A Thesis

entitled

A Contrastive Study of the Intercultural Differences in People’s Reactions Based on Their Cultures

by

Mina Oghanian

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment for the Master of Arts Degree in English with concentration in ESL

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An Abstract of

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This thesis reports on a study carried out to scrutinize the differences between native English speakers and ESL Iranians in using speech acts for their initial and final parts of apologies and to see how the rates of offering repair of native English speakers and ESL Iranians are comparable on the six scenarios. The research proceeded with a number of role play scenarios, two hypotheses, and appropriate statistical analyses. A total number of eight students, including four Iranian native Farsi-speaking students and four American native English-speaking students, were singled out to gather the data. They were of roughly the same age range (24-31) including both sexes (four females and four males). The Iranian participants with different levels of English proficiency have been living in the US from one to five years, and they are from the graduate and undergraduate students. All the participants were asked to give answer to six role play scenarios consisting of six apologizing situations. As a result, the Iranian participants could be compared to the American ones. Data were then coded based on “The classification of illocutionary acts” by Searle (1976). Finally, the researcher used the Rcmdr software to analyze the data, using the Fisher's Exact Test. The obtained results revealed that there is
no correlation between Iranians’ and Americans’ nationality and their initial part of apology. Likewise, there is no correlation between the two groups’ nationality and their final part of apology, and as a result, the first hypothesis is certainly correct. Additionally, there is no correlation between the nationality of the participants and the rates of offering repair (using Commissives) in the initial and final parts of the apology in general.
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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

1.1 Pragmatic Competence

One of the reasons that interlocutors use various strategies in their conversations is to perform speech acts. Therefore, the importance of pragmatics in the production and perception of speech is beyond question. Because second language learners’ knowledge of the target language is not complete, they may apply pragmatic knowledge of their first language to the target language. That is why knowing about the learner’s pragmatic competence and comparing it to their communicative competence can help us teach. In fact, based on Sahragard and Javanmardi (2011), how interlocutors produce and perceive speech in diverse situations is a significant issue due to the fact that creating inappropriate utterances will cause misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Delen (2010, p.692) mentions that “pragmatics has been both a controversial and a popular topic in language research since 1960s and its rising to prominence occurred with the emphasis put on the communicative aspect of language. Pragmatics is simply the study of meaning in interaction.” Likewise, Crystal (1985) in Allami and Naeimi (2011) define pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially
of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social
interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of
communication” (p. 240). On the other hand, according to Hymes (1967), who first
presents communicative competence, speakers can appropriately communicate in
different contexts through the communicative competence ability. In addition, Brown
(2000, p. 250) mentions that "communication is not merely an event, it is functional and
purposive, and communication is a series of communicative acts or speech acts which are
used to accomplish a particular purpose.”

1.2 Speech Acts

Austin (2009) and Searle (2000) established the broad and narrower categories of
speech act theory. Austin (1962) in his book how to do things with words started talking
about speech act theory. Austin (2009) put his focus on how speech acts are expressed in
a specific language (such as in Persian and English, in the present study). In his opinion,
saying words was equal to performing them. For instance, Austin (1962, p. 6) mentioned
that when we announce a marriage, we are actually not reporting on a marriage, but we
are becoming involved in it. To illustrate, according to Austin (2009), three acts of
locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act can occur simultaneously while
a statement is performed. A locutionary act defines only the action of saying something.
While an illocutionary act is to do something by saying something, and a perlocutionary
act acknowledges the effect left on the hearer. It is, in fact, related to the outcome of
something said.
On the other hand, Searle (2000) believes speech acts occur in real situations. He claimed that speech acts are “the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication” (Searle, 1969, p. 16). According to Searle (2000), speech acts consist of five categories: directives or ordering and requesting, declarations or resigning and appointing, commissives or promising, expressives or apologizing and celebrating, and assertives or claiming and swearing. It should be mentioned here that Searle used to call “assertives” "representatives" as well. These categories are elaborated on in detail in sections 1.3 and 1.6.

Based on Istifci & Kampusu (2009), a speech act is a crucial part of communicative competence and is defined as a functional unit of language. The speech act has various illocutionary meanings including apologies, thanking, complaints, and so forth. Despite the similarity of speech acts around the world, people with different cultural backgrounds employ various devices to understand them. Indeed, appropriate performing of speech acts in a first and second language is not easy. These increased challenges stem from both the linguistic and cultural variations. Different kinds of speech acts are used by speakers of different languages. In line with this statement, ibid (2011) confirmed that cultures are the cause of different devices being used by the speakers to apologize.

