

Apology Strategies of Turkish and Bulgarian EFL Learners

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Abstract

Speech acts as a subfield of intercultural pragmatics have been investigated heavily with the aim of investigating different cultures' effects on communication. Nevertheless, the literature lacks enough research comparing non-native speakers of English of two different countries. The present study aims to gather data about the apology strategies of Turkish and Bulgarian EFL learners and investigate the differences and similarities between two groups. The data was gathered from 16 participants including six Bulgarian and ten Turkish EFL learners by employing a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the data gathering tool. The DCT consisted of eight different situations and apologies were analysed by using Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Pattern (CCSARP)" proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983). Findings indicate that responses of both groups include direct apology strategy most and they employed two or three strategies in an apology. It also revealed that Turkish respondents were less apologetic than Bulgarian participants.

Keywords: Pragmatic competence, speech acts, intercultural pragmatics.

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1. Introduction

Communication in a language requires not only comprehending and producing language specified codes but analysing and interpreting the speaker's intended message and offering comprehensible input for the hearer as well. Moreover, teaching only lexical and structural patterns of a language and ignoring cultures' effects may only allow language education to create insufficient communicators. Bearing this in mind, sufficient language communicators are able to understand underlying messages in language specified codes considering they possess the contextual and cultural knowledge besides lexical and structural knowledge. Given the importance of inferential communication, intercultural pragmatics tends to highlight and prevent misunderstandings caused by cultural differences. More specifically, intercultural pragmatics aims to make sense of the effects of non-shared knowledge and how it alters the comprehension of the intended message (Moeschler, 2004). Taking into consideration that language use differs from one culture to another, the lack of pragmatic competence of cultural norms may have negative impacts on communication and the hearer may not be satisfied with the speaker's production. To clarify the issue, Bataineh and Bataineh (2008) note that although the phrase "I am sorry" is enough in some cultures (e.g. Japan), speakers in some other cultures may not be fulfilled with only the phrase and need to hear a reason, excuse or explanation for the committed action.

Researchers investigate speech acts as a subfield of intercultural pragmatics and it is defined as "the action performed by means of utterances" (Yalçinkaya, 2021, p. 285). By investigating speech acts, researchers contrast and compare different variables and their effects on language use such as cultures, proficiency levels, age, gender, social environments, etc. To be able to communicate effectively with people from different cultures, speakers need to comprehend both explicit and implicit meaning of the utterances. Otherwise, there will be gaps and unsatisfying outcomes of the interaction. The hearer may not be able to acquire the implicit meaning of the utterances and focus

only on explicit meaning. This issue can be explained by the lack of pragmatic competence. Apology strategies have been given the most attention among other speech acts since it is noted that apology strategies are dependent on the cultural, social, personal factors (Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; Çetinavcı, 2012). The way speakers apologise change according to the contextual situations and choosing specific apology strategy may inform researchers and hearers about the speakers' cultural and demographic backgrounds.

Although speech acts, specifically apology strategies, were heavily investigated, researchers' foci were either on comparing native speakers in terms of choosing the most appropriate apology strategies (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Suszczynska, 1999; Yalçınkaya, 2021) or comparing Native speakers of English to non-native speakers of English (Asmalı & Yavuz, 2014; Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016; Chiravate, 2019). It is believed that the literature lacks enough research regarding the comparison of non-native English speakers of two different countries. Moreover, only a few studies have been found in available literature regarding apology speech acts in Bulgarian context (Slavianova, 1983; Peneva, 2015) and further research needs to be conducted to obtain detailed insights. In this regard, this research aims to gain insights into apology strategies employed by both Turkish and Bulgarian in English language. Having these aims in mind, current research aims to find answers for the following questions:

1. What are the most frequent combinations of apology strategies adopted by Turkish EFL learners and Bulgarian EFL Learners?
2. What are the differences between the Turkish EFL learners and Bulgarian learners in terms of using apology strategies in English?
3. Do the apology strategies differ in different contexts?

