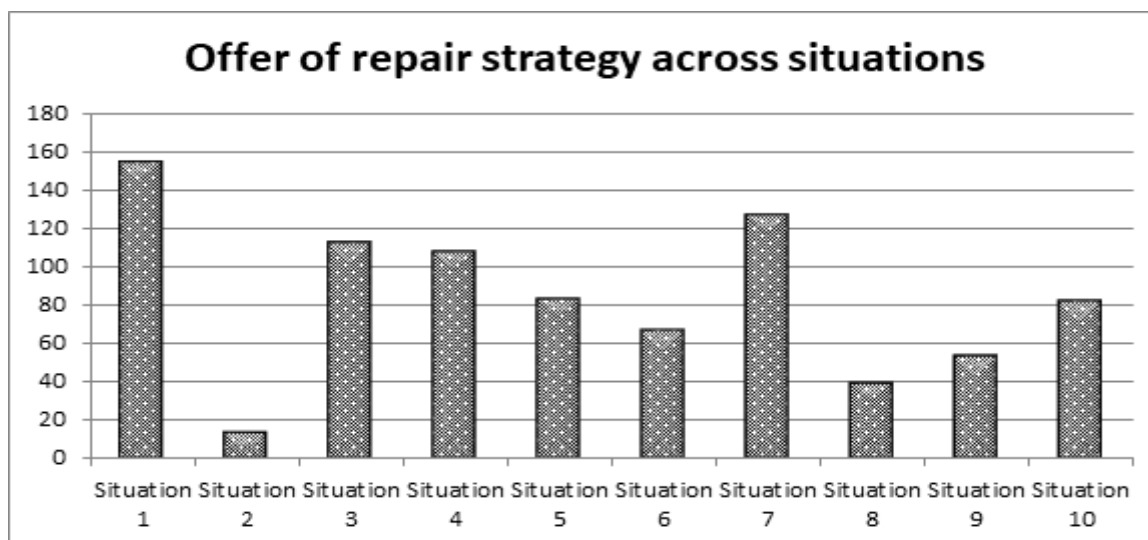


Figure 12. Distribution of offer of repair strategy across situations

In the data, this type of offer of repair strategy, particularly in situation 6 (Disturbing a little sister), situation 7 (Occupied library seat), and situation 8 (Wrong suitcase), may not result in an apology. The co-occurrence of the remaining (n=764; 90%) offers of repair with other strategies are anticipated to act as positive politeness strategies, highlighting the sincere intent of the apology and the apologiser's concern for the offended person. Two different categories of offers of repair –direct and indirect offers of repair –can be employed to address the damage of an offence.

Direct offers of repair

In my data, the Moroccan Arabic respondents showed a great preference for verbal offers of repair (n=835; 98%), with a total of (n=678; 80%) can be classified as direct. Compensation for the offence without performing an IFID is the most direct possibility found in the data. Here, the Moroccan respondents mentioned acts which intended to repair the offence without making an explicit apology, indicating the apologiser's high intention to compensate for the offence.

The future tense phrases that notify the offended party of the actions which the apologisee would take to make up for the harm are the most common realisations of direct offers of repair. The interrogative form was also used by the Moroccan subjects to express some of the direct realisations of offers of repair.

Indirect offers of repair

While direct offers of repair are frequently focused on the apologisee's face needs, thus reflecting the apologisee's desire to maintain the relationship with the offended person, indirect offers of repair may be oriented by concern for both parties' face needs. When performing an indirect offer of repair, the apologisee simply proposes repairing the damage, leaving it up to the offended person to decide whether to accept or decline the compensation suggested.

In my data, the Moroccan Arabic respondents exhibited a marked preference for indirect offers of repair in which they implicitly make suggestions in the form of a question. This type of indirect offer of repair could be interpreted as a request for permission, in which the offended person's judgement on the appropriateness of the proposed compensation is taken into consideration. Indirect offers of repair, however, may not always be oriented by concern for the offended person's facial needs because the apologisee's hesitation to give a direct offer of repair may also be a factor in the choice of a more attentive interrogative construction.

The speaker's hesitation is more clearly expressed when direct offers of repair are supplemented by conditional phrases. When performing such utterances, the apologisee implicitly expresses his or her willingness to compensate for the offence while actually expecting the offended to fee him or her from compensation.

Promise of forbearance

The promise of forbearance apology strategy is typically made in potentially repeated offences, making this strategy particularly context-specific. This type of context-specific promise of forbearance constitutes a major aspect of the apology. However, they serve as an intensifier in offensive situations where the offence has been committed for the first time. The promise of forbearance is perceived as a positive politeness strategy when the apologisee considers the future relationship with the offended person as particularly significant and that repeated offensive behaviours threaten the harmony of their future relationship.

