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A Comparative Analysis of Apology Strategy between Turkish EFL Learners and Native Speakers of English

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to compare the usage of the speech act of apology by Turkish learners of English as a foreign language (EFL Learners) and native speakers of English (L1 Learners). To this end, an Oral Discourse Completion Task (Oral DCT) including eight different situations was given to each 16 EFL and L1 learners. The questionnaire was adopted from Istifci's research (2009) which was adapted from Tunçel (1999) and the data-sets were analyzed according to Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) apology speech act set. The findings of this study demonstrated some similarities and differences in terms of the frequency and the type of strategies employed by the participants in those situations. The cultural background and L1 effect on non-native speakers can be one of the reasons for these differences, and the similarities between these two groups might be due to non-native speakers' high level of English proficiency as they were studying at the department of English Language Teaching.

Keywords: Speech acts; cross-cultural lingusitics; apology; pragmatics.

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1. Introduction

Language can be defined as a system through which all living organisms communicate with each other. Therefore, language is a way which meets the needs of individuals in a community. As human beings, we have the most sophisticated language pattern as we have the ability to think even across the universe. However, as Nakajima (2002) asserts, it is not enough only to know the grammar or phonology of the target language. To maintain meaningful relations among us, we mainly use pragmatics to transfer the data. As Richards, Platt and Weber (1985, as cited in Deveci, 2009) point this out as a speech act, which is an essential unit in the way people talk to each other and may be one of the most crucial elements of pragmatics.

Pragmatics is a study in which a listener tries to identify the underlying meaning in the utterances of the speaker. Therefore, it involves the effect of the context on the utterances, the relationship between the listener and the speaker and the effect of what is unsaid by the speaker. This broad area of the pragmatics makes it hard to grasp the fundamental elements that cause the speakers to use pragmatics. In addition, owing to the fact that it is so hard to analyze the actual process of the human brain during a communication, it may be a very frustrating area of study, as Yule (1996) asserts.

Many research studies have been conducted on different speech acts in different languages and the results have demonstrated the influential role of tradition and culture on the production of the target language. Therefore, as Wolfson (1989), Harlow (1990), and Schmidt and Richards (1980, as cited in İstifçi, 2009) identify the fact that when people learn a foreign language, they have difficulty in adapting to the use of the speech acts in the target language because people from different environments have different habits and informal rules which determine their way of speaking. One of the main reasons behind this situation is the cross-cultural differences which have an effect on the way people talk, i.e., a speech act used in a language may differ. As Bataineh and Bataineh (as cited in Aydın, 2013) exemplify that people from Jordan culture expect a further explanation for a fault while people from Japan are satisfied when 'I'm sorry' is uttered by the speaker. A speaker should pay attention to the rules of the language that he/she learns. Researchers mostly focus on the differences observed between the languages that can be seen as mistakes in communication in order to pave the way for making L2 speakers more aware of their outputs. Hinkel (2017) states that with the help of explicit instruction, L2 speakers start having fewer mistakes.

2. Literature Review

Speech Acts

A speech act can be defined as the action performed by means of utterances. In other words, the speech acts are the core units of human communication. As Aydın (2013) stresses, the speech acts have some linguistic properties. Apology, request, compliment, or refusal are some of these properties that people use to interact with each other in their daily lives.

Austin and Searle (as cited in İrman, 1996) have made a distinction between what is actually said (locution act), what is intended by what is said (illocution act) and what is done by what is said (perlocution act). Due to the fact that they have been the concern of the researchers, illocutionary speech acts have some classifications. For example, as Searle (as cited in İstifçi 2009) states, 'representatives', 'directives', 'commissives', 'expressive' and 'declarations' are some of the basic types of the illocutionary act. As Trasborg (1995) asserts, representatives are the descriptions of propositional contents of the utterance. Directives are the attempts of the speaker for making the hearer perform a verbal or non-verbal action in the future. Commissives are the speakers' commissions of themselves for the things related to the future. Expressives are the statements of the speaker's thoughts about any situation. Declarations are the announcements of the statements.

Speech Act of Apology

An apology is defined as the indemnificatory statement used by a speaker to compensate his/her harmful behaviour towards someone as suggested by Bergman and Kasper (as cited in Çetinavcı, 2013). By apologizing, the speaker recognizes the fact that a violation of a social norm has been committed and admits to the fact that he or she is at least partially involved in its cause (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Hence, apologies involve loss of face for the speaker and support for the hearer.