This study is crucial considering it aims to compare non-native English speakers that possess different cultural backgrounds and gain insights from the subjects that speak two less common European languages. Moreover, getting insights from Bulgarian participants and comparing them to Turkish participants enrich the Bulgarian and Turkish literature regarding apology strategies with a different point of view.

2. Literature

This part presents theoretical base of the study and offers conducted studies in accordance with the discussed framework.

2.1. Speech Acts

In order to analyse sociocultural and pragmatic competence, investigating speech acts is reckoned as necessary (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981) given the fact that they represent cultural, social, personal and situational features. Employing speech act theory which is proposed by Austin (1962) altered the direction of speech analysis from linguistic aspects to more functional aspects and it was highlighted that utterances also perform actions besides explicating meanings (Jassim & Nimehchisalem, 2016). Austin (1962) proposed three types of actions of speech act: a) locutionary, b) illocutionary, c) perlocutionary act. He noted that locutionary act is regarded as the simple production of the words and the hearer should understand what the speaker says. Furthermore, illocutionary act is the utterances that have meaningful purposes or intentions just like most utterances employed in daily life such as offering, informing, requesting and apologising. Lastly, he proposes perlocutionary act which is the actions performed after the locutionary or illocutionary acts. To illustrate the concept, after the illocutionary speech act of apologising, if the hearer feels satisfied or needs more explanation, this action is regarded as the perlocutionary act. Considering speech acts are considered as the basic units and utterances of a language, researchers investigate different types of speech acts such as refusing (Bella, 2011), inviting (Nodoushan, 1995), and apologizing (Holmes, 1989; İstifçi, 2009).

2.2. Apology as a Speech Act

Apology is a face-saving act of speech against the offended side to fix the damage between two sides. The speaker realizes the offending act performed before and makes an attempt to fix the damage. Thus, the speaker employs specific apology strategies in accordance with the situation and level of formality. Considering Fraser (1980) mentions that the way speakers apologise alters according to the culture, environment, familiarity of people and intensity of the context, a great number of research has been conducted to analyse the way speakers apologise in different situations (Garcia, 1989; Olshtain, 1989; Çetinavcı, 2012; Aydin, 2013). The most common situations are represented in three typological communicative contexts varying in interlocutors' relative power and social distance:

a) communication with a stranger, b) communication with a friend, c) communication with a status unequal (Shardakova, 2005). In this regard, Aydin (2013) conducted research aimed to compare native speakers of English to native speakers of Turkish and Turkish non-native speakers of English and found that Turkish people were less apologetic when they performed an offensive action against their friends in his study. In a different context similar to Turkish context, native speakers of Thai considered offending action more severe than native speakers of English when it is performed against someone who has a higher status (Chiravate, 2019). Another similar finding was provided by Shardakova (2005) in her study conducted to get insights into the comparison of native speakers of Russian and American non-native speakers of Russian. She found that native speakers of Russian considered professors and strangers equal in terms of formality while Russian learners reckoned strangers had more formal status than professors and employed more explicit apology strategies. Another study was carried out by Jassim and Nimehchisalem (2016) and researchers noted that Arab EFL students considered all situations as severe regardless of their formality and performed explicit apology at a similar rate.

Apology speech acts can be investigated under two main categories called direct and indirect. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) clarify the concept by noting that if the utterances are comprehended syntactically when they are produced, they are direct speech acts. If the utterances partially refer to the context and need to be derived from the meaning, they are called indirect. To illustrate the issue, if the speaker performs an apology such as "I am sorry, I apologise", it is possible to understand from the syntax, therefore, it is direct apology act. On the other hand, if the speaker prefers to offer an excuse, takes responsibility for the action, or offers repair, it is indirect apology act. Analysing the directness of apology strategies has been another focus for some research and one of this research is conducted by Asmalı and Yavuz (2014). They investigated the apology strategies employed by Turkish, Polish and Latvian EFL teachers and claimed that Latvian prospective teachers chose the most direct way to apologise when they are compared to other subjects. Another research conducted by Chiravate (2019) proposed that both native speakers of English and Thai learners chose to employ direct apology strategies most given the fact that- native speakers preferred expression of regret (I'm sorry) most and native speakers of Thai chose general apology most. Having a similar aim in sight, Slavianova (2012) claimed that native speakers of English preferred more expressive apology strategies than native speakers of Bulgarian and Bulgarians offered apologies more rarely and restricted than native speakers of English.