1.3 The Speech Act of Apology

The speaker always needs to apologize when he causes harm to the hearer or violates social standards. Therefore, we always deal with two sides: apologizer and apologizee. According to Leech (1983), an apology is considered as a strategy which is usually expressed through some words and restores the relationship between interlocutors. He
also asserts that when a damage or discomfort is caused on someone by someone else, apology is provided through some words in order to save the relationship between interlocutors. Therefore, based on what Leech (1983) states, an apology is advantageous for the hearer and to some degree at cost for the speaker. In line with it, Brown and Levinson (1987) state that the act of apologizing is face-saving for the hearer.

Additionally, Marquez-Reiter (2000, p. 57) mentions that when apologies are employed, “the speaker admits that a social norm was violated and she/he was to some extent part of its cause.” So, when someone causes discomfort or hurt to someone else, he/she apologizes. Also, as Goffman (1971) states, apology is a remedial act that changes an offensive statement into a pleasant one by transforming the function of its meaning.

According to Searle (1979), the person who regrets because of doing A is the one who apologizes for doing it. Therefore, only if the speaker accepts the fact that the act A has been done before the time of speaking (apologizing) and it has negatively affected another person, and the affected person needs an apology, the speaking act can be considered as an apology. The components of apologies can be broken down into the categories offered up by Searle (1979). In the present study, here are two concrete examples of my collected data.

- Participant A said: “I gave it to the secretory and she was out for a meeting. I need a few minutes to go get them. I left them with the secretory.” This consists of “I gave it to the secretory” which is assertive, “She was out for a meeting” which is also assertive, “I need a few minutes to go get them” which is commissive, and “I left them with the secretory” which is also assertive.
Participant B said: “I’m sorry. I gave it to the secretory, but I didn’t realize she was out today. It’s my fault. I can run and make them right now for us.” This consists of “I’m sorry” which is expressive, “I gave it to the secretory” which is assertive, “I didn’t realize she was out today” which is also assertive. “It’s my fault” which is expressive, and “I can run and make them right now for us” which is commissive.

### 1.4 Production of Apology by Any Native Speaker

Although L2 learners and native speakers have the same access to the range of speech acts, their use of strategies in this regard is different. According to Samiee and Tabatabaei (2012), L2 learners should be aware that the diversity in the cultural background causes differences in their use of strategies in English. Based on the data collected in research conducted by Ghanbar, Rahimi, and Eslami Rasekh (2014), Persian speakers show concern about the illocutionary effect of their speech acts because they have to assure that the apology saves their face. Additionally, the likelihood of apologizing among Persians is determined by other factors such as social status too. Kashkouli and Eslamirasekh (2013) mentioned that social status for Armenians is not only important in their likelihood to apologize but to the acceptability of their apology. Kashkouli and Eslamirasekh (2013) added in their research that Persians believe that apologizing and getting someone who is offended to accept the apology is difficult; that’s why, they do not tend to offend an acquaintance. In addition, the degree of acquaintance is a determining factor in the way Persians express the apology as well.
1.5 Production of Apology by Foreign Language Learners

Deutschmann (2003) asserts that many studies have been carried on to investigate apologies in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics in order to compare apology speech act use between native English speakers and speakers of other languages, such as Hebrew (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Olshtain, 1989), Spanish (Garcia, 1989), Danish (Kasper, 1989; Trosborg, 1995), German (House, 1989), Austrian (Meier, 1992), Egyptian (Soliman, 2003), and Persian (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004). For instance, an apology in English is more likely to include the two strategies “an offer of repair” and “a promise of forebearance” compared to Hebrew (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983) in which the two named strategies have been less used. But, it has been indicated that the most frequently used apology strategy among Persians is expressing a request for forgiveness explicitly (bebaxs`id) and also the acknowledgement of responsibility (Shariati & Chamani, 2010) which were used on the basis of culture. Also, the focus of most of Persian studies has been on apology strategies used by Persian speakers and their preferences to use these strategies in different contexts. Based on these studies, Persian apologies were pragmatically formulaic, the same as in English (Afghari, 2007; Shariati & Chamani, 2010). Salehi (2014) by examining 36 participants and five different social situations concluded that there are some similarities and also differences between Iranian EFL learners and native English speakers in using apology strategies. To illustrate, regardless of the almost similar level of proficiency among the participants, they dealt differently with identical apology situations in a few cases. For instance, the “use of illocutionary force indicating device (IFIDs)” and “taking responsibility” are among those strategies that have occurred similarly among both groups. Therefore, it can be concluded that although various
situations raised different strategies used by the participants, the main components of apology were explicit apology expression (IFIDs), responsibility statements, promise of forbearance, offer of repair and concern for the hearer.

