

## Investigation of the Effects of the Social Power and Social Distance on the Realization of Apology between Jordanian and English Cultures

**Bilal Ayed Al-Khaza'leh**

*Faculty of Major Language Studies  
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)  
Bilalkaza83@gmail.com*

**Tun Nur Afizah ZainalAriff**

*Faculty of Major Language Studies  
Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)  
tun.afizah@usim.edu.my*

### Abstract

The current study investigated the influence of context-external variables; social power (High, Equal and Low) and social distance (Familiar and Unfamiliar) on the perception of Jordanian and English speech act of apology. Discourse Completion Test (DCT) and Scaled Response Questionnaire (SRQ) were used to elicit data from three groups: 40 Jordanian L2 speakers in Malaysia, 40 Jordanian non-English speakers in Malaysia and 40 English native speakers from British Council in Jordan. The three groups of respondents were asked to assess four context-internal variables i.e. the severity of the offence, the possibility of the offender apology, the difficulty of the apology by the offender and the likelihood of apology acceptance by the offended party. Results of the study were accomplished using one way ANOVA and Tukey HSD post hoc statistical tests. The findings revealed that Jordanians have high sensitivity toward hierarchical power and social distance more than English native speakers. Moreover, results revealed that there are negative sociopragmatic transfers from L1 to L2 by JL2Ss based on their perception of the four-context-internal variables. Findings could be used to increase the cultural awareness toward some similarities and differences between both cultures.

**Keywords:** Speech act of apology, Inter-language pragmatics, sociopragmatic competence, Discourse Completion Test (DCT), Scaled Response Questionnaire (SRQ).

## A. Introduction

Cross-cultural and inter-language researches have confirmed that there are communication differences across different speech communities and cultural groups which might lead to cross-cultural conflicts (Al-Issa, 2003; Al-Momani, 2009; Al-Zumor, 2011; Banikalef, Abdullah, & Maros, 2013; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). These cultural conflicts could be avoided if the speakers of specific speech communities understand the perception and speech functions of other speech communities (Kashkouli & Eslamirasekh, 2013; Nureddeen, 2008). Therefore, there is an essential demand to conduct researches that highlight the perception and value of speech acts cross-culturally. The inter-language researchers investigated not only the cross-cultural similarities and differences, but also the second language speakers' (L2Ss henceforth) development toward the pragmatic of the target culture (Bardovi-Harlig, 2010; Bataineh, 2014; Ifantidou, 2014).

According to Brown & Levinson (1987) social power and social distance are considered as the main sociolinguistic variables that influence the perception of apology among the speakers of different cultural backgrounds. Apology has received a great amount of attention in the field of sociolinguistics due to its significant importance as a remedial interchange aims to re-establish the social harmony after a real or virtual offence has been performed (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1981). As such, inter-language researchers remarkably recognized the eminent importance of achieving the pragmatic competence, particularly the sociopragmatic competence which is the concern to the social status and identity of the interlocutors during the conversation. Therefore, any possible violation for these sociopragmatic norms would likely lead to pragmatic misunderstanding in the stream of the conversation (Thomas, 1983; Ziran, 2004).

The main concern of the present study is to investigate the influence of the context-external variables of social power (high, equal and low) and social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) on the context-internal variables; the severity of the offence, the possibility of the offender apology, the difficulty of the apology by the offender and the likelihood of apology acceptance by the hearer.

Previous studies in speech act of apology have only investigated the production of apology strategies, and none of these studies investigated the perception of apology strategies in Jordanian culture. Thus, this study investigated the perception of speech act of apology of Jordanian second language speakers (JL2Ss), Jordanian non English speakers (JNESs) compared to English native speakers (ENSs). Further, negative sociopragmatic transfer in perception of apology from first language (L1 henceforth) to second language (L2 henceforth) is also investigated. Kasper (1992) explained that pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics is identified as the influence exerted by the learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 in their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information. Thus, in the current analysis, negative sociopragmatic transfer is operational if there is statistically significant difference between JNESs and ENSs groups and between the JL2Ss and ENSs groups and no statistically significant difference between JNESs and JL2Ss groups.