Many researchers classify apology in different ways. Fraser (as cited in Çetinavcı 2013) states that the types of apology changes in terms of the social environment, culture, the familiarity of people and the intensity of the situation. According to him, when the offence is severe, people tend to give excuses, consolidation or compensation in addition to an apology.

What people say always has an effect on the hearer of that speech. Therefore, there might be some different ways of understanding the utterance of the speaker by the hearer. In order not to have a bad effect on the hearer of the utterance or to make a compensation of what is misunderstood by them, these speakers use 'apology'. To apologize when you cause an unwanted outcome is necessary for healthy and reasonable relationships. Nevertheless, to be able to apologize at the correct form is as important as the action itself. So, apologizing is a fundamental communication tool not only for native speakers but also for non-native speakers of the target language. For this reason, English training institutions should provide the learners with sufficient knowledge of the speech act of the target language. Being one of these institutions, METU supplies its students with a good education in English. However, when it comes to using the speech acts of L2, students are not competent enough to express themselves clearly in the target language. Therefore, this study

aims to investigate FLE students, who are supposed to have the highest level of English, in order to gain insight into the foreign language education system of METU especially in terms of the apology speech acts used in English.

Aim and the Significance of the Study

Violating social norms creates a need for an apology to compensate for the unwanted behaviour. While communicating, people make a lot of mistakes; and therefore, they feel a need to apologize for each other when they feel guilty. Therefore, in this research study, a communicative atmosphere has been provided by the researchers to obtain natural responses from the participants who used apology strategies as answers to the questions. Early research studies have made some analysis on the speech acts used by native and non-native speakers of English. These studies involve DCT, multiple-choice DCT and role play as data collection tools. However, most of the researchers who preferred to use the DCT applied these tests in written form in which participants had time to think about their answers, or maybe to change their answers. Therefore, this study used Oral DCT as data collection tools. In this method, the learners uttered what they would say in each situation and their responses were recorded and transcribed by the researchers. In other words, the participants gave their answers while their voices were recorded by the researchers. The reason why in this study oral DCT was used is to supply the participants with an authentic atmosphere. So, the participants did not have the chance to think about or change their answers.

This research study aims to indicate the preferences of apology strategies used by both native and non-native speakers of English. By doing so, the study also makes a comparison between Turkish EFL learners' and English native speakers' responses in terms of frequency of using different types of apology strategies. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the differences between the Turkish EFL learners and native speakers of English L1 learners in terms of using apology in English?

2. What are the most frequent combinations of apology strategies adopted Turkish EFL learners and English L1 learners?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants were 16 native speakers of English who were Manchester Metropolitan University students and 16 non-native speakers of English who were the students of the Department of Foreign Language Education (FLE) at METU. The FLE students were chosen as participants because they were considered as the students having the most native-like English at METU. They were 3rd-year students of FLE. They were totally 6 male and 9 female students whose ages range between 20-22. We chose 16 of them in order to equate the number with the number of native speakers.

The participants that were native speakers of English living in the UK. They were from different departments at Manchester Metropolitan University. Their age ranged between 20-25 and they were 11 females and 5 males. The participants didn't know that they were measured in terms of the types of their responses to the questions and the strategies they adopted in their answers. This was done in order not to let them manipulate their answers and have their real responses in those situations.

3.2. Instrumentation

The Oral DCT includes 8 situations taken from İstifçi's research (2009). The situations were read by the researcher and the participants were recorded while answering the questions. They were asked to listen to the situations, put themselves in those situations and say what they would say in each situation. The average time of recording was 5 minutes per person. First, the researchers listened and then transcribed the responses.

3.2.1 Discourse Completion Test

The Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was taken from Tunçel (1999) and it had been adapted from other DCTs used in literature. The original version of the test consisted of 14 apology situations and

Table 1. Overall data analysis and percentage share

	Native		Non-native	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
IFID	140	35%	155	37%
Repair	115	28.8%	100	23.8%
Explanation	55	13.8%	65	15.5%
Acknowledging responsibility	35	8.7%	30	7.1%
Forbearance	40	10%	20	4.7%
Exclamation	15	3.7%	50	11.9%
Total	400	100%	420	100%

they had been pilot tested before the actual study. The reliability of the test was 75%. The test in this study consisted of 8 situations which were taken from Tunçel (1999) and they started with a description of the situation. The subjects were wanted to write the first thing that came into their minds. The situations in this study were organized according to the severity of the offense and social status of the apologizer and apologizee (see Appendix A for the discourse completion test).