In fact, many scholars have focused on the topic of apology strategies, their use in various contexts, and the speakers who use them. Based on research by Farashaiyan and Yazdi (2011) regarding analyzing the apology strategies, language proficiency among Iranian EFL students and Malaysian ESL university students plays less of a role in determining pragmatic performance of the students compared to other factors. Indeed, it has been shown that in some situations almost equally proficient speakers respond differently in the same apology situations. For instance, Iranian students use more apologizing strategies in comparison with the Malaysian students. As an example, in the study by Farashaiyan and Yazdi (2011), Iranian learners use expression of embarrassment or denial of responsibility to realize the speech act of apology in apology situations; however, Malaysian students do not use those. Some factors such as various socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds, and the speakers’ EFL/ESL status might determine such differences. According to Farashaiyan and Yazdi (2011), these differences between Iranian and Malaysian students might be caused by other factors including their learning styles, preferences in test taking strategies, and personality as well.

Even though Karimnia and Afghari (2012) claimed the universality of apology strategies in their study "On apologizing in Persian: A socio-cultural inquiry", adopting apology strategies highlighted the cultural dimensions of language use in this study. As stated by Karimnia and Afghari (2012), the speakers leaned toward positive politeness.
Apology strategies such as taking responsibility, intensification, and promise of forbearance were not employed by the speakers to save face; however, illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) and explanation, which are considered as less dangerous strategies, were used more frequently.

Because the apology classification of Cohen and Olshtain (1981) might cause overlapping between categories and not be exclusive, one particular answer might fall into more than one category; as a result, it is decided to use Searle’s (1969) classification of illocutionary acts to code the collected data.

### 1.6 The Classification of Illocutionary Acts by Searle

Regarding the study of speech acts, Searle (1969) stated that “The reason for concentrating on the study of speech acts is simply this: all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts. The unit of linguistic communication is not, as has generally been supposed, word, or sentence in the performance of the speech act” (p.16).

Searle (1979) categorized the second category of the Austin’s (1962) speech acts (illocutionary acts) into five subcategories.

- **Directives** are meant to lead the hearer to do something. These include verbs such as “ask”, “order”, “command”, “request”, “beg”, “plead”, “pray”, “invite”, “permit”, and “advise”.

- **Declarations** are more precisely speech acts which through the act of speaking bring about the state of affairs that they describe. “I resign” or “you’re fired” are the instances of this category.
• **Commisives** indicate that the speaker intend to do something through articulating a purpose. They, actually, commit the speaker to do something in the future. For instance: “promising”, “offering”, “committing”, “obliging”, and “pledging” are examples of commissives.

• **Expressives** reveal the speakers’ state of mind or psychological state regarding a situation. They are basically used in the propositional content such as "thank”, “congratulate”, “apologize”, “condole”, and “welcome”.

• **Assertives** tend to commit the speaker to the truth of an uttered proposition. “Boast”, “complain”, “conclude”, “assert”, and “deduce” which are part of this category are all assessable as being true or false.

1.7 Research Questions

According to Eliss (1992), King and Silver (1993), and Baleghizadeh (2007), teaching speech acts to the EFL learners can affect their performance very noticeably. Thus, misunderstanding of the “apology” as a face-threatening speech act (Brown & Levinson, 1987) may lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding (Alfattah, 2010).

Western cultures have been the center of attention of the researches and studies. Therefore, in accordance with Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), there is a considerable need of researches in nonwestern languages rather than Western ones. The majority of Iranian studies (Afghari, 2007; Shariati & Chamani, 2010) have mostly examined
apology strategies used by Farsi speakers. However, the present study makes an attempt to investigate and compare apology strategies among Farsi speakers who are in America (not in Iran) and native English American speakers in the US Kazemi Zadeh Gol (2013) did a study in examining Iranian ESL learners and native English speaking Americans in using speech acts of refusal; and, she analyzed the initial and final parts of the refusals and established the results of the differences between native English speakers and ESL Persians in using speech acts for their initial and final parts of refusals. This made me question how the outcomes of study in apology, conducted in almost similar conditions, might be compared to hers.