Brown and Levinson (1987) explained that the people perception of the social variables is a culturally specific. Further, Spencer-Oatey (2012) added that the pragmatic researchers should include the assessment and perception check for the social variables (social power, and social distance) since different sociocultural groups have different norms and perception regarding these variables. Thus, this discussion involves investigating how the three groups of participants with different social power and social distance categories perceive the four context-internal variables. According to Brown & Levinson (1987) and Locker, Holmes, & Bell (1990), the role of social power in communication involves the interlocutors' ability to recognize each other's social position. Therefore, recognizing the interlocutor social power appropriately is very crucial in order for the speaker to be able to produce the most appropriate and suitable way while interacting with others who have different cultural backgrounds. Further, social distance refers to the consideration of the interlocutors' relation to one another in a particular situation as well as how well they know each other, which is the degree of intimacy between interlocutors.

In the present study, social power variable is divided into three categories or levels. The first category involves those who have high social power and how they interact with the low social power interlocutors (H-L). The second category involves those who have equal social power with their interlocutors and how they interact with them (E-E), while the third category involves those who have low social power and how they interact with high social power interlocutors (L-H). As for social distance, it is taken to represent the degree of familiarity between the interlocutors and it is divided into two categories (familiar and unfamiliar).

## B. Literature Review

Among the speech acts that people engage in daily life situations, apology is frequently used and much researched since it functions as a remedial for restoring and maintaining harmony between the speaker and the hearer (Aydin, 2013; Al-Zumor, 2011; Jebahi, 2011; Majeed & Janjua, 2014; Trosborg, 2010). Apologies are expected from people when they violate the social and cultural norms (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). Apologies have received a great amount of attention in the field of sociolinguistics. This attention is due to their significant importance as a remedial interchange which aims to re-establish the social harmony after a real or virtual offence has been performed (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1981). Olshtain (1989) defines an apology as “a speech act which is intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially mal-affected by a violation” (p. 165).

Speech act of apology has drawn the attention of many researchers due to its importance as a significant speech act in the daily communication. Parsa & Jan (2012) investigated speech act of apology by the Iranian L2Ss in University of Malaya. The data were elicited quantitatively by Discourse Completion Test (DCT henceforth). 40 Iranian postgraduate students majoring in English language studies participated in this study. Results indicated that male respondents used various types of non-apology strategies to get rid of difficult situation of apologizing. Iranian females employed more illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs henceforth) apology strategies to keep their successful relationships with the offended party. With respect to the significant differences, the IFIDs strategies used by female L2Ss were significantly more than males L2Ss.

While, in general, except for a few strategies, there was not any significant difference between respondents considering the number and type of apology and non-apology strategies used, which means, on the whole, gender did not play a significant role in speech act of apology choice.

Alfattah (2010) investigated apology strategies of Yemeni EFL university students by means of DCT. From pragmatic point of view, the study tried to systemize the different strategies employed for the purpose of apologizing. The data of this study were examined and analyzed in light of Brown & Levinson (1987) concept of politeness and face threatening act. The findings revealed that respondents used the IFIDs primarily to express regret which are found in every response in the data. The use of ‘*I’m sorry*’ was argued to stem from the respondents’ believe that apologies should consist of this expression. In the same vein, Jebahi (2011) investigated the speech act of apology by Tunisian university students. 100 students whose mother tongue was Tunisian Arabic were randomly selected for the study and DCT was used to elicit apology strategies. The findings suggested that Tunisian university students used statement of remorse in three main situations where the offended is: (i) a close friend, (ii) old in age and (iii) having the power to affect the offender’s future. A noticeable

percentage of subjects denied responsibility for the offence and shifted responsibility to other sources using accounts. Other less used strategies were: self-castigation, offer of repair, blaming the victim, invoking Allah's name, intensification, minimization, and humor.

