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ABSTRACT

A study examined the production of English apology strategies by Spanish speakers learning English, by analyzing the remedial move in native and non-native social interactions. To restore harmony when an offensive act has been committed, remedial exchanges are performed according to the rules of speaking and the social norms of the speech community; different cultural patterns in the act of apologizing will be reflected in the use of different apology strategies and their intensification during remedial work. Subjects were 29 native speakers of English from the United States and 29 native Peninsular Spanish speakers learning English, who were posed eight situations, each including an offensive action. Responses were elicited. The degree of severity of the offense, age of interactants, and degree of familiarity between interactants were systematically varied to observe their effect on the apologies elicited. Results revealed cultural dissimilarities in the Peninsular Spanish and American English apology systems, and the subsequent transfer strategies of native rules of speaking to the target language. They also show different degrees of intensification between native and non-native responses. Implications for second language teaching are discussed. (MSE)

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Do We All Apologize the Same?--An Empirical Study on the Act of Apologizing by Spanish Speakers Learning English

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Do We All Apologize the Same? -- An Empirical Study on the Act of Apologizing by Spanish Speakers Learning English

Montserrat Mir

The present study examines the production of English apology strategies by Spanish speakers learning English. Based on the pioneering treatment of the remedial interchange given by Erving Goffman (1971), this study analyzes the nature of the remedial move in native and non-native social interactions. In order to restore harmony whenever an offensive act has been committed, remedial interchanges are performed according to the rules of speaking (Wolfson, 1989) and social norms of the speech community. Therefore, different cultural patterns in the act of apologizing will be reflected in the use of different apology strategies and their intensification during remedial work.

An oral elicitation technique was employed in this study. The variables, i.e., degree of severity of the offense, age of interactants, and degree of familiarity between interactants, were systematically varied in order to observe their effect on the apologies elicited. The results obtained reveal interesting cultural dissimilarities between the Peninsular Spanish apology system and the American English one and the subsequent transfer strategies of native rules of speaking to the target language during the act of apologizing. Also, the data show different degrees of intensification between native and non-native responses.

INTRODUCTION

According to Goffman (1971), negative rites occur when there is an infraction of a social rule. These infractions are offensive acts in which two interactants or more (the offender and one or more offended) are involved in a threatening situation which must be resolved. A *remedial interchange* is then required to reestablish social harmony. The *remedial interchange* consists of a dialogue in which the offender provides excuses and accounts for his offense and the offended shows some sign of acceptance and sometimes appreciation for the offender's corrective behavior.[1]

Since remedial interchanges are the result of a violation of a social rule, their performance will be affected by the social rules that characterize the speech community in question. The individual's awareness of any given social rule is crucial in order to provide the appropriate interchange. Since social norms are perceived diversely by different groups of individuals, they are also responded to differently. "The *situation* of the offender must therefore be considered, the world he is in, and it is considered, implicitly if not explicitly" (Goffman, 1971: 102). There are some social norms that are accepted by the great majority of social groups regardless of cultural, educational or language background. As accepted norms, their violation in

any context whatsoever, implies some sort of remedial work. For example, hitting someone in the face is generally perceived as an offense and the victim e[illegible]ts some excuse. However, social norms also vary according to the culture to [illegible] are related. For instance, in a Spanish context kissing as a greeting device between young acquainted people is usual and commonly expected, but, in the North American context, this action may be conceived as an offense between interactants because of the invasion of personal territory and violation of privacy that this gesture represents. Similarly, failure to kiss in Spain may also cause offense under specific circumstances. Goffman observed individual differences in the perception of social norms depending on the context of the situation. Therefore, the same situation may trigger different reactions according to the individuals' perception of social norms. On the other hand, a whole social group may agree on the nature of a set of norms, although this description may vary cross-culturally.

Wolfson (1989) talks about "sociolinguistic rules" or "rules of speaking"[2] which she defines as "patterns and conventions of language behavior" (p. 14). These rules of speaking are understood as part of the communicative competence which differentiates members of one speech community[3] from members of another. Such rules are "culture specific" and "unconsciously held" (Wolfson, 1983, 1989) which means that, although native speakers are perfectly competent in the uses and interpretation of their rules, they are not aware of "the patterned nature of their own speech behavior" (Wolfson, 1989, p. 37). According to Wolfson, native speakers are always attentive to the correctness and appropriateness of the language production of their interlocutors in order to respond to possible deviations in the most reasonable way under the circumstances. However, they are unable to explain the nature of their own rules of speaking which makes it extremely difficult for non-native speakers when they are blamed, without explanation, for their inappropriate or incorrect speech behavior.