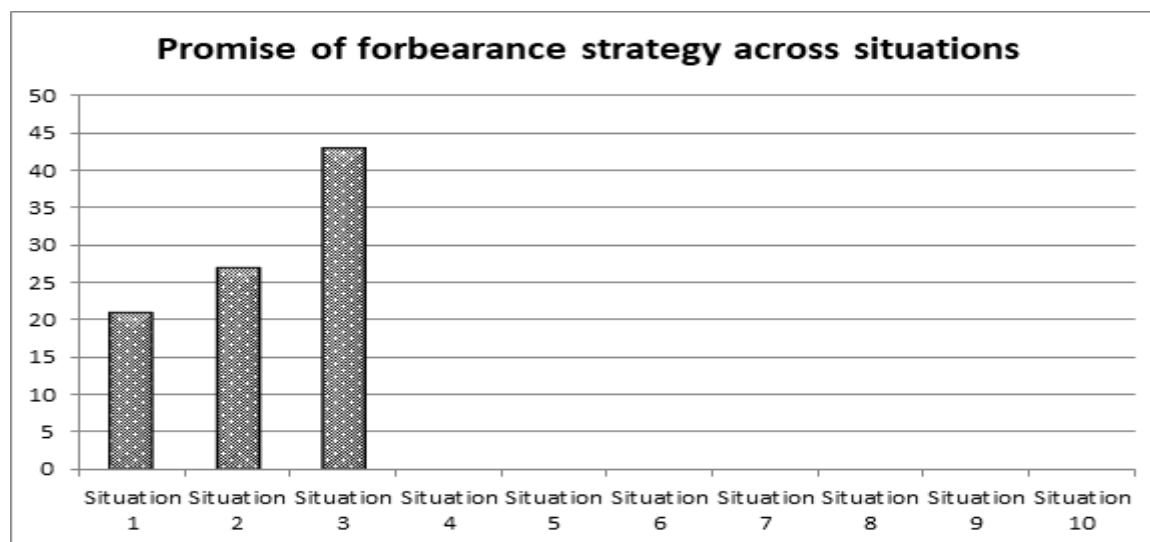


Figure 13. Distribution of promise of forbearance strategy across situations

In the Moroccan data, the total number of promises of forbearance amounts to (n=91) responses. These responses mostly occurred in only three situations, namely situation 1 (Stained book) (n=21; 23%), situation 2 (Late friend) (n=27; 29%), and situation 3 (Forgetting a professor's book) (n=43; 47%), where the apologisers are particularly interested in maintaining a good future relationship with their friends in situation 1 and 2, and their university professor in situation 3.

Most promises of forbearance in the data do not mention the circumstances of the offence; instead, they just include formulaic expressions to put an end to the recurrence of the offence. Promises of forbearance which explicitly address the circumstances of the offence were also frequent among the Moroccan Arabic respondents. Some realisations of this strategy additionally include verbs indicating the apologiser's strong desire to keep the promise. The performative *tanwa:3dak* 'I promise' also occurs in the Moroccan data.

4.2. New apology strategies in the Moroccan Arabic data

The Moroccan Arabic data have shown a variety of new apology strategies outside the coding scheme adopted in the study. It is worth mentioning that not all of these novel apologies were discussed in earlier research on Arabic varieties reviewed in the current study.

Table 3. New apology strategies in the Moroccan Arabic data

New Apology Strategy	Situation										n
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Swearing	27	0	34	12	0	0	0	0	24	0	97

Requiring the offended not to get angry	35	28	0	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	85
Humour	9	17	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	4	40
Determinism	19	13	5	0	0	0	0	18	0	12	67
Reassuring the hearer	0	0	0	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	37
Questioning	0	0	0	0	21	0	5	6	0	0	32
Minimising the severity of the offence	23	22	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	52
Metaphor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	0	0	15
Acting innocently	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	7

4.2.1. Swearing

The impact of religion was evident in the use of apologies in some situations. When apologising for both minor and serious offences, the Moroccan subjects turned to swearing. The usual semantic formula of swearing in Moroccan Arabic is often lexically exemplified by *والله wlla:h* which is literally and pragmatically translated into 'By Allah' or 'By God'. Most of the Moroccan Arabic respondents showed their tendency to use swearing to assume responsibility for the offence and display intention in offering sincere apologies.

4.2.2. Requiring the offended not to get angry

The Moroccan Arabic respondents preferred to broaden the variety of apology strategies to show respect and consideration for the offended person by using the apology strategy of requiring the offended not to get angry. The selection of this strategy indicates the Moroccan subjects' recognition of how crucial it is to maintain harmony with the offended party. By displaying a careful attitude towards the offended person's feelings, the Moroccan subjects tended to reduce the severity of the offence and the damage caused to the positive face of both parties, indicating the speaker's concern about the future relationship with the offended. This strategy was of relatively high frequency in situation 1 (Stained book) (n=35; 17,5%), situation 2 (Late friend) (n=28; 14%), and situation 4 (Forgetting to wash father's car) (n=22; 11%). Moroccan respondents' resort to this new strategy in these scenarios stressed the perceived face-threat underlying these offences.