Additionally, in a study conducted by Grieve (2010) to show the expression of apology in German and Australian workplace telephone discourse, it was stated that the offer of repair was occurred only once in German and never in Australian or in Austrailian and German. Also, in another study by Shahrokhi and Mohd. Jan (2012) which explores the effect of power, distance, and severity of offence on the realization patterns of apology speech acts to show Persian male linguistic choices, it is claimed that Persian male speakers tend mostly to provide an offer of repair when they cause a financial damage to a person’s property. In Shahrokhi and Mohd. Jan’s (2012) study, the highest rate of offer of repair happened in the situations where Persian males did financial damage to the person’s laptop, carpet, and car. Due to reading the above-mentioned study and other similar ones, I came up with the second research question to see how the rates of offering repairs of native English speakers and ESL Iranians compare on the six scenarios in my study.
Therefore, to achieve the purposes of the current study, the following research questions are raised.

1. Are there any differences between native English speakers and ESL Iranians in using speech acts for their initial and final parts of apologies?

2. How do the rates of offering repairs of native English speakers and ESL Iranians compare on the six scenarios?
Chapter 2  Methods

This chapter gives a brief account of the participants who took part in the study, deals with the materials put to use in gathering the required information, and recounts the course of action taken throughout the study in order to find the answer to the mentioned research questions in chapter one.

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study consist of four Iranian native speakers of Farsi and four American native speakers of English who are of roughly the same age range (24-31) and of both genders. The Iranian participants with different levels of English proficiency have been living in the US from one to five years, and they are from the graduate and undergraduate students in different departments of the University of Toledo. Additionally, the American participants are mostly my fellow graduate students at the department of English. There are exactly two male and two female American participants who are of the age 26 to 31. Iranian participants consist of two male and two female as well, and they are of the age 24 to 29. The American participants have grown up in Ohio or the areas around it, and in the same way, two Iranian participants were from
Tehran and two from Isfahan, which is a city next to Tehran. This almost eliminates the effect of gender and age difference in apologizing among the two groups.

### 2.2 Instrument

Data were collected in this investigation through the administration of DCT (Discourse Completion Task) which consisted of 14 slides for six different role-play scenarios (High/equal social status and high/low social distance) to which the participants can easily relate themselves. These scenarios were adapted from Marquez-Reiter (2000) and were created using Power Point.

For instance, in scenario number one the responder, an employee (lower status), has to answer (apologize) in response to the question “Do you have the handouts?” of the boss (higher status). In fact, there is a high social distance between the employee and the boss (See figures 2-1 and 2-2).

![Image](image1.png)

Figure 2-1: Scenario 1 - Apology to Boss
In scenario number two the responder, who is in the role of an employee, has to come up with a statement (apologize) to what he/she did to his/her boss’s car (having an
accident). In this role-play scenario, the social status of the boss is higher than the employee, but they are close in social distance, because they’ve been working with each other for five years at the same company (See figures 2-3 and 2-4).

![Figure 2-4: Apology to Boss (Low-High Status, Low Social Distance)](image)

In scenario number three, the responder (the trainer) has to come up with a statement (apologize) to what he/she did to his/her trainee (smashing the laptop screen). In this role-play scenario, the social status of the trainer is higher than the trainee, and they are high in social distance as well (See figures 2-5 and 2-6).
3) You sent your laptop out to be updated last week, and you haven’t gotten it back yet. The new trainee, to whom you just started to teach, has lent his brand new laptop to you to use for a while. Trying to answer the door bell, you accidentally drop it on the floor and smash part of the screen.

What do you say to him?

Figure 2-5: Scenario 3 - Apology to Trainee

Figure 2-6: Apology to Trainee (High-Low Status, High Social Distance)

In scenario number four the responder (the professor) has to come up with a statement (apology) for his/her mistake (assigning a wrong chapter) to his/her student. Indeed, the
responder (the student) has a lower social status compared to his/her professor, but there is not a high social distance between the professor and his/her former graduate student (See figures 2-7 and 2-8).

4) You and your former graduate student have been coauthoring a paper over the past few months. In fact, you have known each other for several years. He moved to Cleveland after graduation. He comes to your office from Cleveland with the second chapter of the paper you asked him to type. As soon as he gives it to you, you realize that you asked him to bring the wrong chapter to work on together.

What do you say to him?

Figure 2-7: Scenario 4 - Apology to Student

Figure 2-8: Apology to Student (High-Low Status, Low Social Distance)
In scenario number five the responder, who is in the role of a new neighbor, has to come up with a statement (apologize) to what he/she did to his/her neighbor car (dropping the bottle of oil). In this role-play scenario, the interlocutors are of the same social status (neighbors), but they are high in social distance, because the responder just moved to the new neighborhood (See figures 2-9 and 2-10).

Figure 2-9: Scenario 5 - Apology to Neighbor

Figure 2-10: Apology to Neighbor (Equal Status, High Social Distance)
In scenario number six the responder (the inviter) and the host (the invitee) are both friends and have equal social status. Responder has to react (apologize) to what he/she did to his/her friend’s favorite photo frame (breaking his photo frame). They are also close to each other, which means there is a low social distance between the two interlocutors (See figures 2-11 and 2-12).