Nevertheless, native speakers are able to recognize when a sociolinguistic rule has been broken and what they think *should* be done; they are able to express the *norms* of their own speech communities. But, these norms are ideal conventions of human behavior, very far from actual behavior, which is based on the rules of speaking that guide a human being's language production and interpretation. However, the main problem lies in the way non-native speakers are able to conform to the rules that guide the target language behavior: "If learners are to be able to interpret and conform to the rules, they will need instruction based on how people *actually* speak in their everyday interactions, not about how they *think* they speak" (Wolfson, 1989, p. 63). Therefore, a more systematic analytic study of everyday spontaneous interactions is necessary to discover the rules of speaking defining a particular speech community and the norms to which the speakers always refer to base their own behavior.

Owen (1980) examined apologies on actually occurring speech and suggested that the appropriateness of strategies in the act of apologizing will depend on features of the offense and on cultural criteria. Owen offered the distinction between merely ritual moves, which she considers the most common in remedial interchanges, and substantive moves (e.g., repair damage, provide compensation) and

pointed out that different cultures may consider substantive or ritual apology strategies differently. Several researchers followed Owen's suggestions and developed the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSRAP) which looked at apologies and requests in eight languages (Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew and Russian). For each language, data were collected from both native and non-native speakers using a discourse completion test as the elicitation procedure. This project concluded that social variables such as distance, power, and age may be considered as potential candidates for universality which may affect the type of speech act performed. Furthermore, the distributive comparison of realization patterns revealed rich cross-cultural variability (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984).

In order to investigate how first language norms interfered with second language learners' ability to perform appropriate speech acts in the target language, Cohen and Olshtain (1981), Olshtain and Cohen (1983), and Olshtain (1983) compared native and non-native apologies in Hebrew and English. Some data were collected following a carefully controlled elicitation procedure in which subjects were asked to role-play their reactions to a variety of situations. Each offensive action was graded in terms of severity of the offense and the social status of their interlocutors. The results showed that native speakers' choices of apology formulas were highly patterned and that the most common strategies used were expression of an apology (e.g., "I'm sorry") and expression of responsibility. Other strategies such as explanation, offer of repair, and promise of forbearance were used depending on the degree of severity of the offense and the interlocutors' social status. Based on data from discourse completion questionnaires, it was found that speakers of American English apologized much more frequently than Hebrew-speaking Israelis. The non-native responses were discussed as follows. First, there were cases where non-natives used a semantic formula considerably less than native English speakers did. Second, the lack of non-natives' grammatical competence in the target language explained cases where the frequency of use of semantic formulas by native English and Hebrew speakers seemed similar and yet non-natives tended to use these formulas less. Third, there were cases when non-natives responded like native English speakers even when Hebrew speakers responded quite differently in Hebrew.

On the basis of the studies briefly outlined above, the present study examines the possibility that there are some cultural differences in the use of apologies by Spanish and American speakers, which would indicate different rules of speaking for both communities. Also, an examination of non-native speakers' production of English apologies will tell us to what extent non-native speakers transfer their own rules of speaking into the target language. In order to conclude that Spanish and English speakers have different apology systems, one needs to investigate to what extent contextual factors influence the speakers' production of apology strategies, their use and intensity in their native and non-native languages. Therefore, two specific objectives of this study are to discover whether -- and if so, to what extent:

1. the use of apology strategies is *language specific* and/or *situation specific*
2. non-native speakers tend to intensify English apologies more than native speakers.

PROCEDURE

Subjects

Two groups of informants participated in this study: 29 native speakers of English from the U.S. and 29 native Peninsular Spanish speakers learning English. The American speakers were all students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign or at Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois. Their ages were between 18-37 (Mean: 23.5, Mode: 19). There were 22 females and 7 males. The native Spanish speakers were taking an intensive English course at the North American Language Institute in Barcelona, Spain. All of them were students at that moment, but they came from very different professional fields. Some of them were still in high school, others were in the university and others were already professionals (teachers, doctors, and so forth). Their ages ranged from 15 to 40 years (Mean: 21.6, Mode: 16, 24). There were 21 females and 8 males. These 29 subjects served as informants for the native Spanish responses as well as for the second language responses. All the subjects volunteered to participate in the study.

In order to assess the subjects' second language linguistic proficiency, the English Placement Test used in the University of Illinois was administered to the Spanish subjects. The mean score obtained was 76.3 (N: 25, Range: 64-88, Mode: 70, 74, 76) which corresponds to an intermediate level of proficiency according to the standards followed in the English Institute at the University of Illinois.[4]

Elicitation Material and Elicitation Technique

In order to ensure cross-cultural comparability, a controlled elicitation procedure was employed to obtain relevant data. The chosen instrument was a role-play exercise originally developed for comparing the speech act realization patterns of native and non-native speakers and learners (Cohen and Olshtain, 1981, Olshtain and Cohen, 1983). The test consisted of a set of eight situations, all of which included an offensive action.[5] All the situations were placed in different contexts, and they each presented a different type of offense characterized by the following different social variables:

1. degree of severity of the offense: severe vs. non-severe
2. degree of familiarity between interactants: familiar vs. non-familiar
3. age of the offended: young vs. old.