3.3. Data Analysis

The responses were transcribed and analyzed according to Cohen and Olshtain's (1981) apology coding scheme. Later, the answers were categorized as primary and sub-nets with the help of Cohen and Olshtain's (as cited in İstifçi, 2009) main five categories of the apology strategies as:

1. An expression of apology (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device IFID)

    a) An expression of regret (e. g. I'm sorry)

    b) An offer of apology (e.g. I apologize)

    c) A request for forgiveness (e.g. excuse me, forgive me)

2. An offer of repair/redress (REPR) (e.g. I'll pay for your damage)

3. An explanation of an account (EXPL) (e.g. I missed the bus)

4. Acknowledging responsibility for the offence (RESP) (e.g. It's my fault)

5. A promise of forbearance (FORB) (e.g. I'll never forget it again)

    And one more strategy i.e. exclamation was added by the researchers.

6. Exclamation (EXL!) (expressing surprise) (e.g. Oh!)

4. Results

To answer the first question, the data collected from Turkish EFL learners and English native speakers were analyzed based on the percentage of their frequency of usage. The data from Oral DCT was transcribed and coded according to Cohen and Olshtain (1981) classification of the speech act of apology. The number of each strategy was calculated and the total number of each strategy for native and non-native participants was used as comparison tools. Table 1 demonstrates those apology strategies elicited from Turkish EFL learners and English native speakers.

As shown in the table, *IFID* (e.g. I'm sorry, I apologize, Excuse me) is the most commonly used strategy by both native and non-native subjects. Native subjects used IFID strategy in 35% of situations while non-native subjects used it in 37% of situations. The finding shows that non-native participants were not creative in terms of using new excuses and expressions in L2. Instead, they tried to apply the structure "I'm sorry." without any further explanation in most situations. To exemplify, a non-native participant answered as:

"*I'm really sorry because the conditions were not appropriate for me to come for the meeting.*" In contrast, a native speaker said: "*Look I was doing something else, so I hope you could understand. Next time we'll catch up.*"

Table 2. Detailed version of IFID (illocutionary force indicating device)

	Native		Non-native	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
A (regret)	80	57.1%	115	74.2%
B (apology)	50	35.8%	25	16.2%
C (forgiveness)	10	7.1%	15	9.6%
Total	140	100%	155	100%

Moreover, a non-native participant uttered: "*I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry. Oh my God! I'm so sorry.*" so as to emphasize her regret. On the other hand, one of the native subjects just uttered: "I do apologize."

The second most commonly used strategy by native and non-native speakers was *repaired* (e.g. I'll pay your damage) in 28.8% and 23.8% of situations respectively. For example, in situation 3, a native speaker responded as: "I will pay for anything" whereas a non-native speaker uttered: "I know it's my fault and can pay the damage." In addition to this, a native speaker said: "I'll do anything to make it up to you. If I can do anything to help, then just ask." In contrast, most non-native subjects uttered: "I will bring it to you as soon as possible." Furthermore, native participants said: "Is there anything I can do?" and "Can I do anything for you? Can I get anything for you?" This situation also differs from the ones in non-native subjects: "Can I help you with the bags? I can carry them if you like until the place you're going.","I was in a very hurry but let me pick up your bags" and "I'll pick your bags and get you to the hospital and I will cover your expenditures." (see Table 7).

The third commonly used strategy by both groups of participants was an explanation (e.g. My daughter was ill. So, I took her to hospital.) which was used 13.8% by native and 15.5% by non-native subjects. In these situations, native speakers said:

"*Look I was doing something else, so I hope you could understand*", "*I have no real excuse apart from I honestly forgot.*", "*I was in a dream world, I'm really sorry.*", "*I've been busy. I know that's not a good excuse, but it won't happen again.*" and "*Oh, I really just forgot.*" These explanations include less detailed information than the answers of non-native subjects:

"*Sorry, I fell asleep and it won't happen again.*", "*I was just preparing and I was tired. Sorry, it was slow for me.*", "*The book was so fascinating that I forgot to bring it back to you.*", "*I couldn't finish the book because I had some works to do and I was very busy.*" and "*I overslept, and I couldn't remember to wake up on time.*" Also while explaining the situation, non-native speakers of English put the blame on themselves in a more destructive way while native speakers of English did not put themselves in an unfavourable way as offenders. For instance, one of the non-native speakers of English uttered: "I*'m really sorry, I don't know what to say. It was my irresponsibility.*" Also, one of the non- native subjects said: "*I'm sorry, I'm so clumsy*". However, neither in this situation nor any other, none of the native speakers of English referred themselves in an unfavourable way as offenders fourth often used strategy was different for either group. Native speakers used forbearance (e. g. I'll never forget it again.) in 10% of situations, whereas non-native speakers used exclamation (e.g. Oh! Oh, my God!) in 11.9% of situations, which mean that they adopted different strategies for the fourth sequence. In contrast, as fifth commonly used strategy, both groups utilized acknowledging responsibility (e.g. It's my fault.). Additionally, the least used strategy differed in both groups. Native subjects utilized exclamation in 3.7% of situations, while non-native participants used forbearance in 4.7% of situations.

As the table shows, the most commonly used strategy for IFID was expressing regret (e.g. I'm sorry.) which was the easiest and purest way of illocutionary force for both groups. However, non-native participants employed regret more than natives did. As seen in Table 2 native participants expressed their regret in 57.1% whereas non-native participants used it 74.2% of situations. Besides, it can be seen that native speakers used apology strategies almost twice more than non-native participants. In addition, native participants used the phrase "I apologize.", although non-

Table 3. The most frequently used combinations

	Native		Non-native	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**
IFID and repair with some other	25	23%	55	52.8%
IFID and repair only	65	59%	34	32.6%
IFID, explanation, forbearance	20	18%	15	14.6%

Table 4. Places of the use of IFID

	At the beginning		At the end	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Native	120	85%	20	15%
Non-native	70	45%	85	55%

native speakers used some intensifiers such as "so, very, really" with regret strategy (I'm so sorry) in order to deepen the meaning instead of using apology strategy (I apologize). As the table shows the least used strategy by both groups was forgiveness (Excuse me. / Forgive me.).

In order to answer the second research question, the most used combinations in apology speech act, the data collected through oral DCT was analyzed. The following table presents the combination of apology strategies given by the participants.

Table 3 reveals, the most used combination by native is IFID+repair. In other words, they preferred using the combination alone instead of using the other strategies with it. However, non-native speakers utilized some other techniques along with the combination of IFID+repair (see table 3). For example, a native speaker uttered:

> "*Hi. I'm really sorry for not returning that book. Aaa, I can do so for you in the next class. I'm sorry for causing such an inconvenience.*"

This shows that the speaker also used *acknowledging responsibility* which was "I'm sorry for causing such an inconvenience". Non-native speakers tended to use only one way of expressing responsibility strategy while native participants used various ways of doing so. Native speakers mostly uttered the sentences: "You're absolutely correct, I wasn't thinking.", "I appreciate your help but it was an honest mistake.", "I really didn't mean to do that. I accept it." and "I'm sorry for causing such an inconvenience.", whereas non-native participants tended to utter: "I know it's my fault.", "It was my irresponsibility.", "It's totally my mistake." and "So, It's really my fault to be this late to return it to you." These examples indicate that non-native speakers utilized less varied structures to express their feelings of grief.

The second column states the combination of IFID and Repair used by the participants with no other strategy else. To exemplify, a participant answered a question as: "*Sorry man. Can I help you up? I apologize.*" So, he used these two strategies without using any other strategy.

In the first column, IFID and Repair with some other strategies were used by native speakers 25 times (23%) although they were used by non-native speakers 55 times (52.8%). Thus, it can be concluded that non-native participants used combinations with some other strategies twice more than native speakers. In contrast, native speakers used *IFID* and *Repair* alone 65 times (59%), while non-natives used it 34 times (32.6%). Therefore, we can reach the conclusion that native speakers used IFID and Repair alone more than non-natives.

Regarding the combination of IFID, EXPLANATION and FORBEARANCE, a non-native participant answered a question by saying:

> "Yeah I see, but I was in hurry (*Explanation*). I'm so sorry to bother you (*IFID*), but I was in just a little bit hurry. It won't happen again. (*Forbearance*)"

Likewise, a native participant expressed her regret by saying:

> "I'm so sorry (*IFID*). I have a terrible memory. It won't happen again (*Forbearance*). I know that it's happened a few times, I have no real excuse apart from I honestly forgot (*Explanation*) and I do apologize and it won't happen again."