Figure 2-11: Scenario 6 - Apology to Friend

Figure 2-12: Apology to Friend (Equal Status, Low Social Distance)
The related pictures were added after the written form of the scenarios in order to assist the participants feel they are really in the situation and also give them all a similar mental picture of the situation. The people in the pictures were selected in a way that do not raise any dogma or highlight any dogmatic opinion in the responders based on their race or skin and hair color. Also, it is worth mentioning that the first-person point of view and not the third-person point of view was chosen for the pictures in order to help put the participant into the situation.

Table (2-1) summarizes the key elements of the six scenarios based on the two criteria: Social Status (high/equal), and Social Distance (high/low) of interlocutors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Social Distance</th>
<th>Social Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L-H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L-H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H-L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H-L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Procedure

The participants were instructed to follow the assigned tasks to become prepared for the later elicitation of the necessary data.

Each scenario together with the related picture was shown on a separate slide and asked the participants for their reaction. After giving the instruction, the participants were
supposed to silently read the first slide, which was the description of the scenario, and next, see the related picture in the second slide, which helped them to put themselves more naturally in place of the apologizer. After going through these two steps, they orally gave a response to each scenario in English and the researcher recorded all the answers. The students were not informed that the scenarios were about the speech act of apology. The recording data were collected by means of a sound recorder, and all of them were collected in separate folders, labeled with each individual’s name on the researcher’s laptop. Each situation was based on two social variables: the relative social status of the participant and the simulated interlocutor and social distance between the interlocutors. The degree at which the speaker and the hearer might be familiar with each other indicates the level of social distance, and the level of authority of one of the interlocutors on the other in an indication of the social status between them.

2.4 Data Coding

The obtained data from the recorded oral answers to the role-play scenarios were analyzed based on the categorization of John R. Searle (1976) taxonomy which includes five universal semantic formulae for apologies: (1) Assertive, (2) Expressive, (3) Declarative, (4) Commissive, and (5) Directive.

Only the initial and final parts of apologies were analyzed to reach the ultimate results. The following are some of the apologies by Iranians and Americans, and how they were analyzed based on John R. Searle (1976) taxonomy:
• “I left them on the desk” (Assertive: to commit the speaker to the truth of the uttered proposition.) “It was my mistake” (Assertive: to commit the speaker to the truth of the uttered proposition.)

• “On the way back here after picking my husband up, I started speeding up a little bit” (Assertive: to commit the speaker to the truth of the uttered proposition.) “I’m very sorry” (Expressive: to express the psychological state.)

• “Today, someone rang my door bell” (Assertive: to commit the speaker to the truth of the uttered proposition.) “I offer to buy a new one” (Commissive: to commit the speaker to a certain course of action.)

• “We can type the chapter up together” (Commissive: to commit the speaker to a certain course of action.) “We can work on chapter two” (Commissive: to commit the speaker to a certain course of action.)

• “I offer to take your car and have it cleaned” (Commissive: to commit the speaker to a certain course of action.) “I feel really bad” (Expressive: to express the psychological state.)

• “I apologize” (Expressive: to express the psychological state.) “I try to replace the frame best to my ability” (Commissive: to commit the speaker to a certain course of action.)

In the next part, the above-mentioned taxonomy (basically, Assertive, Expressive, and Commissive) would help the researcher to conduct the study and give answer to the research questions which were mentioned in chapter one.
2.5 Hypotheses

1. There is no correlation between the language status and the choice of illocutionary acts for the initial and final parts of apologies by Farsi and English native speakers.

2. There is no correlation between the native language and the rates of offering repairs to the eliciting acts by Farsi and English native speakers.

The following chapter will thoroughly analyze the collected data and the statistical measures utilized for this purpose.
Chapter 3

3 Results and Conclusion

This chapter will present the findings from the analysis of the obtained data. Indeed, in this chapter results obtained from the performances of the two groups will be introduced, and related tables will be presented. The results of relevant statistical procedure are shown in the following sections of the chapter.

3.1 Results

In order to compare the apology data by the two groups of Iranian and American participants and find possible answers to the questions of this study, first, the data were coded based on the categorization of John R. Searle (1976) taxonomy into Assertives, Expressives, and Commissives through an Excel file. Later, using the Rcmdr software, the researcher analyzed the data by the Fisher’s Exact Test.

The first research question asks: “Are there any differences between native English speakers and ESL Iranians in using speech acts for their initial and final parts of apologies?” In order to answer this question, the researcher performed the analysis for each of the six scenarios.

