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On the discursive expression of politeness in Syrian Arabic: The case of apologies

The aim of this research is to investigate politeness in Syrian Arabic as seen through the apology speech act. The research also examines how politeness is communicated through other speech acts and as a joint effort between the interlocutors. The data were collected using four role-play situations and were analyzed following Grainger's (2018) neo-Brown and Levinson framework. The results show that the participants use a wide range of apology strategies that subscribe to Blum-Kulka, et al.'s (1989) taxonomy and that apologies are used as typical negative politeness strategies. The results also reveal that the participants use a combination of negative and positive politeness strategies to achieve politeness. Moreover, rather than being constrained by the social factors of distance and status, the participants manipulate elements of the context to highlight aspects of the different social relationships at hand in order to effectively achieve and express politeness. Finally, the data show that politeness is not only achieved discursively but that conventionalized language expressions also play a role in communicating politeness.

Keywords: politeness, apologies, conventionalized expressions, role-plays

A tanulmány célja, hogy az udvariasság nyelvi kifejezését vizsgálja a szíriai arab nyelvben a bocsánatkérési beszédaktus vizsgálatán keresztül. A közölt eredmények azt mutatják, hogy az udvariasság a beszélők által a társalgási szituációban közösen létrehozott nyelvi jelenség, melynek kifejezésekor többféle beszédaktus azonosítható a beszélők nyelvében. Az elemzés Grainger (2018) neo-Brown-Levinsoni elméleti keretét veszi alapul a kutatásban résztvevő alanyok által eljátszott négy különféle társalgási szituációból kinyert adatok értelmezésekor. Az elemzésből kiderül, hogy a beszélők által használt bocsánatkérési stratégiák, melyek tipikusan negatív udvariassági stratégiák, megfelelnek a Blum-Kulka és munkatársai (1989) által javasolt taxonómia kategóriáinak. Azt is megmutatjuk, hogy a beszélők a kontextusra hagyatkoznak, és a társas kapcsolatok különféle aspektusait figyelembe véve valósítják meg az udvarias nyelvhasználatot. Végezetül pedig a tanulmány nyelvi adatokkal illusztrálja, hogy a szíriai arab beszélők gyakran konvencionális nyelvi eszközökkel fejezik ki az udvariasságot.

Kulcsszavak: elnézés kérése, konvencionális kifejezések, udvariasság, szerepjáték

1. Introduction
This paper examines the expression of politeness by native speakers of Syrian Arabic as seen through their production of the speech act of apology in role-play situations. Apologies are one of the most researched speech acts cross-linguistically. The earliest research focused on the linguistic realization of apologies, and multiple researchers such as Olshtain and Cohen (1983), Trosborg (1987), and Blum-Kulka,

et al. (1989) proposed apology taxonomies based on the cross-cultural examination of this speech act. Apologies have attracted such attention because of their important role in social interaction. For example, Goffman (1971: 113) defines apologies as a form of remedial work, in which a person both admits to an offense and at the same time tries to distance himself from the "delict." Similarly, Holmes (1989) maintains that the function of apologies is to restore equilibrium. These definitions, as Deutschmann (2003) points out, have clear parallels with the definitions of politeness in the classical frameworks, which more or less converge on the conceptualization of politeness as a tool for reducing friction, avoiding conflicts, and maintaining harmony (Lakoff, 1975; Leech, 1983; Brown and Levinson, 1987). As a result, apology studies were often conducted with reference to politeness theories such as Brown and Levinson (1987) and Leech (1983), which have provided solid conceptual and analytical tools for analyzing decontextualized speech acts (for representative works see Holmes (1990) in New Zealand English; Suszczyńska (1999) in English, Polish, and Hungarian; Márquez Reiter (2000) in Uruguayan Spanish and British English; Ahmed (2017) in Iraqi Arabic).

However, the advent of the discursive approaches to politeness (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003) ushered a change in the way politeness is conceived of. Unlike on the classical view, politeness is no longer thought to exist in single isolated utterances; speech acts are no longer analyzed as having inherent (im)politeness values. Rather, researchers highlighted the negotiability of such acts, and one of the basic insights of the discursive approach is that politeness is a constructed effort between the speakers, which stretches over multiple utterances/turns and which is open to various negative and positive evaluations (Mills, 2005; Locher, 2006). This theoretical change, however, does not automatically exclude the study of apologies and other speech acts from a discursive standpoint. Whereas apologies have mostly been examined as speech acts that are mainly influenced by contextual factors such as distance, status, and the severity of the offense, more recent studies, such as Robinson (2004) and Heritage, Raymond, and Drew (2019) highlight the discursivity of apologies as co-constructed actions that stretch over multiple turns and that can be used not only to address an offense but to achieve other conversational functions.

Following this brief exploration of the connection between apologies and politeness, this research seeks to examine the following questions:
1) What are the apology strategies used by the participants in four role-play situations?
2) How is politeness expressed by the participants through the production of apologies and other accompanying speech acts?
3) How is the negotiation and evaluation of politeness influenced by the contextual factors of distance and status in the role-play situations?

4) Besides apologies, how does the participants' use of language express politeness? The paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, I further examine the connection between apologies and politeness by presenting the politeness framework for the study. This is followed by a brief review of the literature on apology taxonomies in Section 3. I present the data collection method, the participants, and the procedures in Section 4. In Sections 5 and 6, I analyze the data and discuss the results. Finally, Section 6 concludes the discussion.

2. Apologies and politeness: Brown and Levinson (1987) and neo-Brown and Levinson (Grainger, 2018)

Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory is the most widely-adopted framework from the classical period of politeness research. This theory is based on the concept of 'face' as borrowed from Goffman (1967). According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face has two aspects: positive and negative. Whereas positive face refers to people's desire to be accepted and have their desires valued and appreciated, negative face refers to people's desire to be free from imposition. Every speech act has the potential of damaging the face of both the speaker and/or the hearer, who are engaged in a self-serving behavior of saving each other's faces while at the same time seeking optimal communication. This conflict between saving face from Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs) and achieving one's own communicative goals leads to a hierarchy of politeness strategies that the speaker resorts to in accordance with the peculiarities of the situation.

Brown and Levinson (1987) argue that if an FTA is to be performed at all, the rational speaker may choose to perform it off-record by hinting, for example. However, the speaker may also opt for on-record strategies that include going baldly on-record without any face redress. Going on-record, the speaker can also use negative or positive politeness strategies. Negative politeness strategies show attentiveness, and so involve strategies that disarm potential impositions by using conventionalized routines, formal address forms, hedges, indirectness, etc. Positive politeness strategies, on the other hand, are strategies that highlight mutual background, in-group solidarity, common interests, values, etc. Choosing the correct strategy depends on such factors as social distance, social power differences, and the ranking of the FTA.

As far as apologies are concerned, Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that apologies are essentially negative politeness strategies that target the hearer's face and entail a degree of face loss for the speaker. The speaker loses face in apologizing as s/he admits to having committed a breach of social norms (Olshtain, 1989). Additionally, the social factors that influence the choice of politeness strategies have

also been found to be influential factors in the choice of the content and the form of apologies (Olshtain & Cohen 1983; Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989).

As I have already mentioned in the introduction, the functions of apologies and politeness overlap to a great extent, and as Deutschmann (2003) notes, apologies are a prime example of politeness in the folk sense. He also explains that apologies bear on the psychological and sociological concept of face, both from the speaker's and the hearer's perspectives. However, Deutschmann (2003) points out that although apologies involve the speaker's face loss, some apologies may be used to restore the speaker's image in as far as the apology seeks to clarify that the offense is out of the speaker's character.