A combination of these three variables led to the configuration of the eight situations used in the study. Here follows a brief description of each of the situations and the variables represented in them:[6]

1. *Severe-Familiar-Young*: Your friend places his glasses on the couch and without noticing, you sit on his glasses bending them very badly.
2. *Severe-Familiar-Old*: You are on the bus with the lady of the house where

you are staying during your stay in the U.S. You two have become very good friends. Your shopping bag, that was on the luggage rack in the bus, falls down and breaks the lady's glasses into pieces.

3. *Severe-Unfamiliar-Young*: Backing out of a parking place, you run into the side of another car driven by a young driver unknown to you.
4. *Severe-Unfamiliar-Old*: You return a damaged book to your old professor.
5. *Non-severe-Familiar-Young*: You arrive late for a casual basketball game with your friends.
6. *Non-severe-Familiar-Old*: You are in a restaurant with your friends and their parents, that you also know for a long time. Without noticing, you take your friend's father's drink and you drink it.
7. *Non-severe-Unfamiliar-Young*: Lost in the middle of a big city you interrupt a group of young students who are talking to ask for directions.
8. *Non-severe-Unfamiliar-Old* : Walking on the street, you bump into an old lady shaking her up a bit without hurting her.

The situations were typed on separate cards and were presented randomly to each subject. At the beginning of each interview, the subject was given a card with the instructions for the task. Half of the Spanish speakers were first interviewed in English and the other half in Spanish. After a week the subjects were interviewed in the other language. The descriptions of the situations were written in the language to be tested. The situations were set up to elicit an apologetic response without a reply from the receiver. At the end of the description of each situation, there was the following question: *What would you say?*, to which the subjects had to respond as if they were placed in the context being described. The aim of the task was to obtain responses which were as spontaneous and natural as possible. Therefore, the role-plays had to present problems and characters which were familiar to those involved. Furthermore, the subjects being interviewed were not asked to play a role different from themselves; they were asked to perform a role that was part of their normal life or personality. Each interview lasted around 10 minutes and was tape-recorded.

In order to compare what the subjects produced in the role-plays with their impressions of the English apology system, an English written questionnaire was administered to all the Spanish subjects who participated in the study. The questionnaire was given after the subjects had finished with the role-playing task.[7] These are two of the questions included in the questionnaire and the results obtained:[8]

1. Do you feel that speakers of English apologize more or less than speakers of your native language?

   More: 65.2% Less: 4.3% Same: 26% Don't know: 4.3%

2. Do you feel that speakers of English apologize differently than speakers of your own language?

   Yes: 65.2% No: 34.7%

Following Olshtain's analysis (1983) when respondents expressed the belief that English speakers apologize differently (whether more or less) than speakers of their native language, the response was interpreted in favor of *language specificity* -- difference between languages under the same social constraints. On the other hand, if the respondents claimed that one apologizes according to the situation (contextual variables) regardless of the language in question, then the answer was interpreted as viewing apology as a universal speech act (*situation specific*). According to these criteria, the responses elicited in this questionnaire support the notion of *language specificity*.

However, the phenomenon of *language specificity* should also be reflected in the subjects' responses obtained in the role-plays in order to claim language specific differences in the apology system. Consequently, if the tendency was to consider the act of apologizing as *language specific*, the responses elicited in this study would show that each language group reacted differently with respect to the use and frequency of the strategies produced regardless of the contextual variables. Furthermore, it would be expected that subjects when interviewed in the second language would attempt to adjust to the non-native context and behave differently than in the first language situations. If, on the other hand, responses were similar between the native groups, this would support the *situation specificity* phenomenon, which would indicate that the context in which the offense is committed is the key factor for the selection and frequency of use of apology strategies regardless of the language in which they are produced.

Data Categorization and Analysis

The responses obtained were categorized according to the following apology strategies or semantic formulas (Trosborg, 1987):

(1) Denial of apology: "I didn't do it"
(2) Minimization of the offense: "Oh, that's nothing"
(3) Acknowledgement of responsibility: "It was my fault"
(4) Offer of apology: "I'm sorry"
(5) Explanation: "Sorry, I'm late but I missed the bus"
(6) Offer of repair:[9] "I'll pay for the glasses"
(7) Promise of forbearance: "This won't happen again"

The data obtained in this study were analyzed by conducting systematic comparisons between native and non-native responses. The frequency of use of semantic formulas was examined and analyses of variance (ANOVA) were run to check for significant differences between groups on the total number of responses elicited in the entire test as well as under each contextual variable. Next the frequency of use of intensified apologetic responses was investigated and chi-square analyses were run to observe differences between groups on the total number of intensified responses offered in the task and under each contextual variable.