Based on the outcomes collected by the Fisher’s Exact Test (p-value= 1), which show the correlation between the nationality (being American or Iranian) and the initial part of
the first scenario (S1S), there is no correlation between these two variables in this study when Americans and Iranians apologize to a person with higher status compared to them and with high social distance (scenario number one). Similarly, there is no significant correlation (p-value= 0.42) between the two variables of nationality and the final part of their apology (S1E) to the same person.

Analysis of the collected data by the Fisher’s Exact Test (p-value= 1) indicated that there is no significant correlation between the two variables of nationality and the initial part of the apology when they apologize to a person with higher status and with low social distance (scenario number two). Likewise, there is no significant correlation (p-value= 0.46) between the two variables of nationality and the final part of apology when the two groups apologize to the same person.

According to the outcomes by the Fisher’s Exact Test (p-value= 0.48), there is no significant correlation between the initial part of the apology and nationality in the two groups of Iranian and American participants when they apologize to a person with lower social status and with high social distance (scenario number three). The results showed that there is also no significant correlation (p-value= 0.42) between the final part of the apology and nationality when Americans and Iranians apologize to the same person.

The obtained results by the Fisher’s Exact Test (p-value= 1) showed that there is no correlation between in the initial part of apology and nationality when the two groups apologize to a person with lower social status and low social distance (scenario number four). In the same way, there is also no correlation (p-value= 1) between the final part of the apology and nationality when the participants apologize to the same person.
Based on the outcomes by the Fisher’s Exact Test (p-value= 1), there is no correlation between neither in the initial part of apology, nor in the final part of apology and nationality when Americans and Iranians apologize to a person with the same social status as theirs and with higher social distance (scenario number five).

Last but not least, the results of the Fisher’s Exact Test (p-value= 0.48) suggested that there is no significant correlation between the initial part of the apology and nationality when the participants apologize to a person with the same social status as theirs and low social distance. Based on the p-value= 0.14, there is also no correlation between the two groups’ final part of apology and nationality in apologizing to the same person.

As a result of all the above-mentioned analyses, it can be concluded that there is no correlation between Iranians’ and Americans’ nationality and their initial part of apology. Likewise, there is also no correlation between the two groups’ nationality and their final part of apology. Therefore, it can be said that the first hypothesis which is “There is no correlation between the language status and the choice of illocutionary acts for the initial and final parts of apologies by “Farsi” and English native speakers” is certainly correct. In other words, by knowing the nationality of either group, we cannot predict their apologizing behavior, and the other way around, by knowing the apology behavior of either group, we cannot predict their nationality.

The second research question asks “How do the rates of offering repairs of native English speakers and ESL Iranians compare on the six scenarios?” Because by mentioning “rate of offering repairs”, we mean Commissive illocutionary act, the researcher counted all the expressed Commissives by all the Iranian and American participants. Next, the correlation between all the participants and the total number of
Commissives was calculated using the Fisher’s Exact Test. The obtained outcome revealed that there is no correlation (p-value= 1) between the nationality of the participants and using Commissives in the initial and final parts of the apology in general. Therefore, the second hypothesis which is “There is no correlation between the native language and the rates of offering repairs to the eliciting acts by Farsi and English native speakers” is correct. It means that by knowing the nationality of either group, it is not possible to predict their use of rate of offering repairs or Commissives in apologizing and vice versa.

3.2 Discussion

Because the present study is a study which has not been conducted before, there are not so many comparable exact previous studies available, but some similar ones with different examined languages.

In a study by Narges Kazemi Zadeh Gol (2013), American English speakers have been compared with Iranian Farsi speakers in the US in order to see the difference in their refusal behavior. The results of this study have shown that in production of refusals to the four eliciting acts including invitation, suggestion, offer, and request regarding the two social variables of social status and social distance, Iranian second language learners used almost the same illocutionary acts. This indicated a behavior very similar to the native Americans’. Additionally, these Iranian Farsi speakers indicated the same native-like behavior in using illocutionary acts in the initial and final part of their refusals. However, in the present study, based on the obtained results, by knowing the nationality of either American or Iranian groups, we cannot predict their apologizing behavior, or by knowing
the apology behavior of either group, we cannot predict their nationality. In fact, the number of participants in this study was small. Based on the results, I did have all the Iranians always used the *Commissive* but Americans basically used *Assertive* or *Expressive* instead of *Commissive*. For instance, the following is one of Iranians’ answers in contrast to one of the American’s answer to scenario number one:

Iranian participant: “I have forgotten that the secretary is out on the meeting day. I can go and print the handouts quickly and bring them back before the meeting ends if you want me to.”