According to Grainger (2018), although Brown and Levinson's (1987) account of politeness has been discredited by the discursive politeness researchers and criticized for its ethnocentric treatment of face (Gu, 1990), this framework can still offer invaluable terminological and analytical tools for a proper analysis of a wide range of politeness and speech act phenomena. Grainger (2018: 21) maintains that the social factors of distance, power, and the ranking of imposition "have some explanatory value in accounting for the degree and quality of face-threat in any particular circumstance." Accordingly, she proposes that a neo-Brown and Levinson framework, which addresses the weaknesses of the classical theory and modifies them, can be adopted in contemporary analyses. The major task of the modified framework is twofold: first, the framework needs to move beyond the idea that meaning resides in decontextualized speech acts and to take into account the role of linguistic and social contexts. By considering the role of context, the social factors of distance and power are no longer computed mechanically, but they are seen as elements that speakers may redefine and re-enforce in accordance with their different social roles and identities. Second, the framework must look at conversation as a dynamic endeavor that is composed of series of turns-at-talk. These turns are influenced by the immediate linguistic context in as far as the content of each turn depends on the content of the previous turn. The turns of talk are also influenced by the social context in which speakers use the various linguistic elements at their disposal to construct their meanings and define their social roles.

Grainger's (2018) neo-Brown and Levinsonian approach attempts to strike a balance between the classical politeness approaches and the discursive perspective of politeness as an evaluation made by the participants with reference to the micro-details of the context (Watts, 2003; Locher, 2006). However, a major advantage of Grainger's (2018) approach is that it takes into account the wider social and cultural context, which has been minimized in the discursive approach in favor of a local outlook on politeness. This wider context lies within the speakers' identities and social roles with which they enter into conversation.

4

In line with Grainger's observations, the analysis of the data in this paper will be based on this proposal of a neo-Brown and Levinson framework. Throughout the discussion of the data, I will draw on the basic concepts of the classical theory. At the same time, I will show how apologies and the different speech acts found in the data are used to achieve various communicative goals and how the participants orient to each other's meanings by referring to their uptakes and responses to previous turns. Before doing this, however, I will go through an exploration of the apology taxonomies I will be drawing on in my analysis, pointing out the problems that are inherent in these taxonomies. I then explain how I attempt to circumvent these problems by motivating the categorization of the different apology strategies.

3. Apology taxonomies

As is already mentioned in the introduction, despite providing different definitions of apologies, researchers agree that in their basic function, apologies are acts intended to make things right and address a past offense.[i] Olshtain and Cohen (1983) maintain that apologies are post-event speech acts intended to address a past offense. They also argue that for apologies to happen, at least one of the participants needs to recognize a breach of social conduct and attempt to address it. Cohen and Olsthain (1981) and Olshtain and Cohen (1983), who examined apologies in Hebrew, maintain that apologies are complex universal speech acts, and their linguistic realization is subject to culture and language-specific peculiarities. Indeed, cross-cultural research on apologies has shown striking similarities in the ways people apologize (see Holmes (1990) on New Zealand English; Nureddeen (2008) on Sudanese Arabic; Awdyk (2011) on Norwegian, among others).

One of the most widely known cross-cultural studies of speech acts is the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) in which Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) examined the production of requests and apologies in eight languages. Following this project, a detailed coding scheme of apology strategies was outlined in Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989). Their coding scheme contains five main strategies and sub-strategies (see Appendix A for the detailed taxonomy).[ii] Olshtain and Cohen (1983) argue that the choice of the apology strategy hinges on considerations of social distance between the interlocutors, the social status differences, and the type/severity of the offense. This was also observed by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989), who explain that external and internal factors can influence an apology situation. The external factors are related to speaker relationships (distance and status), and the internal factors have to do with the nature of the offense.

Despite being widely adopted in apology research, these taxonomies are not without trouble. As Deutschmann (2003: 83) points out, there is little agreement on what constitutes apology strategies apart from the Illocutionary Force Indicating

Device (IFID), or the explicit apology form. For example, it is not at all clear why the sub-strategy of denying responsibility should be subsumed under the strategy of taking on responsibility in Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) but not in Olshtain and Cohen (1983), who list it under the heading of non-apology strategies. However, the major confusion lies in the distinction between accounts and taking on responsibility, where the criterion for distinguishing the two categories has never been established (Ogiermann, 2009). Ogiermann (2009) argues that one of the sub-categories of taking on responsibility, which is 'admission of facts but not responsibility' is easily confused with accounts. The latter are defined as explanations which appeal to external circumstances, which the offender had no control over. Ogiermann's (2009: 58) solution is to subsume the categories of explanations and acknowledgements of responsibility under the category of accounts, following work in sociology.

In this study, while my discussion of apologies will be chiefly based on the taxonomy proposed by Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) taxonomy, I follow Ogiermann (2009) in introducing some modifications to the categories of accounts and taking on responsibility. The basic criteria for distinguishing the two categories in this work will be semantic. I take accounts to mean every excuse and/or explanation that appeals to internal or external circumstances related to the offense. Under this definition, the strategies of expressing deficiency such as forgetting or not waking up are accounts appealing to internal (speaker-related) circumstances. Taking on responsibility, on the other hand, includes explicit linking between the incident and the speaker such as "it is my fault, I take responsibility, this is my own negligence, etc." Explicit admissions of the hearer's right to be angry is also taken to be an admission of responsibility. Accordingly, strategies that deny responsibility, minimize the offense, and/or shift the blame on the offended are categorized under the category of non-apology strategies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

4. The experiment
4.1 Method
Politeness and speech acts are interactive phenomena, which stretch over multiple turns and which are achieved in a dynamic effort between speakers and hearers. Thus, the best way to capture the full range of such phenomena is to use naturally occurring data. However, given the limitations of time and the difficulty of obtaining naturally occurring apologies, I have collected the data using open role-play situations.

Although role-plays cannot yield the same kind of data as naturally occurring speech, they exhibit many features that appear in authentic speech and so approximate naturally occurring speech on many levels (Félix-Brasdefer, 2003). According to Kasper (1999: 77-78), in open role-plays, in which the participants are

asked to participate in a scenario with no prescribed outcomes, the participants are attuned to the uptake of the other participants. Thus, many features of conversation such as turn-taking and coordination can be examined. Additionally, conversational turns in open role-plays allow for the appearance of many speech functions such as politeness.

In addition to the above-mentioned features, researchers have examined role-play data in terms of the length, versatility and frequencies of speech acts, and the degree of interaction among interlocutors. For instance, Houck and Gass (1996), who examined refusals, note that role plays induced lengthy turns in which the participants negotiated the performance of refusals. Moreover, the responses contained elements of authentic speech such as interruptions, self-corrections, and the use of multiple speech acts, which shows the dynamicity of the exchanges. Finally, Sasaki (1998), who investigated refusals and requests by Japanese EFL learners, adds that, compared to questionnaires, closed role-plays provide turns that are more varied in the use of strategies. Overall, her study shows that role-play data are appropriate for analyzing frequencies of speech act usage and the interaction between speakers and the context of the speech.

Since role-plays have many advantages, as discussed above, I used four open role-play situations to collect the data. The situations contain different combinations of social distance, social status, and the severity of the offense (See Appendix B for the Syrian Arabic version and Appendix C for the English translation). In designing the role-play, I have made sure that the situations are typical of the life of the participants as university students. This increases the chance of the participants having actually been through similar situations, which would overall increase the naturalness of the data. In each of the items, there is a description of the situation followed by the description of the two roles: the apologizer and the offended. I have made sure that the description of the two roles includes only general guidelines without specifying the outcome of the situation in terms of whether the apology should be accepted or not.

The situations describe interactions between different interlocutors: friends, classmates, and two interactions between a student and a university professor. So, there are different specifications for distance, status, and offense type. It should be noted, however, that no prior assumption is made about the severity of the offense, which is left to the participants to decide. Their evaluations are of course bound to the contextual information in each situation, which makes an offense towards the professor, in absolute terms, open to an evaluation as more severe than the other offenses because of the power differentials between the interlocutors.

4.2 The participants and procedures

The participants are 10 male and female native speakers of Syrian Arabic. They are first and second-year MA students enrolled in the program for Teaching English as a Foreign Language at Al-Baath University in Homs, Syria. Their ages range from 24 to 39. The role-play situations were recorded over two days, during which I met the participants at a university office. I asked the participants to choose their recording partner so that they feel comfortable during the recording process, which would yield more relaxed and natural recordings.

Before the recording started, I asked the participants to read each situation at a time and choose the role they want to perform, and I explained that the roles would be reversed in the second day of recording to ensure that each participant acts all the roles in the four situations. The participants were also given one minute to think about the scenario before each situation was recorded. The data are 40 recordings from four situations, each participant performing eight roles. In the next section, I present and analyze the data, then I discuss how politeness is negotiated through the performance of apologies and other speech acts, in addition to other conversational moves.