4.2.3. Humour

The data analysis also showed that apologies are occasionally performed in a lighthearted manner as a face-saving move to refrain from apologising, especially in friendship and family

contexts: situation 1 (Stained book) (n=9; 4,5%), situation 2 (Late friend) (n=17; 8,5%), and situation 6 (Disturbing a little sister) (n=10; 5%), which could be interpreted as an indicator that low-status friends and family members should not frequently apologise to one another.

4.2.4. Determinism

Determinism is strategically employed to serve as a reminder to the offended party that such non-attention offence is predetermined to happen to everyone, attributing the offence to external factors. In the data, the use of this new apology strategy indicates that the offence was inevitable, which significantly reduces both the severity of the offence and the apologiser's responsibility as well.

4.2.5. Reassuring the hearer

Reassuring the hearer strategy implicitly demonstrates the apologiser's desire to repair the offence, without making specific offers of repair. Therefore, this strategy can be viewed as an implicit type of offer of repair in that the apologiser presents some personal details that might quieten down the offended party's annoyance. This strategy implies that the Moroccan respondents either do not perceive a situation as an offence or pretend not to interpret it as such, therefore displaying a highly face-saving tendency.

This strategy was exclusively used with high incidence in situation 4 (Forgetting to wash father's car) (n=37; 18,5%), where the offender couldn't keep a promise. The Moroccan subjects justified forgetting to wash the father's car by *reassuring the offended*, explaining that they were just about to start washing it, without performing an IFID.

4.2.6. Questioning

The data presents a new strategy of questioning in which the Moroccan respondents tried to save face by claiming they had forgotten about a scheduled date in situation 5 (Forgetting a student's term paper) (n=21; 10,5%) or asking about the offended person's properties in situation 7 (Occupied library seat) (n=5; 2,5%) and situation 8 (Wrong suitcase) (n=6; 3%).

4.2.7. Minimising the severity of the offence

The strategy of minimising the severity of the offence is mainly concerned with minimising the offensiveness of the situation rather than the offender's responsibility for the offence. However, the less offensive the behaviour is, the less face-loss it implies to assume responsibility, classifying this new strategy as a method used by the Moroccan subjects to reduce the threat to the apologiser's face and absorb the anger of the offended person.

4.2.8. Metaphor

Likewise, the use of metaphor as another newly employed apology strategy occurred in the Moroccan Arabic data aimed to enhance the chances for apology acceptance. In the data,

metaphorical expressions were used by the Moroccan respondents for remedial purposes. They are not usually intended to belittle the damage inflicted, but they were employed as an intentional attempt to ease the tension and thereby put the issue under control.

4.2.9. Acting innocently

The strategy *acting innocently* is a more indirect form of denying responsibility as it does not exclude the possibility of the speaker's accidental involvement in the offence. Formulaic expressions of acting innocently identified in the data are restricted to situation 1 (Stained book) (n=5; 2,5%) and situation 10 (Security guard) (n=2; 1%), justifying speaker's innocence and emphasising the accidental nature of the offence.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study has investigated the production of apology strategies in Moroccan Arabic and revealed some culture-specific aspects of what constitutes an apology in Moroccan Arabic and culture. Empirically, looking into the realisation patterns of apology strategies in the Moroccan Arabic, elicited by the Discourse Completion Task, were the major concerns of this study. Through incorporating Brown and Levinson's concept of face into the classification of apology strategies, this research study has shown that though these strategies proved to be consistent with the coding scheme developed by Cohen and Olshtain (1981), Olshtain and Cohen (1983), and the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) coding scheme used by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984), the illocutionary forces assigned to these strategies in the Moroccan Arabic are culture-specific. Also, a wide range of new apology strategies have been identified in the Moroccan Arabic data. Interestingly, not all these new apology strategies were found in the previous studies on Arabic varieties reported in the literature review. Therefore, it could be argued that these new apology strategies are culture-specific.

The distribution of IFIDs in the different social categories of the situations provides insight on culture-specific perspectives of the sociocultural conditions. The contextual factors of social distance and relative power characterising the speaker-hearer relationship are obviously correlated with the distribution of IFIDs in the Moroccan Arabic. Looking into the structure of the IFIDs in the Moroccan Arabic has been one of the major concerns of this study. The results show that in spite of the numerous possibilities for IFIDs realisation, the native speakers of Moroccan Arabic tended to resort to the most conventional expression of regret *smaHli* 'sorry'. Although the fact that the severity of the offence seems to be the major factor that determines apologising in the Moroccan Arabic, this research study displayed a sensitive tendency of the Moroccan subjects to the severity of the offence correlated with social distance, social power,

A Socio-Pragmatic Study of Apologies by Moroccan Native Speakers of Arabic

and type of the offence committed. It is noticed, for example, that the lesser degree of the social distance between the apologiser and the offended person is likely to minimise the perception of the severity of the offence, regardless of the high relative power of the offended person. The findings also suggested that the native speakers of Moroccan Arabic are metapragmatically sociocultural-oriented. In other words, the sociopragmatic conditions of apology politeness function at a level where the interlocutors' relationship is the focus and interpersonal harmony is highly valued.

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