Aydin (2013) investigated the speech act of apology via DCT between three groups of respondents, 29 English native speakers (NSs henceforth), 30 NSs of Turkish, and 15 nonnative speakers of English (NNSs henceforth) in Turkey. Results revealed that the advanced NNSs showed similarities with NSs in their apologies in terms of general strategies, although in their modification of strategies they showed usage of L1 forms. Similar to Alfattah's study, Aydin also found that the most used strategies by all three groups are the IFIDs. Turkish NSs were found to be more indirect than American English speakers in their apologies.

Hou (2006) investigated the Chinese perception of speech act of apology. The sample of the study contains three groups, 60 Chinese L2s and 60 English NSs and 60 Chinese NSs. Scales Response Questionnaire (SRQ henceforth) was used as the main instrument to investigate the sample perception of the contextual internal variables. These variables include severity of the situation, the possibility of you apologizing, difficulty of the apology for the speaker and the likelihood of the apology accepted by the hearer. Findings of the study revealed some similarities between Chinese and American in perception of the variables and this was attributed to the universality of speech act of apology. However, significant cultural differences were found in which the Chinese rated the offences as more severe and apology more difficult which demonstrated the eastern politeness. It can be argued that the above discussions of the speech act of apology studies indicate the importance and the significance of speech act of apology worldwide.

Research in Jordanian culture speech act indicated that Jordanians assign large value to social power and distance and using more face redress while performing face threatening acts (FTAs) which makes them generally less direct and consequently more polite (Al-Issa, 2003; Al-Momani, 2009). Besides, for Jordanians, the group interest takes priority over individual and protecting harmony among group members is highly important. Moreover, Jordanian culture is considered as a collectivist culture, that is by showing positive attitudes toward vertical relationship and accept differences in power (Al-Shboul, 2014). In Jordanian context, there were some attempts conducted to investigate speech act of apology. Most of these studies investigated only pragmalinguistic competence, that is, the similarities and differences between JNESs and ENSs. Perhaps amongst the earliest studies in the speech act of apology by JNESs and ENSs was conducted by Hussein & Hammouri (1998).

Hussein and Hammouri carried out an investigation to find out the apology strategies (production) between JNESs and ENSs. DCT was the main instrument for eliciting the respondents' apology strategies. DCT was first

designed in English and distributed to 40 American participants and then translated into Arabic and distributed into two groups of Jordanian students from Yarmouk University in Jordan. 50 male and 50 female Jordanian students responded to the DCT. Findings revealed that Jordanian respondents used a variety of apology strategies more than their American counterparts, that is, Jordanian used 12 apology strategies while American used only seven. Moreover, findings showed that social power plays a significant role in determining the apology production in which the Jordanians opted to use an honorific when the recipients of apologies are higher in rank, while this was not found in the American responses.

Moreover, Bataineh (2014) investigated the similarities and differences between JNESs and ENSs by means of DCT. Bataineh found that JNESs used significant apology strategies more than ENSs did. These strategies include (1) statement of remorse, (2) strategy of promising not to repeat the offense, (3) invoking Allah's (God's) name, and (4) the use of proverbs. On the other hand, ENSs used more compensation, and tended to blame others as well as themselves when trying to apologize for the committed offense. The study also compared between males and females in both cultures and found that JNESs males and females used different apology strategies. JNESs males used more statement of remorse strategies while JNESs females used less non apology strategies and assigned the blame on themselves more than on others. ENSs females tended to apologize more than males and used statement of remorse more than male did.

The following study investigated apology speech act from inter-language pragmatic (ILP) approach exploring the JL2Ss pragmatic competence in speech act of apology while performing the target language. Banikalef et al. (2013) conducted a mixed method (DCT and semi-structured interview) study to investigate apology strategies (production) by JL2Ss at Univesiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM henceforth), Malaysia. Findings revealed that JL2Ss used mostly IFIDs specifically when expressing regret, such as *I'm sorry* was the most frequently used strategy. Further, results indicated that some new apology strategies used by JL2Ss demonstrated that speech acts are cultural specific. These new apology strategies include; arrogance and ignorance, blame something else and swearing to Allah. The findings also showed that the choice of the apology strategy was affected by social status more than social distance revealing that in Jordanian culture, the speakers with higher power such as university professors did not apologize directly and they avoid direct explicit apology to the students since this will degrade their social status.