5. Data analysis and discussion

The data from the four situations are classified into apology strategies following Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and my own modifications, as I outlined in Section 3. The strategies and sub-strategies are going to be explored in terms of the number of occurrences per situation. I also shed light on other speech acts and supportive moves and attempt to analyze their function with reference to the way the participants orient and respond to them. Finally, I aim to show how politeness is achieved via the use of different speech acts, conventionalized routines, and various face-redressive strategies.

5.1 Situation 1 (apology to a friend)

In this situation, two friends agree to meet, and one of them is late for the appointment. This annoys the other friend, who calls complaining about the situation. The analysis of the data in this situation, as can be seen in Figure 1., shows that all the strategies are well captured by Blum-Kulka, et al.'s (1989) taxonomy. Accounts are the most frequently used apology strategy, with 10 tokens, and they are followed by IFIDs of different forms. It should be noted, however, that although there are nine instances of IFIDS, only four participants used explicit apology forms, and that some participants used more than one IFID. As can be seen آسفة/أنا آسفة 'I apologize,' بعتذر 'I'm sorry,' بتعذرني 'you'll excuse me' are the most frequent.[iii] Offers of repair and taking on responsibility are marginally used by three participants.
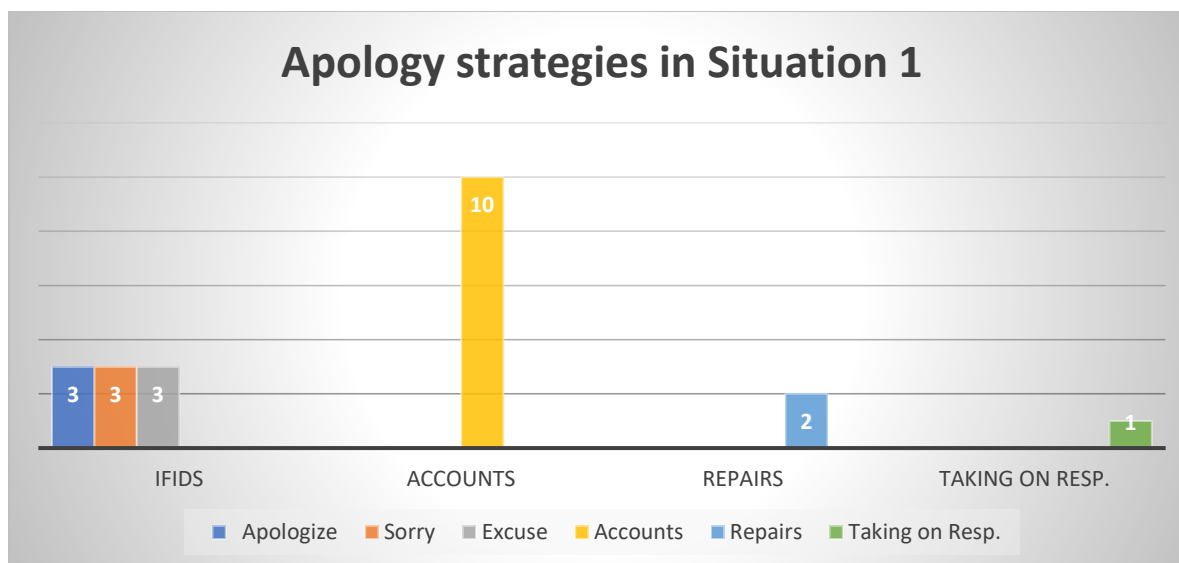
Figure 1: Apology strategies in Situation 1

The syntactic form of the IFIDs subscribes to what Deutschmann (2003) labels as "detached apologies," which refer to the use of the IFID as a stand-alone utterance or as the only apologetic expressions, with no reference to the offense at all. The data show three variations of detached apologies: 'sorry,' 'I'm sorry,' and 'I apologize.' This syntactic frame is the most frequently used form in the British National Corpus (BNC), which Deutschmann (2003) investigated. What is interesting, however, is that the participants who used IFID forms in the present data link them with a following account using the conjunctive "but." The overall function of this linking device is to dissociate the speaker from the offense and the responsibility for the offense (Deutschmann, 2003). This usage is illustrated in the following turn, produced by H:

<div dir="rtl">ه: أهلين د. بعتذر منك بس تأخرت شوي.</div>

(1) **H**: Hi D.[iv] *I apologize to you, but I'm a bit late.*
It can be seen that the clause after "but" does not function as an account; it is a mere statement of facts (Blum-Kulka, et al., 1989). The use of detached IFIDs, linking them with other clauses using "but," and the relative infrequency of IFIDs seem to suggest that their use is ritualistic.[v] It also shows that the participants do not consider the offense weighty enough to warrant an elaborate apology. The data support the latter observation. The participants use appeals based on personality in order to justify being late, which implies that, since they evaluate the offense as habitual, it should no longer be taken as a real offense but a minor incident. For example, DE dismisses the incident in her interaction with M using her personal habits as an excuse.

د: اي بعرف بس إنو خلص يعني خلص صرتو تعرفوني ماشي الحال رح حاول خلص بوصل بالوقت.

(2) **DE**: *I know, but that's alright already. You should know me by now. I'll try to make it on time.*

The results also show that the participants use other speech acts such as complaints and requests, which serve different functions, which can be understood from the interlocutor's response to them. The use of apologies accompanied by other speech acts has also been noted by Davies, et al. (2007: 49), who maintain that apologies rarely occur in isolation but mainly appear in the context of other "discourse work." The function of complaints is to elicit the apologies and to move the conversation forward. The following example from D and H shows how D's initial complaint pushes H to give an account for why she is late and a second round of complaining elicits another IFID.

د: يعني معقول دايما متأخرة دايما متأخرة هبة!!
ه: اي طيب شو بعمل صرلي ظرف طارئ فاضطريت اتأخر.
: شو هالمواعيد هوي اسمو موعد أنو عالموعد لازم تجي بوقتك.
: بعتذر منك.

(3) **D**: *Is that reasonable? You're always late! Always Late H!*
H: *Okay, so what should I do? Something came up and I had to be late.*
D: *This is an appointment! It's called an appointment so that you make it on time!*
H: *I apologize to you.*

Although only one participant used a request, this is worth mentioning because of the function it is used for and the interlocutor's interpretation of it. After K and B have discussed the reason for K's being late, the following exchange takes place.

ب: .. هلأ أنا تعودت عليك بهالقصة بس يالله معليش انتي صديقي المقرب فشو؟ ..
ك: أيوا طيب اوكي منأجلا.
: بدك تعوضلنا ياها.
: أكيد أكيد طبعا الأسبوع الجاي انشالله.

(4) **B**: *I'm used to you doing this, but that's fine you're my close friend, so what?*
K: *Alright. Okay, so do we postpone it?*
B: *You will make it up for us.*
K: *Sure, sure. Next week Inshallah.*

In this example, K interprets "so what" in B's turn as an enquiry about a future action to which he responds positively by suggesting a postponement. Here, K and B's turns overlap and B takes advantage of K's response to frame his request in a bald on-record declarative 'you will make it up for us.' Although B uses a bald on-record, which in B&L's framework is the most face-threatening strategy, it can be seen from K's response that he does not view the declarative as an FTA but as a positive politeness strategy. B's declarative in Syrian Arabic implies that B thinks it is his loss that they did not go out and that it would be of value for him if K can promise

to go out with him again, which appeals to K's positive face. It can be seen in this example that the participants' lexical and grammatical choices do not have an inherent politeness value, but that reaching a politeness interpretation stretches over a number of turns and is co-constructed by K and B through their positive evaluations of each other's turns based on context and their past relationship.

5.2 Situation 2 (apology to a classmate)

The apology in Situation 2 revolves around an incident between two classmates in which one of them says something that the other interprets as a personal offense/attack. As Figure 2 shows, in this situation, the participants mainly rely on explicit expressions of apologies. IFIDs are used 15 times, and the most frequent IFID is 'I apologize.' Taking on responsibility, in the form of expressing lack of intent, and accounts are used equally, five times each. Finally, only one participant uses a promise of forbearance.