A non-native participant answered a question by saying: *"Ooooh! I'm really sorry to put you in that such situation, but I couldn't finish the book because I had some works to do and I was very busy. I hope you forgive me. Let me buy you a cup of coffee."* As seen in the example, the subject used the structure EXCL+IFID+EXPL+IFID+REP. That is, s/he inserted some other techniques between the combination of IFID+REP. Nonetheless, a native participant uttered: *"Look, man, sorry I totally forgot. I'll make it up to you I'll promise, next time."*

In order to see the differences between the native and non-native speakers' choice of the places in their answers, the places of IFID strategy used by the participants were analyzed.

According to the table, there is a big difference between native and non-native speakers in terms of their choices for the place of IFID in their answers. As it is seen, native speakers used IFID at the beginning of the sentence in 85% of situations and at the end of the sentence in 15% of situations. For example, a non-native speaker answering the question by saying:

> "I'm really sorry I was really in a hurry. I couldn't see you. So, are you hurt? Do you need any help?"

As the table shows, native speakers mostly prefer using IFID at the beginning of the apology chunks. However, when it comes to the use of IFID at the end of their speeches, non-native speakers tended to utilize the strategy four times more than native speakers while native speakers did not prefer using IFID strategy at the end. In other words, they used IFID at the beginning of apology chunk six times more than at the end and they preferred to express apology at the beginning of their speeches.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, there are various results indicating that there is a little difference between native and non-native participants in terms of using each strategy alone. As the results show IFID was the most frequently used strategies by both English native speakers and Turkish ELT learners. This finding supports Bergman and Kasper's (1993) research which was on Thai and American speakers and Demeter's (2006) study which was on Romanian and English speakers. Moreover, the results of the study showed both native and non-native speakers preferred using expressions of apology explicitly through using IFID.

Also, as shown in the result section, non-native speakers might not feel capable of expressing their regret appropriately. That is why they may have tried to reflect their grief and concern by exaggerating through repeating the same utterance in order to emphasize how they feel whereas native speakers tried to be as direct and simple as possible. This finding is consistent with Eslami-Rasekh and Mardani's (2010) study in which they stated that Iranian EFL learners transferred socio-pragmatic strategies of intensifiers from Persian into English and they overuse apology strategies even when there is little need. It is rooted in Turkish culture, i.e. exaggeration while apologizing is considered as a Turkish norm and Turkish speakers try to face their interlocutor's face by repeating the apology chunks. Moreover, this study is in line with Aydın (2013)'s research in which he concluded that native speakers of English are more direct compared to Turkish speakers of English.

Regarding the place of IFID, there is a huge difference between the two groups. This huge difference may be the result of the effect of the mother tongue on non-native participants. As Aydın (2013) found out in his research, Turkish native speakers equally used IFID at the beginning and at the end of the apology speeches. Therefore, we can conclude that the Turkish speakers of English in our study employed language transfer from L1 into L2.

As mentioned before, the repair was the second frequently used strategy by both groups. Even though the frequency of using the strategy of *repair* is similar, the extent of using this strategy is different in native and non-native participants. In other words, native speakers used much

broader compensation for the mistake than non-native subjects who only offered to fulfil the part that they damage.

Explanation strategy was also benefited from both groups nearly in the same amount but the content of the explanation varied between the two groups and native subjects used more superficial phrases. So, it can be concluded that native participants tend to apologize with less detailed information for compensating the unwanted behaviour (see Table 8).

The strategy of *acknowledging responsibility* was also utilized by both groups nearly in the same amounts. Moreover, from the answers of both groups, it can be concluded that non-native speakers tended to use only one way of expressing responsibility strategy while native participants used various ways of doing so.

In contrast to most of the results, there is a huge difference between the use of *forbearance* strategy by native and non-native participants. Native speakers used much more various ways of expressing their sadness and endurance. This may be because of the fact that they have much more knowledge of their mother tongue or that the cultural and social differences might have an effect on this case.

Surprisingly, the use of the exclamation strategy was extremely different between native and non-native participants. As table 1 indicates, non-native participants used these exclamations about 3 times more than native participants. This may be because non-native participants would feel that they were not able to express themselves in English sufficiently. Therefore, in order to express their grief and apology adequately, they might have preferred to use exclamation strategies. That's because they have so many things to say, yet limited knowledge in the target language to show and state their emotions. Therefore, it can be said that there might be so many reasons for non-native subjects to use more *exclamation* strategies than native speakers.