Most of these Jordanian studies have investigated speech act of apology from pragmalinguistic level which is investigating only the similarities and differences in the apology production between Jordanian and English native speaker cultures. Thus, this study is an attempt to investigate the sociopragmatic

level which is investigation the perception of apology by three groups of participants.

## **C. Research Methodology**

### **1. Participants**

a- Jordanian second language speakers at UKM (40 JL2Ss)

This group of respondents consists of 40 Jordanian postgraduate students who are pursuing their higher study at UKM majoring in different fields of studies. These students are considered as competent in English proficiency since all of them have achieved band 4 and above in English Proficiency and Placement Test (EPPT), or have passed their Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with more than 550 or have achieved band 6.5 and above for their International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

b- Jordanian non English speakers at UKM (40 JNESs)

This group of respondents consists of 40 Jordanian postgraduate students who are pursuing their higher study at UKM majoring in different fields of studies. These students are considered as having low proficiency in English since all of them achieved band 2 and below in EPPT, and none of them have passed either TOEFL or IELTS. Most of these students are majoring in Islamic Studies and Arabic whose medium of instruction is Arabic.

c- English native speakers at British Council, Amman, Jordan (40 ENSs)

This group of respondents consists of 40 English language lecturers in British council located in Amman capital of Jordan. Convenience sampling was used in the selection of participants in this group. Convenience sampling is a kind of non-probability or nonrandom sampling in which members of the target population are selected for the purpose of the study if they meet certain criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility or willingness to volunteer. This British Council was chosen due to the availability of the native English speakers and their willingness to participate in this research. All of the lecturers have at least Master degrees in Education and English Language Studies and are native English speakers from United Kingdom. The respondents of this group responded to the English version of the SRQ and DCT.

### **2. Instruments**

In this study, two tools were used to measure the perception of the three groups' context-internal variables as follows:

a. Scaled Response Questionnaire (SRQ)

This study utilized Scaled Response Questionnaire (SRQ) which was adopted from Bergman & Kasper (1993). This SRQ includes four context-internal variables that were rated in a five point rating scale by the three group respondents in which 1 is the lowest and 5 is the highest. The four context internal variables are:

1. The severity of the offence by the speaker
2. The possibility of the apology by the speaker
3. The difficulty of apology by the speaker and
4. The likelihood of apology acceptance by the hearer

These four context-internal variables used to examine the three groups perception of speech act of apology. The English version of SRQ was translated into Arabic by the researcher who is a native Arabic speaker and answered by JNESs (the baseline group that answered the Arabic version of the SRQ. Both groups of JL2Ss and ENSs responded to the English version of SRQ while the JNESs responded to the Arabic version of the SRQ.

b. Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

To evaluate the four context-internal variables mentioned earlier, the participants answered 12 DCT offensive situations put forward and combined together with the four SRQ variables in order to find out the assessment of these four variables by the three group participants. The 12 DCT situations were adopted from Al-Adaileh (2007) study of apology. Both groups of JL2Ss and ENSs responded to the English version of DCT and SRQ while the JNESs responded to the Arabic version of the DCT which was translated into Arabic by the researcher himself.

#### D. Findings

The influence of the context-external variables of social power (high, equal and low) and social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) on the context-internal variables; severity of the offence, the possibility of the offender apology, the difficulty of the apology by the offender, and the likelihood of apology acceptance by the offended party is discussed below respectively. Analysis of variance ANOVA and Tukey HSD post hoc analysis were performed to determine whether there were significant differences between the JL2Ss, JNESs and ENSs groups in their assessment of the four context-internal variables.