It is worth noting that in this situation, the participants use detached IFIDs less frequently than in the previous situation. Instead, syntactically complex forms can be found of the IFID 'I apologize.' Deutschamnn (2003: 82) explains, in the BNC, complex apology forms are the most popular form of real apologies. He also adds that the clauses, NPs, or VPs following the apology often involve admissions of violations. Thus, complex apology forms partly function as strategies for taking on responsibility. The following examples by M and S(f) show this complex form in which the apologizers refer to the offense.

Figure 2: Apology strategies in Situation 2

م: بعتذر عن الموضوع اللي صار يعني.
ص: بس حكيني شوي حبابي. أنا بعرف إني انفعلت وعصبت قبل شوي بس أنا آسفة جدا أنا بحبك كتير بس ما بعرف كيف هيك انفعلت. أنا بعتذر عن انفعالي وعن ال..

(5) **M**: *[…] I apologize for what happened.*
S(f): *Let's talk for a bit, please. I know that I got angry earlier, but I'm very sorry. I love you so much, but I don't know how I got so worked up like that. I apologize for my anger and about … about what I said.*

In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, some of the participants express embarrassment over the incident, which can boost the sincerity of their apology. Moreover, they appeal to their own hot-tempered but good natures in that the offense is neither intended nor personal. According to Deutschman (2003: 41), apologies that often rely on accounts often "improve the speaker's image in the eyes of others […] especially when the speaker wants to show that a transgression was 'out of character', and thus not to be taken as a true reflection of his/her self." Thus, these appeals overall serve to rectify the speaker's as well as the addressee's faces. The following exchange between B and K is an example of this strategy:

ب: هلأ أنا هيك طبيعتي أحيانا بكون مع أهلي حتى بكون مباشر و صريح و أحيانا بتطلع معي كلمات وقحة بس ماني قاصد يعني بتعرفني طيوب.
ك: صح بس بس صارت قدام العالم يعني صارت مشكلة كبيرة كتير.

(6) **B**: *It's how I am. Sometimes, I am direct and honest even with my parents and say rude things. But I don't mean it, you know I'm kind-hearted.*
K: *That's right. But it happened with the others' watching and a big problem happened.*

K's response shows that this appeal is not always successful. In fact, throughout most of the data, interspersed with apologies is the speech act of blaming the classmate for his/her behavior and complaining about the embarrassment that such a behavior has caused the offended. The complaints reveal the participants' awareness of face loss, which results from open and public criticism. K's response in the above-example shows this, but in another example, H makes it clear that she feels embarrassed and attacked.

ه: اي لكن هيك بتحكيني قدام العالم!!
: طيب خفي علينا شوي ماهيك قدام العالم.
د: هلأ انتي قلتي إنو...
: أحرجتيني.. أحرجتيني.

(7) **H:** *[…] Is this how you talk to me in front of others?*
[…]
H: *Okay. Be easy! Don't do this in front of people watching.*
D: *You said that..*
H: *you embarrassed me! Embarrassed me!*

The analysis of the data shows that the speech act of complaining leads to more apology attempts such as using more accounts, IFIDs, and taking on responsibility. However, some of the participants responded to the other interlocutor's complaint by explaining that it is normal for classmates to argue and that everyone can have a momentary loss of temper. These interactions are interesting as they show how talk is discursive: these exchanges show that the interlocutors orient to the same context differently, each taking advantage of it to prove their own point. For the offended, the fact that others witnessed the argument adds to the face loss. The apologizer, on the other hand, uses this context for his/her defense by relegating the incident to the mundane due to regular occurrences. The following example between M and DE shows how M uses this argument to excuse himself and at the same time obtain a pardon from DE by appealing to their mutual background as "friends," which is a positive politeness strategy. M is successful in this strategy as he gets an absolution from DE at the end.

م: حاسك زعلاني شبك ليش زعلاني؟

دي: لاء ما في شي يعني عادي.

لاء اذا مشان الموضوع اللي صار بالمحاضرة من شوي اي يعني عادية كلياتنا منختلف بوجهات :
النظر كل واحد بيعبر عن رأيو أحيانا الواحد بيكون معصب بتطلع منو كلمة غير مقصودة مانا بمحلا بس
يعني بتصير بين أي رفيقين بتصير يعني فأنا بعتذر عن الموضوع اللي صار يعني .

لاء لاء ما في مشكلة ابدا عادي يعني أنا تفهمنت انو خلص انو نحنا مختلفين بوجهة النظر بس إنو :
شوي هيك شوي كنت حد معي بس يالله عادي عادي ما في مشكلة..

(8) **M:** *I feel that you're upset. Why are you upset?*
DE: *No, it's nothing.*
M: *If this is about what happened earlier in class, it' normal. We all have our differences in opinion. Everyone says their own minds and may at times be hot-tempered and say inappropriate words. But anyway, it happens with any two friends. I apologize for what happened.*
DE: *No, it's no big deal I understand we disagree but you were a bit angry with me. But that's fine no problem.*

Although the participants' choices of the strategies can be accounted for with reference to the social factors of distance and status, the data show that things are not as straightforward, as Grainger (2018) also explains. As is already mentioned, a neo-Brown and Levinson model needs to take into account the fact that these social factors are not static but negotiable and subject to change (ibid., 2018). A closer look at the data shows that this is indeed the case. The participants use a range of strategies that address both types of face and signal a move along the dimension of social distance, in particular, which once again serves to show the discursivity and negotiability of politeness. The participants use apologies as typical negative

politeness strategies in their typical function of restoring balance. Nearly all the participants use IFIDs, almost twice as much as they did in the friend situation. It is reasonable then to assume that, other things being equal, the only factor that is different in the two situations is the social distance factors. Therefore, it seems to be the case that more IFIDs, expressions of embarrassment, and overall lengthier turns, are related to higher social distance. However, the participants also use positive politeness strategies to consolidate their apologies. The participants resort to appeals based on their mutual background as classmates in order to lessen the prospect of face loss. In addition to this, the participants use positive politeness in two different ways. First, they use it as a support for the apology by boosting the addressee's positive face. This example from S(f) and R shows this function:

ر: عن جد لاتواخذيني أنا بحترمك وبقدرك من البداية من أولة الفصل.

.....

ص: تسلمي خلص نحنا زملاء ورفقات ما في مشكلة يعني.

(9) **R:** Really excuse me. *Since the beginning of the semester, I have had nothing but respect and appreciation for you.*

[…]

S(f): *Thanks. It's over. We're classmates and friends. There's no problem.*

The second way in which positive politeness is used is to conclude the exchange and ensure the success of the apology by suggesting a future activity, as the following example from D and H illustrates:

د: لاء عادي يعني عادي إإإإ إختلاف وجهات النظر لا يفسد للود قضية فا يعني عادي.

ه: صافي يا لبن.

: ما في بيناتنا.

: إي خلص.

: نطلب مناقيش؟

: ههههههه إي أوكي ههههههه مناقيش.

(10) **D:** *No, it's fine. That's fine. A little disagreement wouldn't spoil things between us. So,..*

H: *...are we alright, then?...*

D: *..yes...*

H: *Shall we order food?*

D: *hhh, food? Okay, let's order food.*

Another aspect where positive politeness is evident in this situation is the participants' use of endearment terms and in-group address forms. For example, in Syrian Arabic, a traditional way in which in-groupness is expressed is through the use of the first-person plural morpheme نا, by a singular subject, in addressing the interlocutors. In this usage the نا functions as a possessive pronoun and the overall

meaning is that the speaker is talking on behalf of a group of people. In the following example, K uses نا 'our' in this function to tell B that he is their precious friend.

ك: طيب اوكي انتي ب و غالي علينا.

ب: انتي كفو و الله انك كفو و الله (...).

(11) **K**: *Alright. You're B and you're our precious friend.*
B: *I swear to God you're worthy. You're up to it!*

B's response also contains a generally masculine endearment terms, which also functions as a compliment. B says to K that the latter is كفو, which means something along the lines of 'reliable and trustworthy.' Other endearment terms found in the data include the epithets حبيب, حبيب القلب, حبيبي, صديقي, which mean 'sweetie,' 'sweetheart,' 'my sweetheart,' and 'my friend,' respectively. It is interesting to note that only the male participants used these positive politeness endearment terms and in-group address forms.