It should be noted that informants in this study could have used more than one different strategy in each situation. Therefore, each response obtained for each indi-

vidual may be as simple as one single apology strategy but as complex as a combination of more than one different strategy and/ or repetition of strategies. For the purpose of this study, the responses elicited have been analyzed in terms of type and frequency of use of strategies produced by each subject (repetition of strategies was ignored) regardless of the type of combination utilized in the response.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Use of Semantic Strategies Overall.

The analyses of variance for the total number of responses obtained in the role-play exercise showed a significant main effect for group [NES/SLL: $F(1,56) = 14.37$, $p < .001$; NES/NSS: $F(1,56) = 8.44$, $p < .01$]. Native English speakers (NES) produced more responses than native Spanish speakers (NSS) and second language learners (SLL). (Cell Means: NSS: 2.01, SLL: 1.88, NES: 2.45). These results, then, support the notion of *language specificity:* native language groups behave differently; in this case, the difference lies in the total frequency of the strategies used.

The results displayed in Table 1 reflect the frequency of use of the semantic formulas. These results represent the number of subjects for each group (transformed into percentages) who used a particular strategy in the eight situations. Note that a subject may have used more than one different strategy, therefore, the sum of the percentages in each column does not result in 100%.[10]

Table 1. Use of Semantic Strategies Overall.

Strategies	NSS	SLL	NES
DEN.	6.5	6.9	3.0
MINIM.	8.6	3.9	4.3
ACKNOW.	28.4	20.2	28.4
APOL.	67.2	81.9	88.4
EXPL.	37.5	35.8	33.6
REPA.	39.6	28.0	62.0
FORB.	0.4	0.4	0.4

We can see a tendency to decrease the frequency of use of some strategies in the second language. For instance, second language learners underused the strategy expressing acknowledgement of responsibility for the act committed (20%). A possible explanation could be the extent to which lack of linguistic knowledge in the second language may force the learner to deviate from the standard usage, which is shared by L1 and L2. The particular nature of this strategy -- acknowledgement of

responsibility -- may give us some insights into what caused this verbal outcome. As Trosborg noted (1987), the speaker may perform six different sub-formulas in order to express acknowledgement of responsibility (e.g., expression of lack of intent, expression of embarrassment, self-deficiency, acceptance of blame, implicit and explicit acknowledgement). Although these formulas do not appear linguistically complex in terms of their syntactic and lexical components, second language learners may have some difficulty in producing them as part of the remedial interchange. A simple routinized expression such as "I'm sorry" seems to be more easily internalized and, therefore, preferred.

Furthermore, along with the lack of linguistic knowledge in the L2 (grammatical knowledge), it could also be suggested that second language learners use an avoidance strategy as a communicative technique to succeed in the act of apologizing. Second language learners may be aware of all the linguistic possibilities to express acknowledgement of responsibility or other apology strategies but because of the artificial nature of the test or perhaps because of being uncomfortable when speaking in the L2, they avoid any complex linguistic strategies and overuse simple apologetic expressions (i.e., "I'm sorry") as a communicative strategy. In addition, it could also be hypothesized that second language learners may be aware of all the possibilities of apologizing in English but they are unsure about the sociolinguistic rules of speaking that guide the production of apologies in American English.

The cultural distance existing between peninsular Spanish and American English is also evidenced by the use of offers of repair and apologies. As we can see in Table 1, overall, NSS (67.2%) used apologies considerably less than NES (88.4%). However, it seems that SLL were aware of this cultural dissimilarity, and therefore, increased their production of apologies in order to emulate the American standards (SLL: 81.9%). These results seem to indicate that Spanish speakers prefer to produce other strategies without having to always rely on the performance of an apologetic expression as part of their remedial move. In fact, it would seem that expressions of apology such as "I'm sorry" or "excuse me" are routinized expressions in the American social rule system to be used in almost every offensive situation. In this sense, the production of apology expressions by Spanish and American subjects can also be considered *language specific*.

Considering offers of repair, we observe that this strategy is not used very frequently by Spanish speakers (NSS: 39.6%, SLL: 28%, NES: 62%). Since an offer of repair does not seem to be an immediate apologetic expression in peninsular Spanish, second language learners believe that this is also the case in the American system and accordingly they negatively transfer its lack of usage into the target language setting. These results, then, suggest that an offer of repair is also a *language specific* strategy.

Use of Semantic Strategies According to Contextual Variables

Severity: The analysis of variance comparing SLL and NES and NSS and NES showed a significant main effect for severity [SLL/NES: $F(1,56) = 112.15$, $p < .001$; NSS/NES: $F(1,56) = 178.10$, $p < .001$]. All groups of subjects increased

their number of responses under contexts where the offense was described as severe. Furthermore, although across groups the number of responses increased in severe situation, the increase was greater for NES subjects than for SLL subjects, as shown by the interaction found in the analysis of variance [SLL/NES: $F(1, 56) = 7.80$, $p < .01$] These results clearly support the notion of *situation specificity*, which claims that the groups interviewed in the study behave similarly under the same conditions.