In order to provide detailed insights into apology strategies of Bulgarian people, Peneva (2015) examined one British and one Bulgarian TV series in terms of gender differences on apology strategies. She noted that Bulgarians relate the seriousness of the offence to social distance, whereas British speakers relate to social power and social distance. Another gender related research was proposed by Bataineh and Bataineh (2006) and the research investigated Jordanian undergraduate EFL students' apology strategies. They noted that male Jordanian EFL students employed accounts, compensation, reparation, showing lack of intent to do harm, and promising not to repeat offense as apology strategies. On the other hand, female Jordanian EFL learners mostly chose accounts, promise not to repeat offense, compensation, reparation, and showing lack of intent to do harm. In addition, İstifçi (2009) conducted another research investigating the effects of proficiency levels of Turkish EFL learners and claimed that intermediate level EFL learners more tend to transfer L1 apology strategies to English than advanced level learners and advanced level learners approached to native speaker norms in terms of their apology preferences in eight different situations.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The data was gathered from two different groups of participants. The first group consists of five Bulgarian EFL learners whose language level is above B1+ according to the Common European Framework of References (CEFR). The second group consists of 10 Turkish EFL learners whose language level is above B1+ according to CEFR. The variables such age, gender, additional languages were not taken into consideration. Thus, they were not included in the current research. The participants that possess above B1+ language levels were chosen considering understanding and responding to the situations in the survey that were written in English require more than intermediate English language level.

3.2. Instrument

The current exploratory cross-sectional research employed Discourse Completion Test (DCT) considering it is seen as a useful method to investigate speech acts such as apologizing, requesting, refusing, etc. (Mackey & Gass, 2005). The DCT applied in the current study was originally prepared by Beckwith & Deweale (2008) and modified

by Aydin (2013). It consists of eight different scenarios and these scenarios differ from each other in terms of power relationship: low, equal and high. Also, scenarios include different social distance as a) communication with a friend, b) communication with a stranger, c) communication with a status unequal.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The DCT was prepared in an online website given the fact that participants live in different countries. In this regard, researcher shared the DCT with participants via online by explicitly highlighting the goals of the study and asking their participation voluntarily.

3.4. Data Analysis

During the analysis of the current study, “Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Pattern (CCSARP)” proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) was employed. The raw data was investigated and classified under appropriate strategies considering CCSARP is the most widely acknowledged apology speech set (Hou, 2006). The strategies are as follows:

1. An expression of an apology
 - a. expression of regret (I am sorry)
 - b. an offer of apology (I apologize)
 - c. a request for forgiveness⁴ (Excuse me)
2. An expectation or account of the situation (The bus was late)
3. An acknowledgement of responsibility
 - a. accepting the blame (It's my fault)
 - b. expressing self-deficiency (I wasn't thinking)
 - c. recognizing the other person as deserving apology (You are right)
 - d. expressing lack of intent (I didn't mean to)
4. An offer of repair (I'll pay for the broken vase)
5. A promise of forbearance (It won't happen again)

The apology strategies mentioned above failed to cover all responses. Thus, one more strategy has been added to the analysis which is proposed by Tunçel (1999). The strategy is called “denial of fault or offense” (e.g. it's not my fault).

4. Findings

After the data was gathered from the participants, it was analysed by employing apology strategies proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Tunçel (1999). The findings were visualized by preparing tables and they are clarified under different headings below regarding research questions.