In the study by Suszczyn'ska (1999), it is found that native speakers of English use the combination of IFID+repair+other techniques in a sequential order more than Hungarian learners of English. Likewise, in this study, researchers found that native speakers of English use the combination of IFID+repair as a routine-like scheme. This finding showed that in contrast to non-native participants, native speakers tended to use the strategies as a chunk, without inserting some other techniques.

The researchers found some similar consequences in accordance with other previous research studies. Similar to what we observed, Istifçi (2009) found that when they use a *repair* strategy while apologizing, native participants use broader covering for the damage while non-native participants generally cover a part of the damage. On the other hand, there are some differences between this study and the previous ones. F o r e x a m p l e, i n this study, researchers found that while giving explanations, non-native participants were more detailed, whereas native participants gave more general and superficial information. However, Aydın (2013) found that non-native participants were more nonspecific in their explanations. Another contrast with the study of Aydın (2013) is that, in his study, native participants used more intensifiers than non- native speakers. However, in this study, as it can be seen from the explanation of Table 2, non-native speakers used more intensifiers along with the phrase "I'm sorry.", while native speakers preferred not using intensifiers but using "I apologize" to strengthen the meaning.

The research conducted by Suszczyn'ska (1999) revealed that under the category of the explanation technique, Hungarian speakers of English spoke about themselves, as offenders, in an unfavourable way like "I was terribly careless.", while native speakers of English did not show the same indications. Similarly, in this research, researchers found that non-native speakers of English put the blame on themselves in a more destructive way while native speakers of English did not put themselves in an unfavourable way as offenders. This result may be because of cultural differences and it seems Hungarian and Turkish cultures are close to each other in terms of the blame issue. As Suszczyn'ska (1999) states there is a need for much research studies on the culture of Hungarian and in this case Turkish culture.

The purpose of this study was to find the similarities and differences between the English native speakers and Turkish non-native speakers in terms of using apology in English. The study is

significant because, in contrast to previous research studies which were conducted on the apology strategies, this study did not use the DCT in a written form, but in oral form. That's why the researchers had a chance to learn about the first responses of the participants without thinking and interference.

The results indicated that native and non-native participants of this study used almost similar frequency of strategies in apology speech acts. It indicates that non-native participants especially advanced learners, in this research, may have almost native-like levels of L2 in pragmatic issues. However, the finding showed that there are some differences between the two groups in the content of apology expressions, the place of IFID and degree of directness. Therefore, it is suggested that syllabus designers and material developers make a list of apology situations and the strategies used by English native speakers in order to help learners to avoid negative transfer from L1 into L2. So we can conclude that teaching pragmatics and speech acts should be included in English course books as even advanced learners of English had problems in employing the proper strategies of apology.

There are some important implications that can be drawn from this study. The most significant is including some Turkish native speakers who would be given the translation of these questions in Turkish. So, they would answer the questions in their native language to evaluate the effect of L1 on L2. This would help the researchers to find sufficient and reliable data about the effect of interlanguage on non-native speakers. So, the researchers would have the chance to comment on the non-natives' interlanguage and this would supply the researchers with much better and more detailed results. Moreover, oral DCT was used in this study but also it is recommended to use different kinds of instruments to elicit more reliable findings. This study also focused only on strategies used in apology speech acts. Other studies should concentrate on the sociopragmatics aspect of apology strategies by Turkish EFL speakers and factors such as gender, age and social status of the participants should be taken into account to have more detailed information.

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Appendix a Discourse Completion Test

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

   Boss:

   "What happened to you?"

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

   Friend: "What happened?"

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

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

   You:

4. You promised to return a textbook to your classmate within a day or two, after xeroxing a chapter. You held onto it for almost two weeks.

   Classmate: I'm really upset about the book because I needed it to prepare for last week's class.

   You:

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

6. Spending an evening at a friend's apartment, you accidentally break a small vase belonging to her.

   You:

7. Rushing to get to class on time, you run round the corner and bump into one of your fellow students who were waiting there, almost knocking him down.

   You:

8. You have forgotten to return the book you borrowed from your professor. On the staff corridor you come across your professor.