The responses of each group of participants i.e. JL2Ss, JNESs and ENSs are divided into five categories. These categories represent different social power and social distance levels. For example, Category 1 (High social power) (+P + D) which consists of situations 1 and 9; 1-Professor promised to return a student term paper but he did not and 9-Customer called the waitress to change the order. Category 2 (Low social power) (-P + D) which consists of situations 2 and 3; 2- Student forgot to return the book he borrowed from his professor 3-Employer forgot an important appointment with boss for the second time. Category 3 (Equal social power) (=P - D) which consists of situations 4, 8 and 12; 4-You forgot an appointment with friend for the second time, 8-You accidentally spilled an oil in your neighbor car, 12-You said something that annoyed your colleague. Category 4 (Familiar) (-P - D) which consists of situations 5 and 7; 5-Father promised to take his kid for shopping but he did not



do that 7-You accidentally broke the lights of your intimate boss car. Category 5 (Unfamiliar) (=P +D) which consists of situations 10, 11 and 6; 10- You accidentally bumped into a passenger toe which made him spill all his package on the floor 11- You accidentally bumped into passenger toe which disturbed him a bit 6-You accidentally hit another driver car while parking your car.

The following discussions explain how the three groups of participants with different social power and social distance categories assessed the four context-internal variables. One way ANOVA and Tukey HSD post hoc statistical tests were used in the data analysis.

### 1. The Assessment of the Severity of the offence

Table: 1 Means and standard deviation to the contextual variable Severity of the offence

Contextual Variables	JL2Ss		JNESs		ENSs		df	F	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
<b>Social power</b>							<b>Error</b>		
Category 1 High	2.61	0.96	2.83	1.00	3.38	0.48	2 (116)	8.626	0.000* <b>T</b>
Category 2 Equal	3.19	0.50	3.30	0.42	4.15	0.16	2 (117)	70.952	0.000* <b>T</b>
Category 3 Low	4.01	0.43	4.02	0.00	3.90	0.20	2 (117)	1.714	0.185
<b>Social distance</b>									
Category4 Familiar	2.06	0.30	2.32	0.40	3.81	0.24	2 (117)	341.30	0.000*
Category5Unfamiliar	4.15	0.33	4.12	0.33	4.75	0.14	2 (117)	63.587	0.032* <b>T</b>

Note: JL2Ss= Jordanian second language speakers, JNESs= Jordanian non English speakers, ENSs= English native speakers. **T** indicates the occurrence of negative sociopragmatic transfer. \* $p < 0.05$ .

Table 1 above illustrates the influence of context external social variables; (a) social power (higher, equal, and low); and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) on the perception of the severity of the offence by the three groups of participants.

The role of social power in communication involves the ability of the interlocutors to recognize each other's social position (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1995; Leech, 1983). One-way ANOVA results show that there are significant differences among the three groups in Category1, ( $F_{2, 116}=8.626, p = 0.000$ ). As Table 1 above illustrates, Tukey HSD post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups assessed the severity of the offence significantly lower than ENSs group. This indicates that the Jordanian with high social power did not perceive that the offence is very severe when it is committed against people with low social power. Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category since there is no significant difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, and there is significant difference between both Jordanian groups and ENSs.

In Category 2, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups assessed the severity of the offence significantly lower than ENSs did ( $F$

2, 117=70.952,  $p = 0.000$ ) which indicates a negative sociopragmatic transfer since the assessment of both Jordanian groups is similar to each other but different from ENSs assessment. By contrast, in Category 3 analysis showed that there is no significant difference among the three groups despite the fact that both Jordanian groups assessed the severity of the offence higher than ENSs group ( $F 2, 117=1.714, p = 0.185$ )

The results of ANOVA showed that there are significant mean differences in Category 4 and Category 5. Post hoc pair comparisons revealed that significant mean differences were found between both Jordanian groups and ENSs group in category 4. As it is noticed in Category 4 both Jordanian groups assessed the severity of the offence significantly lower than ENSs did ( $F 2, 117=341.320, p = 0.000$ ). Likewise, in Category 5 post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups assessed the severity of the offence significantly lower than ENSs did ( $F 2, 117=63.587, p = 0.032$ ). As a result, negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category. That is because there is no significant mean difference between both Jordanian groups, but there is a significant mean difference between both Jordanian groups and ENSs group.