A closer examination of the type of strategies used by each group provides some evidence for interpreting the apology as a universal speech act (see Table, 2[11]. For instance, strategies such as acknowledgment of responsibility were produced more under the severe condition than under the non-severe context by all the groups. This behavior was expected since a severe offensive action seems to require a type of remedial work marked by the speaker's acceptance of responsibility in order to emphasize his regret for the act committed. It could also be argued that, for the same reason, repairs were offered more frequently in the severe condition; although, the nature of the events being narrated may also be responsible for this verbal behavior. Only two of the situations in the non-severe condition (#6, #8) elicited offers of repair, whereas all four situations which included a severe action elicited this strategy since objects were damaged.

On the other hand, *language specific* strategies were also discovered in the use of formulas such as explanations and apologies where native groups reacted differently and second language learners possibly transferred their use from the first language. Whereas NES maintained the same number of explanations under both conditions, NSS increased their frequency when the offenses were non-severe. Probably as a result of this cultural dissimilarity between the two native languages, SLL did not react according to the American standards and simply negatively transferred from L1 to L2 producing similar responses to the ones obtained in the first language settings. With respect to the use of apologies, NES did not vary considerably from one context to another. However, NSS and SLL produced more apologies in the severe condition.

Finally, the results obtained in the production of denials and minimizations by NSS and SLL in the severe condition are surprising since this type of strategy does not seem to fit properly in remedial work destined to express sincere regret and responsibility for an action which caused some damage to the victim (e.g., breaking the victim's glasses or damaging his book). A detailed analysis of the situations used for this study indicated that in some contexts the Spanish subjects denied their responsibility for the act because they felt the action committed was not their fault. Although this belief was also expressed by the American subjects, they did not manifest it as part of their remedial work, contrary to NSS. The oral behavior of Spanish subjects seems to be characterized by a more direct form of expression, which seems to be illustrated by the type of responses discussed here. Spanish subjects directly expressed their lack of acceptance of responsibility by denying the act committed or trying to minimize it, whereas native English speaker preferred to obey the politeness requirement involved in the remedial work.

Table 2. Use of Semantic Strategies under the Severity Condition

Conditions	Strategies	NSS	SLL	NES
SEVERE	DEN.	8.6	11.2	4.3
(Situations # 1,2,3,4)	MINIM.	12.0	2.5	4.3
	ACKNOW	37.0	26.7	44.0
	APOL.	75.0	84.5	86.2
	EXPL.	34.4	29.3	33.6
	REPA.	62.0	44.0	89.6
	FORB.	0.0	0.85	0.0
NON-SEVE.	DEN.	4.3	2.6	1.7
(Situations # 5,6,7,8)	MINIM.	5.2	5.2	5.2
	ACKNOW	19.8	13.8	13.0
	APOL.	59.5	79.3	90.5
	EXPLA.	40.5	42.2	33.6
	REPA.	17.2	12.1	34.4
	FORB.	0.85	0.0	0.85

Familiarity: The analyses of variance showed a language by familiarity interaction when comparing SLL and NES [$F(1, 56) = 10.67$, $p < .01$] and NES and NSS [$F(1, 56) = 6.70$, $p < .05$]. Whereas North Americans tend to use more responses or strategies when the interlocutor is unfamiliar to them, NSS prefer to diminish their number of responses in the same context, and this behavior is also transferred into the second language (see Table 3).

These results may be interpreted according to the native Spanish subjects' perception of the American social norms. During the role-play exercises and some informal talks I had with the Spanish subjects, I observed that my subjects repeatedly commented on the polite aspect of the American social system reflected in everyday language use. Therefore, it was expected that these subjects would become more polite in their English responses by increasing the frequency of use of their responses in unfamiliar contexts as Americans did. However, second language learners simply transferred the type of strategies used in their Spanish responses into English and followed their native intuition about the behavior expected with unfamiliar or familiar interlocutors. Second language learners were unaware of the specific effect of this contextual variable on the American apology system. These re-

sults seem to favor the notion of language spe .y -- the difference between groups is due to the different effect of the familiarity factor on the subjects' verbal reactions.

With relation to the production of specific apology strategies, it was observed that each native group produced different types and frequency of formulas under different conditions, which offers more evidence for the *language specificity* phenomenon. First of all, NES increased the production of apologies and explanations in the unfamiliar condition, whereas NSS and SLL used these two strategies very similarly in the two conditions. Also, an unequal distribution of offers of repair in the responses elicited from each native group was observed -- NSS used this strategy more in the unfamiliar condition whereas NES increased their production in the familiar context. The Spanish speakers' conduct with relation to the production of offers of repairs might be triggered by the presence of unfamiliar interactants which impelled them to offer more repairs. According to the statistical results, NES significantly increased their number of responses with unfamiliar interlocutors, as is illustrated by the higher frequency of use of all the strategies except an offer of repair. Since this is the only strategy that does not follow the expected pattern, it might also be the case that the specific conditions of the situations described were responsible for the production of more repairs in the familiar condition.