The overall combination of negative and positive politeness shows that the participants do not perceive social distance as a limiting factor that imposes a specific form of behavior, but they use it to redefine their relationship with the classmate, in accordance with the context, and in order to achieve various communicative goals. The negative politeness strategies at first are used as entry points to negotiate a formal apology. Once that has been achieved, positive politeness is used to consolidate the success of the apology and move forward with the newly restored balance.

5.3 Situation 3 (apology to a professor)

In this situation, in which a student apologizes to a professor for forgetting to bring him/her back a book, all the apology strategies are used, as can be seen in Figure 3., but IFIDs are by far the most frequently used with 35 instances. There are 16 and 13 tokens of accounts and offers of repair, respectively. Taking on responsibility and promises of forbearance are the least frequently used. In addition to these strategies, the participants use expressions of embarrassment in two functions: first, they use them as strategies that accompany the apology itself. Second, the participants use them as a preface to announce to the professor that they forgot to bring the book. The following example clarifies this function:

ر: بس ما بعرف كيف بدي افتح الموضوع معك دكتورة. كنا آخدين منك موعد إنو اليوم اجي لعندك عالمكتب و رجعلك الكتاب.

ص: اي صحيح.

ر: بس الموضوع راح جدا عن بالي يعني عنجد لا تآخزيني في كذا وضع بالبيت و اجيت على حمص و تذكرت إني نسيت جيب الكتاب فجيت اعتذر منك بعتذر منك كتير دكتورة.

(12) **R:** *Ahh. I don't know how to start talking about this Doctor. We had an appointment and I was supposed to bring you back the book.*

S(f): *That's right.*

R: But it has completely slipped through my mind. Really, excuse me (don't blame me). There are issues at home, and Just when I came to Homs I remembered that I didn't bring the book. So, I came to apologize. I apologize to you professor.

Figure 3: Apology strategies in Situation 3

It can also be seen in this example that R intensifies her apology by using the adverbial عنجد 'really.' Most of the participants intensified their IFIDs either through repetition (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984) or through adverbials such as عنجد 'really,' كتير 'so,' and جدا 'very,' as in the following intensified IFID, in which K also offers a repair by saying:

ك: أنا آسف كتير دكتور طيب في وقت أني روح وارجع جيبو؟..

(13) **K**: *I'm very sorry Doctor. Is there time for me to get back home and bring it?*

Besides the diversity of apology strategies, the different ways in which they combine, and the different ways in which they are intensified, some of the participants phrase their apologies in a different style than the one found in Situations 1 and 2. Although the participants continue to use detached IFIDs, they are not used as stand-alone expressions, but most of the time are followed by one or more of the other strategies such as accounts or taking on responsibility. The detached IFIDs also show more variation in form such as using the apology expression followed by the name of the addressee, in this case the professor. Finally, there are more syntactically complex forms of IFIDs than in the previous situations. The frames, which the

participants use, include the IFID followed by a prepositional phrase that refers to the incident, as in the following example:

<div dir="rtl">

م: بعتذر كتير دكتورة عن الموقف.

</div>

(14) **M**: *I deeply apologize for the incident, Doctor.*

The language of the participants was also different in the strategy "taking on responsibility." Whereas the casual حقك عليي, which literally translates as 'it's on me' and functions as an admission of the offense, was more frequent in Situations 1 and 2, in this situation, the participants explicitly link the expression of responsibility to negligence and sloppiness. For example, H expresses her apology and takes on responsibility using the following expressions:

<div dir="rtl">

د: أوكي بدي إياه ضروري إذا في إمكانية تروحي تجيبي وتعطيني إياه فأكيد بكون ممنونتك.

ه: إي خلص خلص بعتذر أنا الغلط مني أنا مقصرة بعتذر منك.

</div>

(15) **D**: *I really need it. If you can go bring it back to me, I'd appreciate it.*
H: *Yes, yes. I apologize. This is my fault.. my own dereliction. I apologize to you.*

The participants' style is overall more elaborate, apologies are more explicit, and formal, which encodes respect and awareness of status differences. For example, instead of using the IFID 'forgive me' in the imperative mood, one of the participants S(m), frames the IFID using the performative بترجاك سامحني 'I beg you to forgive me.' Another participant, T, puts his IFID in a more elaborate frame by saying بدي منك ما تواخزني 'I want you to excuse me.' In the English translation, the 'I want you' clause is used as a directive and may not be appropriate in addressing a professor. However, the Syrian Arabic expression, literally 'I want from you,' has the connotation of pleading and wishing for the plea to be accepted. T makes another intensified IFID, and the intensification device is using God's name. T says الله يخليك ما تواخزني 'May God keep you, excuse me,' which is a powerful form of pleading since it invokes the name of God. Using God's name is not a rare practice in the Arab world as previous research on apologies has shown that speakers of different Arabic dialects resort to using God's name in making apologies (Ahmed, 2017 on Iraqi Arabic; Hodeib, 2019 on Syrian Arabic; Jebahi, 2011 on Tunisian Arabic).

As far as responding to the incident is concerned, the professor tends to blame the student for failing to comply with his/her duties and prioritizing his/her tasks. Blaming sequences seem to elicit more IFIDs, accounts, and/or offers of repair. The following exchange between DE, who role-plays the professor, and M shows how DE's blame pushes M to give a more elaborate apology that combines taking on responsibility, intensified IFIDs, an account, and an offer of repair:

دي: *طيب محمد لما أخدتو الأسبوع الماضي أنا طلبت منك تجيبو بهاد الاسبوع لأنو في عندي محاضرة فيه انا هاد الاسبوع يعني شو بدي ساوي هلأ؟..*

م: *.. حقك علي دكتورة انا كتير بعتذر دكتورة كتيير بعتذر منك. بس المشكلة إنو هيك صار معي يعني نسيت الكتاب و ما بعرف لو بلحق اليوم كان جيتو بس بقى رح يخلص الدوام اليوم ما بقى لحق جيبو خلص وعد مني الأسبوع الجاي جيبو دكتورة جيبو خلص هاي وعد..*

دي: *.. طيب.*

(16) **DE**: *Alright M. When you borrowed it last week, didn't I ask you to bring it back this week because I need it for a lecture, what do I do now?*

M: You're right (it's on me). I deeply apologize Doctor. I deeply apologize to you. But it just happened I forgot the book and I'm not sure whether I still have time to go and bring it back to you today, but working hours are almost over. I promise you I will bring it next week Doctor. That's a promise…

DE: *… Alright.*

In example (16), DE accepts the offer of repair. However, as the data show, such offers can also be rejected. In example (17), K, the professor, rejects B's offer of repair, which triggers a negotiation sequence about how to resolve the issue.

ب: *أنا رح اعم جهدي بس إذا ما قدرت يعني بدك تعذرني.*

ك: *يا ب بدنا حل مستحيل أنا ما في نسخة تانية بالجامعة كلا.*

شفتلك إذا في موجود نسخة عالنت بي دي إف أو كذا ببعتلك ياها. ما بيمشي الحال بي دي إف بنكون هيك مضطر تطبعا.

طب أنا.

بدون ما تطبعا فيك تتصفحا عال..

الفكرة لقلك لقلك بلال شغلة. أنا عامل هايلايتينغ على بعض القصص.

أيواا صح والله معك حق.

و عامل بوكماركس مستحيل استغني عنن يعني.

طيب ما بتمشي الحال ابدا؟ معناتا اليوم بعمل جهدي أنا انشالله بعمل جهدي.

طيب بتصورلي صفحات في صفحات معينة بتصورلي ياها و بتبعتلي ياها عالواتس.

بصورلك ياه كلو إذا بدك كمان ما بتفرق معي.

أوكي.