## 2. The assessment of the possibility of the offender apology

Table: 2 Means and standard deviation to the contextual variable Possibility of apology

Contextual Variables	JL2Ss		JNESs		ENSs		df		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Error	F	Sig
Category1High	3.80	0.24	3.17	0.31	4.42	0.28	2(117)	198.236	0.000*
Category 2 Equal	3.17	0.48	3.58	0.47	3.91	0.30	2(117)	29.406	0.000*
Category 3 Low	4.91	0.19	4.96	0.13	4.93	0.16	2(117)	0.980	0.379
<b>Social distance</b>									
Category4Familiar	4.15	0.23	4.13	0.23	4.81	0.29	2(117)	92.447	0.000*T
Category5Unfamilr	4.12	0.16	4.07	0.15	4.79	0.22	2(117)	183.688	0.000*T

Note: JL2Ss= Jordanian second language speakers, JNESs= Jordanian non English speakers, ENSs= English native speakers. **T** indicates the occurrence of negative sociopragmatic transfer \* $p < 0.05$

Table 2 above illustrates the influence of context external social variables; (a) social power (higher, equal, and low); and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) on the perception of the possibility of apology by the three groups of participants.

ANOVA results showed that there are significant differences among groups in Category 1 and Category 2. Post hoc pair comparisons revealed that the three groups have significant mean differences among each other. In category 1, JL2Ss assessed the possibility of apology significantly higher than JNESs did. Moreover, JNESs assessed the possibility of apology significantly lower than ENSs did ( $F 2, 117=198.236, p = 0.000$ ). Similar to Category 1, in Category 2 post hoc pair comparisons revealed that the three groups have

significant mean differences among each other. JL2Ss assessed the possibility of apology significantly lower than JNESs did. Moreover, JNESs assessed the possibility of apology significantly lower than ENSs did ( $F 2, 117=29.406, p = 0.000$ ).

With regard to Category 3, the three groups showed agreement in their assessment of possibility of apology. That is because no statistically significant differences were found in any of the three groups ( $F 2, 117=0.980, p = 0.379$ ). This indicates an inter-language and cross-cultural similarity between both cultures. In Category 4 and Category 5, significant mean differences were observed between both Jordanian groups and ENSs group in both categories. Specifically, in Category 4 significant mean difference was found between both Jordanian groups and ENSs group. Both Jordanian groups assessed their possibility to apologize for their familiar interlocutors significantly lower than ENSs did ( $F 2, 117=92.447, p = 0.000$ ). Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category since both Jordanian groups assessed the apology possibility significantly lower than ENSs did. Similarly, in Category 5, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups significantly assessed the possibility to apologize lower than ENSs did. ( $F 2, 117=183.688, p = 0.000$ ) which indicate an influence of L1 and pragmatic transfer.

### 3. The assessment of difficulty of the apology by the offender

Table: 3 Means and standard deviation to the contextual variable Difficulty of Apology

Contextual Variables	JL2Ss		JNESs		ENSs		df		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Error	F	Sig
<b>Social power</b>									
Category1 High	2.98	0.08	3.08	0.19	2.19	0.27	2(117)	244.978	0.000*T
Category2 Equal	3.17	0.16	3.00	0.00	2.21	0.20	2(117)	440.875	0.000*
Category 3 Low	1.00	0.00	1.02	0.15	2.02	0.00	2(117)	1579.500	0.000*T
<b>Social distance</b>									
Category4 Familiar	2.21	0.25	2.11	0.23	1.46	0.13	2(117)	147.872	0.000*T
Category5 Unfamiliar	2.27	0.12	2.13	0.16	1.35	0.15	2(117)	428.897	0.000*

Note: JL2Ss= Jordanian second language speakers, JNESs= Jordanian non English speakers, ENSs= English native speakers. **T** indicates the occurrence of negative sociopragmatic transfer \* $p < 0.05$

Table 3 above illustrates the influence of context external social variables; (a) social power (higher, equal, and low); and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) on the perception of the difficulty of Apology by the three groups of participants.