4.1 Overall Apology Strategies

When the data was analysed, the most frequent apology strategies became eminent, and they are represented in table 1. According to the findings, IFID (expression of apology) is the most frequent strategy employed by both groups given the fact that 70 percent of Turkish and 75 percent of Bulgarian participants' responses involve it. It is followed by an offer of repair strategy since 38 percent of Turkish and 43.75 percent of Bulgarian learners preferred to make use of an offer of repair strategy. These two strategies are followed by an account of situation (30%), an acknowledgement of responsibility (18%), denial of fault or offense (18%) and a promise for forbearance (2%) in regard to Turkish respondents' data. When the Bulgarian respondents' data is investigated, IFID and an offer of repair strategies are followed by an account of situation (22.9%), are illustrated in table 1. Both groups preferred to use IFID (expression of apology) to a similar extend since 70 percent of Turkish and 75 percent of Bulgarian participants' responses included IFID. The results failed to show a strict distinction in this regard although Bulgarian EFL learners made use of IFID more than Turkish participants. Moreover, the data also represents another similar result in terms of an acknowledgement of responsibility given the fact that both groups benefited from an acknowledgement of responsibility strategy to a similar extend. 22.9 percent of Bulgarian and 18 percent of Turkish participants responses included an acknowledgement of responsibility strategy. The same similarity rate was also prominent when the participants made use of an offer of repair and a promise for forbearance strategies. 38 percent of Turkish and 43.75 percent of Bulgarian participants employed an offer of repair strategy. In addition, a promise of forbearance strategy was used rarely in both groups' responses seeing that 2 percent of responses involved it. As

for the last prominent similarity, both groups employed more than one strategy to a similar extent given the fact that 60.4 percent of Bulgarian and 56 percent of Turkish EFL learners' responses consisted of more than one strategy.

The data has also provided some differences and they are also represented in table 1. As for the first difference regarding overall apology strategies, Turkish EFL learners' responses included more utterances to offer an account of the situation with 30 percent while 22.9 percent Bulgarian participants' responses included an account of the situation strategy. One of the two clear differences is about denial of fault or offense. Although 18 percent of Turkish participants' responses included denial of fault or offense, none of the Bulgarian learners preferred to use it. Another obvious difference is related to the use of intensifiers. While almost half of the Bulgarian participants' responses involved intensifiers (so, really, very), only 24 percent of Turkish EFL learners' responses included intensifiers.

Table 1. Overall apology strategies

Overall apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 50 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 48 responses	
	n	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	35	70	36	75
An account of the situation	15	30	11	22.9
An acknowledgement of responsibility	9	18	11	22.9
An offer of repair	19	38	21	43.75
A promise for forbearance	1	2	1	2
Denial of fault or offense	9	18	0	0
Intensifier	12	24	22	45.8
More than one strategy	28	56	29	60.4

4.2 Apology Strategies in Different Context

The DCT included eight different contexts which vary in terms of power relationship and social distance and responses provided relevant insights when they were investigated under specific contexts. The salient findings are explained below.

Situation 1: A professor fails to return a student's essay and the student shows up and asks for the essay.

The first situation has a status unequal social distance and the power relationship between the professor and the students is high-low (see table 2). Although Turkish participants' responses included IFID and an account of the situation most in a high-low power relationship context, Bulgarian respondents preferred IFID and an offer of repair. Also, Bulgarian respondents chose to employ intensifiers as well while Turkish respondents ignored this strategy.

Table 2. Situation 1 apology strategies

Situation 1 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 7 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	n	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	4	57.1	3	50
An account of the situation	3	42.8	2	33.3
An acknowledgement of responsibility	1	14.2	0	0
An offer of repair	2	28.5	3	50
A promise for forbearance	0	0	0	0
Denial of fault or offense	0	0	0	0
Intensifiers	0	0	2	33.3

Situation 2: A student forgets to return a book s/he borrowed from a professor on time and the professor asks for the book.

The second context has a status unequal social distance and low-high power relationship since it is about a student with a professor (see table 3). In terms of low-high power relationship, both groups shared similar strategies in their responses except Turkish participants preferred to offer an account/explanation of the situation more similar to the first situation. Both groups chose to employ IFID with intensifiers with high frequency.