(17) **B**: *I'll do my best, but if I can't, you must excuse me.*

K: *B.. no way. We want a solution. There is only this one copy at the university.*

B: *Should I check whether there is a PDF copy available and I'll send it to you? Isn't a PDF okay? In this case you would need to print it out …*

K: *… but I…*

B: *… without printing it, you can browse it on …*

K: *…The problem is B.. let me tell you something. I've highlighted bits…*

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　B: *Yeah! True, you're right…*

K: *…on the book…There are bookmarks. I can't do without them.*

B: *So, it's impossible. Okay, I'll do my best to get it today.*
K: *There are certain pages.. you can take a photo of those pages and send …*
B: *…I'll take photos of   the entire book…*
     K: *…it to me on WhatsApp.*

B: *…It makes not difference.*
K: *Fine.*

The interaction has many overlapping turns and self-repetitions, which approximates real-life speech.[vi] This supports the observations that role-plays can elicit dynamic interactions, in addition to showing how different turns are topically related to each other, which are aspects that Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs), for example, fail to elicit (Kasper & Dhal, 1991).

As can also be seen from example (17), K, who initially dismisses B's offer of repair, is willing to be cooperative by suggesting that B send him photos of certain parts of the book. This interaction shows how the professor uses the negotiation to reiterate his powerful position. Another way in which the professor(s) in the data seem to define their power is by blaming the student for negligence. However, the blame is underlain, and probably toned down, by instructive reminders for the student(s) of the importance of diligence and commitment. In this way, the professor(s) uses these sequences to practice their role not only as academic advisors but also as mentors and leaders. Example (18) between S(f) and R shows this sort of interaction:

ص: هلأ المشكلة انو انتي كطالبة لازم تكوني ملتزمة بالمواعيد و يكون عندك برنامج لهالاشياء هايمشان ما تنسي أو ما تغلطي هيك غلط ما بيصير هالشي.

ر: والله حقك عليي يا دكتورة عنجد لا تآخزيني بدي ياكي ضلي آخدة فكرة صح عني لا تآخزيني...

.... هلأ أنا أكيد آخدة فكر صح بس لاوم تنتبهي أكتر على أبحاثك و تنتبهي أكتر على مواعيدك العملية أكتر من الظروف العائلية.. بكل الأحوال آآآ فيكي تجيبي بأي وقت كان.

(18) **S(f)**: *The problem is that you, as a student, should stick to your appointments and have a clear schedule so that you don't forget or make such a mistake again. It is not acceptable.*

R: *You're right, Doctor. Do excuse me (don't blame me). I just want you to keep thinking highly of me. Please excuse me…*

S(f): *…Of course, I still think highly of you, but you should pay more attention to your research and your appointments than to your family issues. Anyway, you can bring it back whenever you want.*

It can be seen here that R orients to the professor's attempt to show authority and responds herself by an utterance that enhances the professor's positive face. Her insistence that she wants the professor to keep thinking nicely of her reflects R's

perspective on the importance of the professor's opinion as an academic figure and a person of authority. This attitude may not have been articulated in the same way by the other participants, but their language serves the same function of showing respect and awareness of the status differences between them and their higher status addressee. In the next and final situation, the dynamics of the apology are reversed with the professor apologizing and the student responding to the apology.

5.4 Situation 4 (apology to a student)

As can be seen in Figure 4. below, unlike the previous situation, accounts are the most frequent apology strategy, with 19 tokens. They are followed by offers of repair, which were used 12 times and IFIDs (11 instances of 'I apologize,' 'I'm sorry' and 'excuse me'). The least frequently used strategy is taking on responsibility with only four occurrences. It should be noted that whereas all the strategies are used by all the participants, IFIDs are not used in all responses. This could be explained in terms of the power imbalance between the professor, who needs to apologize, and the student, who receives the apology.

   Despite considerably less frequent occurrences of IFIDs than in Situation 3, the syntactic forms of IFIDs in this situation are more complex. Only one IFID is used in its detached form, and one is intensified by the adverbial 'really.' All the rest of the IFID tokens are used in complex syntactic forms (Deutschamann, 2003). For example, some of the complex formats involve the IFID 'I apologize' as a complement to an بدي 'I want to' clause, or 'excuse me' preceded by the semi-auxiliary بدك ما تأخذني 'would have to,' as in the two following examples.

د: بدي إعتنر فعلا فعلا معاكي حق بدي إعتنر منك أنا صراحة.
ط: بدك ما تأخذني اليوم (....) بوكرا أكيد بتكون جاهزة.

(19) **D**: *I want to apologize to you. Really, really, you're right. I want to apologize to you, honestly.*
(20) **T**: *You'd have to excuse me today [...]. It will be ready tomorrow for sure.*

In example 20, the Syrian Arabic expression بدك literally 'you want,' does not have the sense of obligation perceived in the English equivalent, but the implication is that of urgency. When used in this context, the expression is a form of urgent appeal to the addressee to do whatever follows the expression, which is in this case the excusing. The use of this expression is peculiar in this context, if we consider that it is addressed to a subordinate. However, as the data show, the language of most strategies is elaborate, formal, and close to the written expressions of Standard Arabic. For example, one of the participants, H, offers her repair in the form of a polite request rather than using a declarative, or even a directive. Offers, being of benefit to the addressee, are best put in the directive form (Leech, 1983). H's

syntactic choice, in example (21), has the effect of a request that appeals for the understanding of the other party.

Figure 4: Apology strategies in Situation 4

<div dir="rtl">ه: بتعطيني كمان فرصة يومين لأرجع شوفلك إياه؟</div>

(21) **H**: *Will you give me two more days so that I can check it for you?*

Another participant, B, uses an infrequent verb for 'to give time,' امهلني /, which is borrowed from Standard Arabic and evokes a sense of formality, to buy more time to correct the chapter. Additionally, he produces two of his IFIDs in the form of a plea, as in the following:

<div dir="rtl">ب: بتمنى تقبل اعتذاري (...)</div>

(22) **B**: *I wish you'd accept my apology [...]*

As I have already shown in the previous situation, the language is also elaborate and formal. Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that the formality of the language reflects the participants' evaluation of the setting itself as formal. Moreover, the above-discussed lexical and syntactic forms may indicate an evaluation of the offense type as severe. These two observations fit in well with previous research which relates formal language to formal contexts, on the one hand (Holmes, 2013), and longer and more polite apologies to more severe offenses (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

The high frequency of accounts can also be accounted for with reference to the topic of the offense: accounts are the default manner in which similar incidents can be presented and/or explained. The accounts are not diverse and mainly rely on two

excuses: the busy life of the professor and personal issues. Example (23), contains a turn in which an IFID is combined with an account and an offer of repair.

ط: بدك ما تأخذني اليوم لأنو صرلي أربع تيام عم صلح وراق وكان فحص الجامعة فا ما صلحتلك كل الورقة صلحتلك نصا تقريبا بوكرا أكيد بتكون جاهزة.

(23) **T**: *You'll have to excuse me for today. I've been grading exam papers. There have been exams, you know. I only corrected half of your paper. It will be ready by tomorrow for sure. Don't worry you still have time.. you have time.*

In this turn, as we can see, T starts with an IFID followed by an account for why he only corrected half of S(m)'s work. The turn ends with an offer of repair and a reassurance to put the student at ease.

The structure of T's apology, in which more than one strategy is used, is typical of the apologies in this situation. However, combining two or more strategies may not always be confined to a single turn. As the data show, some of the repair sequences are used in separate turns as a response to the student's expression of worry about the upcoming deadline and/or as a response to the student's explicit request for a solution for the inconvenience. In example (24) below, we see a stretch of seven turns in which D is expressing her concern over the pressing deadline and H is repeatedly re-issuing her offer of repair and reassuring D that everything will be fine.

ه: بتعطيني كمان فرصة يومين لأرجع شوفلك إياه
د: طيب أنا لازم قدمو بأقرب وقت شو لازم أعمل؟
: خلص لا تهكلي هم بيومين انشالله بقدر صححلك إياه خلص.
: يعني ما عاد تنسيلي إياه دكتورة.
: إي لاء بوكرا خلص.
: يعني عندي ديد لاين ولازم بهالنهارين سلم أنا.
: إي لاء لا تهكلي هم.