Table 3. Use of Semantic Strategies under the Familiarity Condition

Condition	Strategies	NSS	SLL	NES
FAMILIAR	DEN.	10.3	10.3	5.2
(Situations # 1, 2, 5, 6)	MINIM.	8.6	6.8	7.8
	ACKNOW	32.7	25.0	27.6
	APOL.	66.4	82.0	84.5
	EXPL.	38.8	36.2	23.2
	REPA.	35.4	25.0	66.4
	FORB.	0.0	0.85	0.0
UNFAMIL.	DEN.	2.6	3.4	0.85
(Situations # 3,4, 7, 8)	MINIM.	8.6	0.85	1.7
	ACKNOW	24.1	15.5	29.3
	APOL.	68.1	82.0	92.2
	EXPL.	36.2	35.3	44.0
	REPA.	44.0	21.5	57.7
	FORB.	0	0	0

Age: The three groups of subjects reacted to the age factor described in the situations, as shown by the significant main effects for age obtained in the analysis of variance [SLL/NES: $F(1,56) = 33.15$, $p < .001$; NSS/NES: $F(1,56) = 54.73$, $p < .001$]. All the subjects used more responses in addressing an older person, which seems understandable since offenses committed against older subjects are generally perceived to be more severe (see Table 4). An increase in the production of expressions of acknowledgement of responsibility and offers of repairs seems to characterize those situations which involved an old offended person. The similar behavior between the three groups supports the notion of situation specificity.

Table 4. Use of Semantic Strategies under the Age Condition.

Condition	Strategies	NSS	SLL	NES
YOUNG	DEN.	6.9	7.8	5.2
(Situations #1,3,5,7)	MINIM.	8.6	2.5	1.7
	ACKNOW.	22.4	16.3	24.1
	APOL.	64.6	83.6	90.5
	EXPL.	36.2	37.0	32.8
	REPA.	28.4	18.0	44.0
	FORB.	0.0	0.85	0.0
OLD	DEN.	6.0	6.0	0.85
(Situations #2, 4, 6, 8)	MINIM.	6.8	5.1	7.8
	ACKNOW.	34.5	24.1	32.8
	APOL.	69.8	80.2	86.2
	EXPL.	38.8	34.5	34.5
	REPA.	50.8	38.0	80.1
	FORB.	0.85	0.0	0.85

Degree of Intensification

In order to analyze the degree of intensification of the speakers' responses, a close examination of the subjects' use of expressions of apology (i.e., "I'm sorry") was undertaken. These expressions were divided into two main categories:

(1) Apologetic expressions with adverbs of intensification. For instance, "I'm awfully sorry", "I'm very sorry", and so forth.
(2) Combination of expressions, such as "excuse me", "I'm sorry" or repetition of the same expression. For instance, "excuse me, excuse me."

According to the chi-square analyses carried out to analyze these data, native English speakers produced a significant higher frequency of intensified apologetic expressions than the other two groups (see Table 5) [SLL/NES: $^2(1, N = 464) = 21.86, p < .01$; NSS/NES: $^2(1, N = 464) = 13.84, p < .01$)]. A closer examination of the results obtained for each of the three contextual variables also supports this thesis. When the offense was considered severe (see Table 6) all speakers across groups intensified their apologetic responses, although NES showed more intensification than NSS. The increase of intensification is comprehensible since a severe offense requires a deeper feeling of regret on the part of the speaker. However, SLL were more inclined to behave as in the first language which indicates that they did not respond to the demand imposed by the second language context.[12] However, the degree of familiarity between the interactants (see Table 7) and the age of the victim (see Table 8) seemed to affect the amount of intensification produced slightly. For instance, the contexts which involved an old victim produced more intensified apologies by NSS and NES but not by SLL.

Table 5. Overall Intensification Percentages

NSS	SLL	NES
18.0	14.6	33.0

Table 6. Degree of Intensification under the Severity Condition

	NSS	SLL	NES
SEVERE	28.4	20.7	47.7
NON-SEVERE	7.8	8.6	19.0

Table 7. Degree of Intensification under the Familiarity Condition

	NSS	SLL	NES
FAMILIAR	21.5	17.2	32.8
UNFAMILIAR	14.6	11.2	33.6

Table 8. Degree of Intensification under the Age Condition

	NSS	SLL	NES
YOUNG	15.5	14.6	28.4
OLD	20.7	14.6	37.9

In all, the most important outcome relates to the consistent high frequency of

intensification displayed by NES across all conditions in comparison with the native Spanish group and the second language learners. According to the Spanish subjects' impressions of the English apology system, Americans apologize more than Spaniards. If intensification is understood as another way of emphasizing the purpose of the remedial work (apart from selecting more than one apology strategies), then the intensified apologetic expressions found in the NES responses would be in accordance with the belief that Americans apologize more than Spaniards. Consequently, the results obtained in the analyses of intensified apologetic responses by the three groups provide more evidence for the *language specificity* hypothesis.

CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained in this study have shown that the act of apologizing is cross-culturally universal since all subjects in this experiment provided some sort of remedial work regardless of their native language. However, some differences in the use and intensification of apology strategies by Spanish speakers and American speakers appeared in the data analyzed, which seems to indicate that Peninsular Spanish and American English speech communities differ in their "rules of speaking", to a certain extent. First of all, the different frequency of use of apology semantic formulas and use of intensification of apologetic expressions obtained for the three groups supports the notion of *language specificity* -- native language groups apologize differently in terms of frequency of responses and intensification of expressions of apology. In particular, native English speakers provided a higher number of apology strategies and intensified their apologetic expressions more than native Spanish speakers when tested in Spanish or in English. Further support for the existence of a *language specificity* phenomenon is provided by an examination of the familiarity factor, since it seems to have different effects on the frequency of use and type of semantic formulas for the three groups. However, the contextual variables severity and age have similar effects on the responses of the three groups, which seems to support the *situation specificity* hypothesis.

With respect to the type of strategies or semantic formulas used, the most interesting result is the use of apologies and offers of repair. Both strategies are used differently by the native groups, which further supports *language specificity*. Recall that NES used more apologies and offers of repairs than NSS and SLL in all contexts. Furthermore, SLL only reacted to this cultural difference in the case of apologies by increasing their frequency of use and thus, trying to emulate American standards. Such an outcome may indicate three things. First, learners may be unaware of the use and importance of other apology strategies in the target language, and therefore, they simply transfer native language apology patterns to the target context. Second, learners' lack of linguistic knowledge in L2 may be affecting their performance. Third, a teaching effect may be operating here -- there seems to exist an emphasis on teaching apologetic expressions (e.g., "I'm sorry") as the only strategy for apologizing in English; and since SLL believe that Americans apologize more than they do in their native language, they tend to increase the number of such apologetic expressions, since they are unaware of other strategy types.[13]

SOME TEACHING IMPLICATIONS

The most important implication that derives from this study is the importance of instructing second language learners in the acquisition of pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence. More specifically, the incorporation of different contextual variables in activities requiring apologies by the learners should be stressed in the classroom in order to sensitize the learner to the different sociocultural meanings of the speaker and to the situational context. Marcum (1986) argues that pragmatic competence will not necessarily develop as a consequence of exposure to L2 culture as Rintell (1979) seems to suggest. On the contrary, in order to enhance the acquisition of pragmatic competence of the second language learner in the classroom a *perception-teaching approach* needs to be attempted. Such approach, according to Marcum, should have the following behavioral objectives:

1. Make the learner aware of the variety of possible meanings of utterances in context.
2. Encourage learners to consciously monitor the cross-cultural context and the given context of the social environment in which interaction takes place.
3. Make learners explicitly aware of the various levels of contest operating in the environment during any instance of spoken discourse and relevant C2 (= L2 culture) contextual cues.
4. Aid learners in acquiring the ability to assess the C2 contextual cues, to draw appropriate inferences about speakers' intentions, and to respond without succumbing to (a) 'pragmalinguistic failure' (assigning C1L1 force to utterances or inappropriately transferring speech act strategies from L1 to L2) or (b) 'sociopragmatic failure' (perceiving and interpreting L2C2 behavior through a C1 set of social conditions placed on language use).

The effect of instruction on the acquisition of pragmatic elements of the target language has not been thoroughly investigated. One particular study conducted by Olshtain and Cohen (1990) is of special interest for the purpose of this paper since the researchers considered the effect of explicit teaching of the speech act of apologizing to advanced EFL learners. Olshtain and Cohen based their study on the data elicited from previous studies on the production of apologies and requests by non-native speakers. Similarly to what the study presented in this paper showed, Olshtain and Cohen's data also revealed the need for teaching elements such as choice of semantic formulas, appropriate length of realization patterns, use of intensifiers, judgement of appropriateness, etc. In the light of these results, Olshtain and Cohen (1990) developed a series of teaching materials designed to make the learners aware of the nature of the apology speech act and its different levels of appropriateness for different situational contexts. Although the quantitative results obtained in Olshtain and Cohen's study did not reach statistical significance, the researchers were still able to draw some interesting conclusions based on the observed qualitative data.

For instance, the data showed that fine points of speech act behavior such as (a) types of intensification and downgrading, (b) subtle differences between strategy realization, and (c) considerations of situational features, can and should be taught in the second and foreign language classrooms.