Table 3. Situation 2 apology strategies

Situation 2 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 6 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	N	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	5	83.3	5	83.3
An account of the situation	3	50	1	16.6
An acknowledgement of responsibility	1	16.6	1	16.6
An offer of repair	3	50	4	66.6
A promise for forbearance	0	0	0	0
Denial of fault or offense	0	0	0	0
Intensifiers	3	50	4	66.6

Situation 3: A manager of a café is late to an interview with a student who wants a job.

The third context consists of a high-low power relationship with a possible status unequal social distance considering the manager is recognized as the one who will decide to hire the student or not (see table 4). Although all Turkish respondents expressed the damage they caused with IFID strategy, Bulgarian respondents both chose IFID and an account of the situation at the same level. Moreover, Turkish participants also desired the repair the damage (I can pay for the road, I will pay you one day's wage).

Table 4. Situation 3 apology strategies

Situation 3 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 5 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	N	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	5	100	4	66.6
An account of the situation	2	40	4	66.6
An acknowledgement of responsibility	0	0	0	0
An offer of repair	2	40	0	0
A promise for forbearance	0	0	0	0
Denial of fault or offense	0	0	0	0
Intensifiers	0	0	1	13.3

Situation 4: A waiter/waitress in an expensive restaurant brings the wrong food and the customer expresses the mistake.

The next situation represents a low-high social distance and status unequal power relationship situation between a waiter/waitress and a customer (see table 5). The results show that both groups preferred to use an offer of repair strategy at the highest degree among all contexts and they also chose IFID at high frequency. However, as a distinction between two groups, Turkish participants applied an acknowledgement of responsibility strategy as the highest degree among all situations whereas only 33.3 percent of Bulgarians made use of it.

Table 5. Situation 4 apology strategies

Situation 4 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 7 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	N	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	6	85.7	4	66.6
An account of the situation	2	28.5	1	16.6
An acknowledgement of responsibility	5	71.4	2	33.3
An offer of repair	6	85.7	6	100
A promise for forbearance	1	14.2	0	0
Denial of fault or offense	0	0	0	0
Intensifiers	1	14.2	2	33.3

Situation 5: A student who is often late was supposed to meet with a friend to work on an essay and the student is late for two hours and his/her friend has been waiting.

The fifth situation has a communication with a friend power relationship and equal social distance between two friends (see table 5). According to findings, Bulgarian EFL learners preferred to employ IFID with intensifiers while most Turkish learners refused to use a direct apology (IFID) in this context. Although Bulgarian learners employed 12 apology strategies at total, Turkish respondents only offered 7 apology strategies.

Table 6. Situation 5 apology strategies

Situation 5 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 6 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	N	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	2	33.3	4	66.6
An account of the situation	2	33.3	3	50
An acknowledgement of responsibility	1	16.6	2	33.3
An offer of repair	0	0	2	33.3
A promise for forbearance	1	16.6	1	16.6
Denial of fault or offense	1	16.6	0	0
Intensifiers	0	0	4	66.6

Situation 6: The participant bumps into a passenger in a bus and breaks his computer.

The next situation is a communication with a stranger social distance and equal power relationship situation between two passengers (see table 7). When the findings were analysed, Turkish participants employed an offer of repair more than IFID in this context while all responses from Bulgarian learners include IFID. The responses in both groups included intensifiers at a highest degree among all contexts (f=7) and offer of repair strategy and IFID were also considerably used (f=9). Turkish participants focused on repairing the damage more than explicitly apologizing from the offended side comparing to Bulgarian responses.

Table 7. Situation 6 apology strategies

Situation 6 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 5 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	N	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	3	60	6	100
An account of the situation	0	0	0	0
An acknowledgement of responsibility	1	20	2	33.3
An offer of repair	4	80	5	83.3
A promise for forbearance	0	0	0	0

Denial of fault or offense	1	20	0	0
Intensifiers	3	60	4	66.6

Situation 7: The respondent offends his/her colleague in a meeting and his/her colleague express that s/he was offended by the respondent's comment after the meeting.