(24) **H**: *Will you give me two more days so that I can check it for you?*
D: *But I have to submit it as soon as possible. What should I do?*
H: *You don't have to worry. I'll get it ready in two days. It's okay.*
D: *So, you won't forget it again Professor?*
H: *No. Tomorrow, I'll..*
D: *I have a deadline and I should submit the work within two days.*
H: *Yes. Yes, don't worry.*

The sequence in example (24) is a recurring pattern in the data, in which the student expresses concern, and the professor responds by reassuring the student that everything is under control. In this way, the reassurances may be analyzed as double-functioning face-redressive actions. On the one hand, by decreasing the student's stress through such reassurances, the professor shows concern for the student's

psychological state, which is a positive politeness strategy. On the other hand, by reassuring the student, the professor shows him/herself as a knowledgeable person, who is in control of the situation, despite having made this mistake. The last function is reminiscent of Deutschamnn's (2003) observation that apologies can be used to salvage the speaker's self-image. In this case, the reassurances, not being apologies in themselves, nevertheless serve this self-image preserving function. The following extract from T and S(m)'s exchange shows how S(m), as a student, explicitly shows that he counts on the professor's ability to keep this delay from negatively affecting him. In response, T reassures him of both his control over the issue and his ability to get the corrections ready in one day.

ط: ما يهمك في وقت معك في وقت معك ولا يهمك.

س: يعني في وقت عندي؟

: إي ولا يهمك ...منسقو سوا.

: يعني بايدك الشغلة؟

: لا ولا يهمك بوكرا بتجي لعندي عالساعة تسعة بتكون عندي بتلاقيا خالصة.

(25) **T**: *Don't worry you still have time. Don't worry.*
S(m): *I still have time?*
T: *Yes. Don't worry we'll work through this together.*
S(m): *So, it's in your hands?*
T: *Absolutely. You'll come tomorrow at nine and it'll be ready for you.*

It is interesting to note that, generally, the participants, who role-played the student, in showing their concern, may have sounded more insisting and forthcoming in their demand for a solution than is usually tolerated in professor/student interactions. In the following exchange, R directly expresses her distress over the situation:

ر: بس دكتورة بدي خبرك إنو الديدلاين اللي الي بكرا يعني الديدلاين هادا يعني حضرتك السوبرفايزر عليي و أنا لازم يكون يعني في شي بدنا نلتزم فيه أنا و أنتي و هادا الشي ممكن يأثر عليي و يأثر يعني عكل الشغل...

ص: ... خلص و لا يهمك...

: ... ع كل الشغل دكتورة هلأ بيروح التعب كلو...

: ... أنا رح اول إني شوفا اليوم و ببعتلك ياها ايميل.

(26) **R**: *But, Doctor. I'd like to tell you that my deadline is tomorrow.. this deadline.. Your Presence (honorific) is my supervisor.. there should be.. there are things that both of us, we need to stick to. This could influence both you and me and the entire work..*
S(f): *Don't worry..*
R: *.. the entire work professor. Effort will be wasted.*
S(f): *I'll try to take a look at it today and I'll email it to you.*

R's expression of distress may have been evaluated as face-threatening, in normal contexts. R directly reminds the professor of her duty, which would have constituted a direct criticism from a subordinate to a superior- an FTA to the negative face of the professor. However, the professor in this situation does not orient to this face-threatening interpretation. Instead, she tries to reassure R once and again. The professor's behavior may be indicative of her awareness of the context and of her own evaluation of the severity of the situation, which is her fault. These considerations may have influenced her neutral evaluation of R's turn, as is witnessed in her response; R's unusual directness is tolerated by considerations of context. Overall, this shows the discursivity of politeness evaluations in accordance with the immediate context (Locher, 2006).

Similarly to R's unusual behavior, some of the participants showed a lot of insistence in trying to get the professor to correct the chapter quickly. Again, this over-insistence may constitute an FTA of imposition, in addition to having the implied meaning of telling the professor what to do. Indeed, this face-threatening interpretation is oriented to by DE, playing the professor in the following example, who responds to M's over-insistence in a manner that reiterates her powerful position as a supervisor.

م: ... طيب دكتورة أنا هل أشو بدي أعمل؟ ما معي وقت خلص يعني لازم تكون العغو منك لازم تكوني مخلصة تصحيح الفصل (...) هلأ يعني هلأ كيف بدنا نلحق؟ كيف بدنا نعمل يعني؟ ...

دي: ... خلص أنا رح فرغ حالي خلص من اليوم لهالكم يوم الجايين أعطين كل الشغل و بشوفك خلص أكيدي رح شوفك بكرا انشالله...

: طيب دكتورة بتمنى إنو الموضوع جدا حساس بتمنى إنو خلال...

: ... ما في ما في داعي محمد تذكرني عنجد بس لو ما يكون عندي ضغط كتير أكيد أنا ما بنسى هاد الموضوع...

(...)

: بعرف بحترم هادا الشي عندك أكيد هادا حقك يعني بالنهاية بس إنو خلص انشالله بكرا بتزبط كل الوضع ما تخاف أهم شي...

(27) **M**: *What am I to do now professor? I don't have time. It's over.. this means it should be, I beg your pardon, you should have finished correcting the chapter already [...]. Now, how are we supposed to finish by time? how are we to proceed?*
DE: *It's okay. Starting from today, I'll be devoting my whole time to it in the next couple of days. I'll work exclusively on it, and then I'll see you. I'll see you tomorrow, God willing.*
M: *Okay Doctor. I wish.. this is a very sensitive issue, I wish that in the next..*
DE:*... You don't need to remind me, M, seriously. Had it not been for the work pressure, I wouldn't have forgotten about this..*
M:*.. Okay..*

DE:*... I know and I respect that for sure. That's your right, but tomorrow, God willing, everything will be alright. Don't be scared that's the most important thing.*

In this exchange, we notice that DE responds positively to M's initial expression of concern by a reassurance and an offer of repair. However, when M digresses, thus, appearing to state the obvious, DE interrupts him and gently expresses her disapproval of him for reminding her of what she already knows. This is evidence that she has interpreted his previous turn as an FTA, and she uses her turn to save her own face by reinstating her powerful position. But, despite reclaiming her challenged authority, DE engages in redressive facework again by showing her sympathy with M's situation and her concern for his wellbeing by saying 'don't be scared.'

The above-discussed interaction is not only interesting because of the way DE negotiates both the offense and her status by doing different kinds of face-redress. It is also interesting as M's first turn contains an instance of using the IFID 'I beg your pardon' not as a post-event but as a pre-event speech act. According to Deutschmann (2003: 60), there are two types of apologies depending on where they are produced relevant to the offense; anticipatory and retrospective apologies. He explains that anticipatory apologies precede the offense and function as disarmers, which prepare the hearer for an "unwelcome statement" and, thus, circumvent or decrease the face-threatening potential of the upcoming action. As can be seen, M's apology is anticipatory, and it serves as a negative politeness strategy to decrease the face-threat of his implied criticism. The data contain another instance of an anticipatory IFID, which functions as a precursor to lessen the imposition of the following request.

ك: أنا آسف كتير دكتور رح آخد من وقتك بس هالخمس دقايق معليش؟

ب: أيوا تفضل...

: ... بعرف كتير مشغول و عندك عالم...

: ... عادي عادي.

(28) **K**: *I'm very sorry, Doctor. I'm going to have to keep you busy for just five minutes. Is that fine?*
B: *Yes. Go ahead.*
K:*... I know you're very busy and you've got other people to deal with.*
B: *That's okay.*

Anticipatory apologies, in which apologies function to defuse the negativity of a following action, fall under the category of conventionalized/formulaic language use (Deutschmann, 2003), which in turn counts as a form of conventional/unmarked politeness (Watts, 2003; Terkourafi, 2008). The data in all the above-discussed situations abound with instances of conventionalized and formulaic language expressions used to express politeness. In the next section, I will examine how

politeness is achieved through the use of fixed phrases and expressions, which have become part of conventionalized language use.