American participant: “I gave it to the secretary and she was out for a meeting. I need a few minutes to go get them. I left them with the secretary.”

The following is also another actual example of one of the Farsi-speaking Iranian participants’ answers in contrast to one of the English-speaking American participants’ answers to scenario number two:

Iranian participant: “I was in a hurry and that’s how it happened. I apologize for what happened to your car and let me have the car and fix it for you.”

American participant: “Hey man; I rear ended someone in your car.”

Thus, if I had larger number of subjects, a significant correlation between nationality and the offer of repair might have been shown, and bigger numbers might give me different results.

Averil Grieve (2010) showed the expression of apology in German and Australian English workplace telephone discourse. In this study, the offer of repair occurred only once in German and never in Australian English. Mohsen Shahrokhi and Jariah Mohd. Jan (2012) intended to show Persian male linguistic choices by examining the effect of
power, distance, and severity of offence on the realization patterns of apology speech acts. According to the result of their study, Persian males tend to offer to repair when they cause a damage to a person’s property, and in their study, it happened mostly when the male Persian participants caused a damage to the carpet, laptop, and car of the person. According to a study by Zohreh Kashkoulia and Abbass Eslamirasekh (2013), Persian L1s, compared to Armenians, are more likely to apologize to acquaintances than to strangers in order to maintain social relationships. They also mentioned that Persian L1s were less eager to apologize to interlocutors of all three statuses (high / equal / low). In fact, although likelihood of apology is determined only by social status among Persians, it is a significant factor for Armenians not only in their likelihood to apologize and severity of the offending situation, but also in the acceptability of their apology. Last but not least, in a study by Reyhaneh Salehi (2014), apology strategies used by Iranian EFL learners and English native speakers from around the world in five different situations were compared. The obtained results of the study were in line with some other studies (Blum –kulka & Olshtain, 1989; Istifci & Kampusu, 2009; and Farashaiyan & Amirkhiz, 2011) and indicated that both proficiency and L1 norms affect the use of apology strategies. The results of Reyhaneh Salehi’s (2014) study concluded that different combination of apology strategies and complicated formulas in apologizing were used more by the advanced level participants. Indeed, the proficiency level of the participants cannot completely remove the role of L1 in producing apology strategies in the target language, but it can affect the apology strategies used by EFL learners.
However, the results of the present thesis suggests that knowing the nationality of either Iranian or American group does not determine their use of rate of offering repairs or Commissives in apologizing and vice versa.

### 3.3 Implications

According to Al-Kahtani (2005), the students may face misunderstanding and problems in interacting if pragmatic competence is ignored in foreign language class rooms. The results of this study may be of benefit to L2 teachers in that they would find the information in this study useful in helping them with the way they present speech acts in their classes. L2 instructors should encourage students to improve their knowledge about the cultural differences and different uses of the target language. They are recommended to detect their students’ areas of weakness and strength in understanding speech acts first and lead their intermediate students to learn unfamiliar speech acts more efficiently by providing them with contextual examples throughout the stages of their education. In fact, in order to depict a clear picture of the differences between the two cultures for the learners, English culture and learners’ native culture need to be included in instruction when English apology patterns are taught to them.

Additionally, not only helping the students boosting their knowledge of appropriate use of speech acts in the target language through implementing instruction in pragmatics is important for the language instructors (Allami & Naeimi, 2011), but, in order to meet the communicative competence goals of education, material developers should also adjust teaching materials with EFL students’ needs (Atashanesh & Izadi, 2011). Thus, materials writers and syllabus designers, like L2 teachers, may benefit from the results of
this study through designing and preparing suitable instructional materials and course contents in which specific care and prominence is given to speech acts. They should try to make expressing the speech acts a piece of cake for their students, not a hard nut to crack. In fact, it has already been stated that the number of participants in this study were small, and if this research were conducted, using larger number of participants, different results might have been obtained which might have been shown a correlation between the nationality and the use of speech acts.

There will also be some implications for students as well. According to Al-Issa (2003), the language learners need to be more knowledgeable about the pragmatic rules of the L2 speech community to be able to compete in the target language. So, if students try to use speech acts in exposure to the target culture, they will be more easily understood by both native speakers on one hand, and their fluency and speed of delivery will be enhanced on the other. Indeed, in spite of gaining mastery of linguistic competence to even a very high level, most advanced EFL learners have difficulties in communicating appropriately in a target context (Sadeghi & Savojbolaghchilar, 2011).

To summarize, it is hoped that by using the results of this study, L2 instructors and researchers follow better ways of approaching and developing speech acts in pedagogical atmosphere.