One-way ANOVA results show that there are significant differences among the three groups in Category1, ( $F 2, 117=244.978, p = 0.000$ ). Tukey HSD post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups assessed the difficulty of apology significantly higher than ENSs group did. Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category, while there is no significant

difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, there is significant difference between both Jordanian group and ENSs. In Category 2, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that the three groups have significant mean differences among each other. JL2Ss assessed the difficulty of apology significantly higher than JNESs did. And JNESs assessed the possibility of apology significantly higher than ENSs did ( $F 2, 117=440.875, p = 0.000$ ).

In Category 3 post hoc pair comparisons results show that there are significant differences among the three groups, ( $F 2, 117=1579.500, p = 0.000$ ). Both Jordanian groups assessed the difficulty of apology significantly lower than ENSs group did. Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category. That is, while there is no significant difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, there is significant difference between both Jordanian groups and ENSs.

In Category 4 post hoc pair comparisons revealed that there are significant differences among the three groups, ( $F 2, 117=1579.500, p = 0.000$ ). Both Jordanian groups assessed the difficulty of apology significantly higher than ENSs group did. Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category. That is, while there is no significant difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, there is significant difference between both Jordanian groups and ENSs. In Category 5, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that the three groups have significant mean differences among each other. JL2Ss assessed the difficulty of apology significantly higher than JNESs did. And JNESs assessed the possibility of apology significantly higher than ENSs did ( $F 2, 117=428.897, p = 0.000$ ).

#### 4. The assessment of the likelihood of apology acceptance

Table: 4 Means and standard deviation to the contextual variable likelihood of apology acceptance

Contextual Variables	JL2Ss		JNESs		ENSs		df		F	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Error			
<b>Social power</b>										
Category1 High	4.83	0.40	5.00	0.00	3.04	0.24	2(117)	647.382	0.000*	
Category2Equal	4.12	0.16	4.13	0.16	3.03	0.20	2(117)	497.728	0.000*T	
Category 3 Low	3.11	0.66	3.50	0.00	3.01	0.07	2(117)	18.324	0.000*	
<b>Social distance</b>										
Category4Familiar	4.79	0.24	4.78	0.25	3.19	0.66	2(117)	180.842	0.000*T	
Category5Unfamiliar	3.75	0.14	3.75	0.15	2.63	0.20	2(117)	575.834	0.000*T	

Note: JL2Ss= Jordanian second language speakers, JNESs= Jordanian non English speakers, ENSs= English native speakers. **T** indicates the occurrence of negative sociopragmatic transfer \* $p < 0.05$

Table 4 above illustrates the influence of context external social variables; (a) social power (higher, equal, and low); and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) on the perception of likelihood of apology acceptance variable by the three groups of participants.

One-way ANOVA results show that there are significant differences among the three groups in all categories. In Category 1, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that the three groups have significant mean differences among each other. JL2Ss assessed the likelihood of apology acceptance significantly higher than JNESs did. And JNESs assessed the possibility of apology significantly higher than ENSs did ( $F(2, 117) = 647.3828, p = 0.000$ ).

In Category 2, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups assessed the likelihood of apology acceptance significantly higher than ENSs group did ( $F(2, 117) = 497.628, p = 0.000$ ). Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category. That is, while there is no significant difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, there is significant difference between both Jordanian group and ENSs.

In Category 3, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that the three groups have significant mean differences among each other. JL2Ss assessed the likelihood of apology acceptance significantly lower than JNESs did. Moreover, JNESs assessed the likelihood of apology acceptance significantly higher than ENSs did ( $F(2, 117) = 18.324, p = 0.000$ ). In Category 4, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups assessed the likelihood of apology acceptance significantly higher than ENSs group did ( $F(2, 117) = 180.842, p = 0.000$ ). Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category. That is, while there is no significant difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, there is significant difference between both Jordanian groups and ENSs group.

With regard to Category 5, post hoc pair comparisons revealed that both Jordanian groups assessed the likelihood of apology acceptance significantly higher than ENSs group did ( $F(2, 117) = 575.834, p = 0.000$ ). Negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category i.e. while there is no significant difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, there is significant difference between both Jordanian group and ENSs.