Above-mentioned situation has a communication with a friend social distance and equal power relationship between the respondent and his/her colleague (see table 8). The findings show a clear distinction regarding the use of denial of fault or offense strategy given the fact that it is the most employed strategy by Turkish respondents (71.4%) while none of the Bulgarian learners made use of it. Moreover, none of the Turkish participants applied acknowledgement of responsibility strategy whereas it was common in Bulgarian learners' responses (50%). The other responses shared similar strategies included in them.

Table 8. Situation 7 apology strategies

Situation 7 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 7 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	N	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	3	42.8	3	52
An account of the situation	1	14.28	1	26.6
An acknowledgement of responsibility	0	0	3	50
An offer of repair	1	14.2	0	0
A promise for forbearance	0	0	0	0
Denial of fault or offense	5	71.4	0	0
Intensifiers	2	28.5	1	13.3

Situation 8: The respondent puts his/her bag in the rack in a coach. However, it falls down and hits another passenger.

The last context includes a communication with a stranger power distance and equal social relationship with two passengers in a coach (see table 9). The findings show that all participants employed IFID regardless of their demographic with a frequent use of intensifiers (f=7) in their responses. Besides using IFID as the main apology strategy, Turkish participants also employed an account of situation and denial of fault or offense strategies whereas none of the Bulgarian learners' responses included these two strategies in this context.

Table 9. Situation 8 apology strategies

Situation 8 apology strategies	Turkish EFL learners: 7 responses		Bulgarian EFL learners: 6 responses	
	N	%	n	%
IFID (Expression of Apology)	7	100	6	100
An account of the situation	2	28.5	0	0
An acknowledgement of responsibility	0	0	1	16.6
An offer of repair	1	14.2	1	16.6
A promise for forbearance	0	0	0	0
Denial of fault or offense	2	28.5	0	0
Intensifiers	3	42.8	4	66.6

5. Discussion

The current study aimed to gain insights into both Turkish and Bulgarian EFL learners' apology strategies in different situations. One of the prominent findings show that both participant groups chose to employ direct apology strategies (IFID) more than indirect apology strategies. This finding coincides with the study of Aydin (2013), Cohen and Olshtain (1981) and Shardakova (2005) as their studies also show that direct apology strategies are the most employed strategy overall. Thus, it can be argued that benefiting from direct apology strategies most can be regarded as a universal feature of apology strategies. Moreover, study also shows similarities regarding the complexity of apology strategies. Both Turkish and Bulgarian EFL learners used 2 or 3 strategies in their apologies. Considering Turkish and Bulgarians are EFL learners, this finding is compatible with Chiravate (2019)'s findings as it was noted Thai EFL learners employed 2 or 3 apology strategies although native speakers of English used 3 or 4 apology strategies. The findings offered some similarities when they the overall apology strategies were analysed. This can be the result of both groups of participants being an EFL learners and lack of apology repertoire in target language. Also, having so much in common in cultural perspectives, Turkish and Bulgarian EFL learners might have represented those cultural similarities in their apology strategies as well. On the other hand, the current study revealed that Bulgarian EFL learners employed direct apology strategies in a great extent. Thus, this finding conflicts with the findings of Slavianova (2012) as it was claimed that Bulgarians apologised rarely.

One of the distinctions between the two groups of participants were the use of denial of fault or offense. While none of the Bulgarian respondents employed it, 18 percent of Turkish responses included a denial of fault or offense. It can be stated that Turkish respondents refused to accept their fault in some situations to save their faces and offer utterances accordingly. Moreover, another distinction is about the use of intensifiers. Given the fact that Bulgarians benefited from intensifiers more than Turkish respondents, it can be argued that Bulgarians prefer to mitigate the effects of face threatening situation more than Turkish respondents. Bearing in mind, Bulgarians made use of IFID, intensifiers, different strategies more than Turkish participants and never used denial of fault or offense, it can be concluded that Bulgarian EFL learners are more apologetic than Turkish EFL learners. These differences contribute to the discussion that choice of apology strategies differs due to the culture, environment, familiarity of people and intensity of the context (Garcia, 1989; Olshtain, 1989).