3.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Although the present study revealed some insightful findings regarding the speech act of apology, like any other research study, it suffered from a number of limitations which
will pose inevitable restrictions upon the generalization of its results. These limitations are as follows:

A major limitation is the limited access of the researcher to the Iranians with almost the same level of proficiency in English and exposure to the English speaking Americans, age and gender range, and the years that they have been in the US. Therefore, the sample represented a small part of the larger whole. Secondly, the number of available participants in this study is limited and if larger number of participants were used, different results might have been obtained. Additionally, the target language environment is among the variables which might have some effects on the results of the study. By target language speaking environment, we basically mean the environment in which the language is spoken. People might learn to use a specific language differently (for instance in “apologizing” in this study) due to the target environment in which the language is spoken.

Therefore, all the above-mentioned limitations could actually be viewed as a great hindrance to the generalization of more comprehensive results. They have to be taken into consideration before any conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the study. Also, as it is true for every research, it cannot be claimed that all the findings of this study are generalizable to similar cases. Keeping this fact in mind, the following areas can be suggested for further investigation. It is hoped that prospective researchers keep these suggestions in their minds and apply them to their forthcoming research studies.

First, confirming research can be conducted to see whether the findings of this study can be verified. In addition, because the selected participants in this study were in the US and used English as their second language (Farsi as their native language), it is suggested
to repeat this research in another country such as Iran, where people use English as their foreign language not their second language. Thus, it can be seen if the similar role play scenarios would bring out the same results with those who do not live in a country in which English is the language. In this way, with elimination of the effect of exposure to an English-speaking environment and English-speaking people, the obtained results can be compared to the outcomes of the present study. Another suggestion to the future researchers is to change the form and number of role-play scenarios and see if the type of role-plays might have any specific effect on the participants and the obtained findings. Furthermore, further path of research needs to be paved by carrying out this study among learners, who have the knowledge of other languages rather than Persian and English and see how social power and social difference might be affected if the languages differ in apologizing. Additionally, because as it was stated, the age range in this study was limited to a specific range (24-31), it is recommended that participants with an age range different from the one in this study answer the same role play scenarios and the researchers notice whether different results might be obtained with a different age range. Last but not least, a replication of this study with a larger sample size is required due to the limited size of the participants group in the present study in order to confirm the findings.
References


Appendix A

Power Point Slides for the Role Play Scenarios

The role-play scenarios consist of 14 slides for six different situations using Power Point. The situations offered various cases including high social distance/high social power, high social distance/low social power, low social distance/low social power, and so forth. Each two slides were related to one scenario. The first one was the scenario itself which asks for the participants reaction, and the second one was the related picture to the scenario which makes it easier for the participant to put himself/herself more naturally in the situation.
1) You just started your work in a new company. Your manager at work has asked you to prepare a 20-page handout for an important meeting with the company’s vice president. You had given the files to the secretary to print; however, you had forgotten she is out on the day of meeting. You arrive at the meeting and your boss asks you: “do you have the handouts?”

What do you say to him?
2) You have been working with your boss together for the past five years at Southland Industry Company. You are pretty close to him, and ask to borrow his car to pick up your spouse from the airport. On the way back to office, you speed up a little bit, and you hit the car in front of you, which results in a broken headlight and a bent bumper. Once back at the office, you return the keys.

What do you say to him?
3) You sent your laptop out to be updated last week, and you haven’t gotten it back yet. The new trainee, to whom you just started to teach, has lent his brand new laptop to you to use for a while. Trying to answer the door bell, you accidentally drop it on the floor and smash part of the screen.

What do you say to him?
4) You and your former graduate student have been coauthoring a paper over the past few months. In fact, you have known each other for several years. He moved to Cleveland after graduation. He comes to your office from Cleveland with the second chapter of the paper you asked him to type. As soon as he gives it to you, you realize that you asked him to bring the wrong chapter to work on together.

What do you say to him?
5) You just moved to a new neighborhood on Dorr Street. Your neighbor whom you just met once while out mowing grass has agreed to help you move some things out of your apartment with his car. Once in his car, you notice how clean and spotless the car is. While turning round a bend, a bottle of oil which was among your belongings falls onto the back seat, and its content is spilled all over the seat. You both lean back, and notice it.

What do you say to him?
6) You are invited to a party at your friend’s luxurious house (you know each other from high school, and are close friends). On your way back from his bedroom where the guests were told to leave their coats, you accidentally break his favorite photo frame, which was a gift from his Dad. He opens the door to change clothes, and you are still there, staring at the broken glass.

What do you say to him?