In conclusion, the teaching of sociocultural and pragmatic competence is necessary in the language classroom. Furthermore, this particular aspect of the target language should be specifically stressed in EFL situations (such as the one from which the subjects in this experiment come). The incorporation of sociocultural aspects of L2 in the EFL classroom is particularly difficult since the learner tends to approach the new culture from a very unrealistic perspective, which negativeiy affects the acquisition of the sociocultural aspects of L2. However, an attempt to provide authentic language activities focused on speech act performance should be carried out. The acquisition of speech acts in the target language should be more thoroughly analyzed by examining the production of such communicative acts in the learners' native language. A careful description of native and non-native verbal patterns will help the researcher and, consequently, the teacher, design teaching techniques directed to the acquisition of sociolinguistic rules of speaking in L2.

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NOTES

[1]The structure of the remedial interchange is very flexible and may change according to the context in which the threatening act takes place. However, the presence of an apology strategy is relevant for the accomplishment of a remedial interchange. This apology can be expressed in very different ways across languages and cultures but its purpose of expressing regret for the act committed is considered universal.

[2]Dell Hymes was the first to introduce this term and the theoretical framework on which Wolfson built her further work.

[3]Hymes (1972) defines a speech community as "a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (p. 54). Not all speakers of a language share the same set of rules of speaking, and therefore, not all may belong to the same speech community. We must recognize that speakers of a single language may constitute different speech communities with their own norms and rules of speaking.

[4]Moreover, the subjects in this study were enrolled in English courses at the North American Language Institute in Barcelona and their level was considered high-intermediate according to the criterion adopted in the Institute.

[5]In order to determine the degree of severity of the offense, a judgment test was presented to 31 native Spanish speakers and 8 native American speakers. The test consisted of a brief description of the situations to be used in the study. The subjects had to judge whether the situation described offered a severe or a non-severe offense (the judgement was designed to be dichotomous to facilitate the interpretation of responses).

[6]Different situations were used to represent each set of variables because it was expected that the use of situations in which only one social variable differed would not make the subjects think carefully about the situations presented and instead they would respond similarly to the previous similar situations. Therefore, the severity of the offense is not identical in all the severe offenses described. However, the purpose of the task was to differentiate between severe and non-severe offenses.

[7]The subjects answered this questionnaire voluntarily in the language of their choice, English, Spanish or Catalan.

[8]Two more questions were included in the questionnaire:

3. Do you have any problems with respect to when and how to use English apologies? Why?
4. Would you like to comment on any of the responses on the ten situations?

The most common answers to these questions are the following. To question 3, most of the subjects acknowledged their difficulty in apologizing in English due to their lack of mastery of the second language, their lack of knowledge of the English social rules, the type of teaching received, etc. Very few people answered the fourth question and the most frequent responses referred to the subjects' lack of linguistic mastery of the target language, the lack of naturalness in the responses due to the nature of the exercise and to the absence of the interlocutor's reaction to the remedy provided.

Since the responses obtained in these two questions were not very systematic across subjects, the information they provided was not directly used to answer the objectives proposed in this study.

[9]In this particular study, this strategy aims to offer to replace or fix the object being damaged during the offensive action and also to express concern for the hearer. Some researchers, such as Trosborg (1987), have treated this last expression (i.e., concern for the hearer) separately to indicate intensification on the part of the speaker. However, because I included some situations in which the offense did not only include damaging a physical object but also inflicting pain on the subject, I decided to categorize both sub-types under the same formula.

[10]In order to maintain consistency in reporting the results obtained in the study, an arbitrary figure of 8 percentage has been set up. Only those results that differ by more than 8 points will be considered for further discussion.

[11]The percentages displayed in this table and subsequent tables have been obtained by summing up the total number of responses under each strategy type of-

fered by each group and dividing them by the total number of possible responses (since each individual's response was counted only once, regardless of whether he repeated a strategy more than once, the total number of possible responses was calculated by multiplying the total number of subjects, i.e. 29, by the four situations under each contextual variable). Since each subject may have provided more than one strategy (=response) as part of his remedial action, the total number of different strategies in each column expressed in percentages may not equal 100%.

[12]Although, it could be argued that the lack of linguistic proficiency in the second language may be responsible for the behavior of SLL, I would not claim that this is the only reason why these subjects did not increase their intensification in the apologies provided. The linguistic knowledge necessary to intensify an apology does not need to be very extensive since a simple adverbial form, such as *very* could provide the required intensification.

[13]From an analysis of the use of "I'm sorry" and "excuse me" displayed in the subjects' responses obtained in this study, it was concluded that non-native speakers are unaware of the uses of "excuse me", since an overuse of "I'm sorry" by non-native speakers was found in the data. Such results were explained in the light of a teaching effect that seems to overemphasize the use of "I'm sorry" as the only apology strategy in English. For more information on these analyses, see Mir (1991).

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