Findings also revealed that besides using IFID Turkish respondents preferred to give an explanation when they apologise from their student for forgetting to return the essay while Bulgarians preferred to offer a repair. The findings were similar when participants had to apologize from their professors. It can be stated that when the social distance is unequal, Turkish participants prefer to offer an explanation more while Bulgarians chose to repair the situation by promising to accomplish the task soon more. In another context which participants as the manager of a café were late to a meeting with a student, Turkish participants were more apologetic. This can be the result of the sense of empathy considering Turkish participants were university students and they may have put themselves in student's place. When both groups of participants brought the wrong order as a waiter/waitress, they employed the IFID with offer of repair most. This can be the result of a universal fear of losing the job and trigger respondents to be sure the damage was repaired.

The two groups show explicit difference when they need to apologise from their friends for being late to the meeting. It can be claimed that Turkish participants are much less apologetic in situations that they need to save the face of their friends. Thus, they offer the least apology strategies in these situations. On the other hand, Bulgarians offered high number of intensifiers and IFID even though they are required to apologise from their friends. It can be argued that although causing a damage against a Bulgarian whom participants have close relationship requires an apology, Turkish participants may ignore it only because of the cultural differences. This finding coincides with Aydin's findings (2013) as the same results were noted in his study. The other explicit difference was seen when the participants were required to apologise from their colleague due to a comment they made in a meeting. Although both groups used IFID the least among all situations, Bulgarians' responses included acknowledgement of situation when most Turkish respondents include denial of fault or offense. It can be stated that Turkish participants refuse to fix the damage they caused when they unintentionally upset someone who has equal social power. This finding is compatible with the study of Çetinavcı (2012) considering most Turkish participants refused to apologise in the same context and employed denial of fault or offense strategy.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The current study aimed to gain insights into Bulgarian and Turkish EFL learners' use of apology strategies and contribute to the field of socio cultural and pragmatic competence by investigating apology as a speech act. Considering apology serves as a repair method to fix the damage interlocutor caused and significant part of solving the communication breakdowns, it was regarded prominent to conduct research. The main conclusion drawn from

the current study, cross-cultural differences are at play when specific situations and relationship statuses between participants are investigated in detail. These differences can be the results of the culture, environment, familiarity of people and intensity of the context besides linguistics skills of the participants considering both groups possessed the same level of language skills. According to the findings, both groups exhibited many similarities in terms of the choices of apology strategies, this can be results of same language level, cultural similarities of two neighbour countries with their historical backgrounds. However, the differences in many situations highlight the importance of the pragmatics and cross-cultural studies.

It can also be concluded that teaching pragmatics explicitly plays a crucial role to at least create an awareness of how cultural differences can cause communication breakdowns. Learners must be aware of the effects of the culture as well since they will employ the language to interact with people from other cultures. Coursebook designers, material developers and curriculum designers and teaching staff should enrich the language program by offering exposure to the different cultures rather than focusing one target culture. Another implication can be claimed for teacher training programs for teachers are the main component of language teaching. Prospective language teachers will surely have international students seeing that globalisation and migration are two prominent realities of the future. They will have to interact with the learners with the minimum possibility of communication breakdowns. Thus, highlighting the possible noteworthiness of pragmatics in teacher training should be considered essential.

Similar to all research, the current study had also some limitations. Data was collected by utilizing DCT and although DCT as a data gathering tool is seen as the most applicable way of gathering data for speech acts, participants may not have given the responses they would have said in natural occurring communication settings. Moreover, the number of participants were limited, and it is a possibility that with the high number of participants from both groups, different results might be provided.

As for further studies, researchers should conduct a similar study with a high number of participants in both Bulgarian and Turkish contexts. The field of language pragmatics requires constant research regarding speech acts to see the effects of different variables such as globalization, exposure to the target culture or technological affordances learners employ.

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