## **E. Discussion and Conclusion**

The current study investigated the perception of speech act of apology among three groups of participants i.e. JL2Ss, JNESs and ENSs. Specifically, it investigated the influence of context-external variables of social power (high, equal and low) and social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) on the assessment of four context-internal variables i.e. the severity of the offence, the possibility of the offender apology, the difficulty of the apology by the offender and the likelihood of apology acceptance.

Results revealed that social power has crucial influence on Jordanian participants' responses more than English native speakers. Jordanian with high social power did not perceive the offence as very severe when it is committed against people with low social power. In contrast, ENSs assigned high severity for the offence when it is committed against their low social power interlocutors. This might indicate that the Jordanians are so sensitive regarding hierarchical

power more than ENSs. In other words, Jordanians who have high social power perceived the offence as not severe when it is committed against their low social power interlocutors, while ENSs consider it severe. Thus, negative sociopragmatic transfer occurred in this category since there is no significant difference between JL2Ss and JNESs, and there is significant difference between both Jordanian groups and ENSs. Further, Jordanians consider the offence as not so severe when it is committed against their familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors. In contrast, ENSs consider the offence as very severe when it is committed against their familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors.

As for the assessment of the possibility of the offender apology, results revealed that all three groups of participants showed their readiness to apologize in all five social power and social distance categories. However, the ratings of the three groups were different based on the participants' perception of the offence. Findings revealed that Jordanians showed high possibility to apologize only for their high social power interlocutors. Further, results indicated that Jordanians are less sensitive toward the offence when it is committed against their equal social power interlocutors and when it is committed against their familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors. As such, Jordanians are found to be less apologetic than ENSs.

Regarding the assessment of difficulty of the apology by the offender, results showed that there are significant differences among the three groups. Jordanians who have high social power such as professors find it so difficult to apologize for their low social power interlocutors such as students. Conversely, Jordanians who have low social power find it is not difficult to apologize to their high social power interlocutors. Both Jordanian groups of participants assessed the difficulty of apology for their equal social power interlocutors higher than ENSs did. This might show that it is difficult for Jordanians to apologize for their equal social power interlocutors but for ENSs it is not difficult to do so. Regarding the social distance categories; category 4 and category 5, both Jordanian groups of participants assessed the difficulty of apology for their familiar and unfamiliar interlocutors significantly higher than ENSs did.

It was observed that the biggest significant difference among the three groups was regarding the assessment of likelihood of apology acceptance by the offended party. Jordanians expect their apology to be accepted since they were polite and apologized in a given situation, as a consequence, they expect the others to be polite as well and appreciate them by accepting their apology. Conversely, this was not the case for the ENSs who assigned low rating for this variable. Significant mean differences were found among the three groups of participants in most of social power categories; as a consequence, negative sociopragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 had occurred as exhibited by JL2Ss responses. This negative sociopragmatic transfer might be due to the influence of participants L1 perceptions and cultural values. All Jordanian groups of participants believed that the other offended party should accept the apology of

the offenders. This is because they all assessed this variable significantly higher than ENSs did. This might be due to the nature of Jordanian culture which is considered as a collectivist culture (Al-Adaileh, 2007; Al-Shboul, 2014). Jordanians expect return politeness from their offended parties by accepting the apology. In contrast, ENSs did not show high expectations for their apology to be accepted by their offended interlocutors.

In sum, findings provide some cultural insights about Jordanian and English cultures regarding the similarities and differences in their perception of speech act of apology. Based on aforementioned responses, JL2Ss and JNESs showed a great deviation from English native culture. This might be due to the Jordanians sensitivity toward social power and social distance variations more often than English speakers. JL2Ss responses clearly showed sociopragmatic failure. That is because the perceptions of the contextual variables are still influenced by the Jordanian L1 cultural norms and different from English native culture. These differences might be closely related to the cultural differences which are considered as social conditions placed on language use stemming from cross-culturally different perceptions (Thomas, 1983).

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