6. Politeness and conventionalized/formulaic language

As I have shown in the discussion about the formality of language in Situation 4, and the use of in-group address forms and endearment terms in Situation 2, it can be seen that there is a contrast between language use in both situations. The contrast, however, is not restricted to the level of formality. In fact, in Situation 4, the data show that the participants try to achieve politeness by manipulating conventionalized aspects of language use such as address forms, honorifics, and routinized formulas.[vii]

At the end of the last section, I have noted the participants' use of anticipatory apologies, which can be categorized as conventionalized apologies. According to Terkourafi (2008), a certain expression is conventionalized when it is repeatedly used in the same contexts to achieve the same perlocutionary effects. Watts (2003) takes a slightly different perspective and argues that formulaic, ritualized, and conventionalized expressions have undergone a process of pragmaticalization. In this process, the expressions lose referential (propositional) meaning and develop into expressions that "provide the addressee with clues as to how to derive relevant inferences" (Watts, 2003:198). Examples of pragmaticalized expressions include pre-event apologies, greetings, leave-takings, thanking expressions, address forms, and pronouns encoding familiarity and deference, among many others. However, Watts (2003) explains that those expressions do not inherently have a politeness value but that they are open to such evaluations, according to context, and that they may be part of the politic behavior of the situation. Following Terkourafi's (2008) and Watts's (2003) proposals, the conventionality of the anticipatory apologies discussed at the end of the last section results from their regular co-occurrence with requests, which invites the hearer to infer their meaning, not as expressions of regret, but as conventionalized markers that attempt to lessen the imposition of the request. This function accords them a negative politeness value (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

As far as other conventionalized forms are concerned, the participants address the professor following the standard Syrian Arabic practice of title-plus-name of the professor format. This address format subscribes to Watts's (2003) notion of politic behavior. Using the title 'doctor,' which is a cover address form for university teachers of any rank, to address a university professor in Syria is a normal but expected behavior in any setting involving a student and a professor. However, its absence, which constitutes a breach of social codes, is marked and gives rise to impoliteness evaluations. The following two examples are just representative of an abundance of similar examples from Situations 3 and 4:

ص: طيب أوكي شكراً دكتورة لتفهمك.

دي: يعطيك العافية دكتور م.

(29) **S(f)**: *Okay. Thanks for understanding, Doctor.*

(30) **DE**: *May God give you health, Doctor, M.*

The participants have also used other typical formulaic devices such as address forms and honorifics. T/V address forms and honorifics are commonly used in languages such as French, German, Spanish, Standard Arabic, and Japanese, where the use of honorifics is socially prescribed. Whereas the use of honorifics and T/V forms is normal in Standard Arabic, the use of plural second person pronouns to show deference is restricted and highly stilted in Syrian Arabic. Normally, the honorific حضرتك, which translates as 'your presence,' is used to express respect and mark status differences. The function of honorifics, as can be seen from the data, is to avoid direct reference to the addressee by using the second person singular pronoun إنت/إنتي 'you.M/you.F.' The following example shows this function:

ه: بس حضرتك بتعرفي عن الموعد النهائي قبل موعد التسليم.

(31) **H**: But *Your Presence knows about the deadline already.*

The final aspect of formulaic language use in the data for politeness effects is the use of fixed phrases that generally serve a purely affective function and can be interpreted to mean different things, according to context. One expression, which is especially used in the two professor situations, is a fixed Syrian Arabic expression يعطيك العافية. This expression is a truncated form of the longer الله يعطيك العافية, which means 'may God give you good health.' The shorter form does not contain God's name but the meaning is understood. As an expression of good will, it is a positive politeness strategy that is used to address someone who is in the middle of work or as a routine and generalized acknowledgment of the work of someone, who may not necessarily be engaged in work at the time of speaking. The sequential position of this expression in the data, following the opening greeting sequence, shows that the participants interpret it both as part of the greeting sequence and as a stand-alone expression. The following two examples show both interpretations:

د: مرحبا دكتورة كيفك؟

ه: أهلين دالين كيفك شو أخبارك؟

: الحمد لله ماشي الحال يعطيكي العافية.

: كيف الدراسة انشالله تمام؟

(32) **D**: *Hello, Doctor. How are you?*

H: *Hi D. How are you? What's up?*

D: *I'm fine thanks. May God give you health.*

H: *How are your studies?*

In this example, H's response 'how are your studies,' shows that she orients to the fixed expression as part of D's greeting. Had she interpreted it as a well-wishing, she

would have given the normal response to this expression, which is الله يعافيكي, 'may God make you healthy.' This is how DE responds to M's 'may God give you health,' in the following example, which shows that she reacted to the conventionalized interpretation:

دي: أهلا محمد يا هلا.

م: الله يعطيكي العافية.

دي: الله يعافيك يا هلا.

(33) **DE**: *Welcome, M.*
M: *May God give you health.*
DE: *May God make you healthy.*

As the discussion above shows, conventionalized expressions, similarly to other non-conventionalized speech acts and expressions, can be positive or negative politeness strategies with different degrees of flexibility in their meaning in as far as some of them are open to different interpretations according to their position in the talk interaction.

7. Conclusion

This research investigates politeness in Syrian Arabic as mainly expressed through apologies. The paper also looks at how other speech acts such as requests, blaming, and complaints, as well as the use of conventionalized language expressions contribute to the discursive evaluation and expression of politeness. The results show that the participants' apologies fit in well with the taxonomy of Blum-Kulka, et al. (1989) and that across the four role-plays situations, IFIDs and accounts were the most frequently used strategies. As far as politeness is concerned, by analyzing the data with reference to the speaker's input and the hearer's uptake, I was able to show that politeness is not viewed as a static concept that is constrained by contextual factors. On the contrary, politeness was a co-constructed endeavor in which apologies were not accepted at face value but were negotiated over multiple turns and where other speech acts such as requests, complaints, and blaming were used as supportive moves for the success of the apology. Moreover, the analysis of the data also revealed that social factors were not static either: the participants' use of combinations of positive and negative politeness strategies shows how they manipulated elements of the context such as distance and status in order to achieve different communicative goals such as restoring balance, showing respects, and emphasizing mutual background. Additionally, the power differentials between the speakers, as seen in Situations 3 and 4, were also used to define role relationships and to highlight and reinstate institutional and academic power, which are key aspects of the professor's personality. A final aspect of the discursivity of politeness was evident in the way context altered evaluations of politeness in that behaviors,

which otherwise would have been evaluated negatively as face-threatening, were tolerated due to the severity of the offense. However, the expression of politeness did not only lie in the discursive negotiation of different speech acts and the changing evaluation of the contextual elements. As the results show, the participants used a range of conventionalized expressions and phrases to express politeness. Such conventionalized language use included using apologies as pre-event speech acts to disarm a potential offense, the use of honorifics and formal address forms, and the use of fixed Syrian Arabic expressions. The results of the present research need to be taken with caution as the limited number of the participants and the data collection method do not make generalizations based on the results possible. Despite the fact that the role-play situations were able to elicit data that approximated real-life interactions, interactional phenomena, such as politeness and speech act production, are best examined using real-life data. Further research may look into how much data taken from role-plays and real-life interactions converge and/or diverge in as far as the expression and evaluation of politeness is concerned.

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Appendix A: Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) apology coding scheme (adapted)

1) Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID)
- Sorry
- Excuse me
- I apologize for
- Forgive me
- Pardon me for
- I regret that
- I am afraid

2) Taking on responsibility
- Explicit self-blame   e.g. my mistake
- Lack of intent   e.g. I didn't mean to upset you
- Justify hearer   e.g. you're right to be angry
- Expression of embarrassment   e.g. I feel awful about it
- Admission of facts but not responsibility e.g. I haven't read it
- Refusal to acknowledge guilt
- Denial of responsibility e.g. It wasn't my fault
- Blame the hearer   e.g. It's your own fault
- Pretend to be offended   e.g. I'm the one to be offended

3) Explanation or account
e.g. The traffic was terrible

4) Offer of repair
e.g. I'll pay for the damage

5) Promise of forbearance
e.g. This won't happen again

Appendix B: The role-play situations in Arabic

تعليمات:

يرجى قراءة المواقف الأربعة التالية واختيار الدور الذي ترغب بتنفيذه. لا يوجد سيناريو معين لما يجب أن تقوله لكن يرجى التفكير في الموقف لمدة دقيقة والتحضير لما ترغب بقوله. الرجاء التذكر أنه من المهم أن تتحدث بعفوية وصدق وأنه لا يوجد إجابة خاطئة.كل ما سوف تقوله مهم ومفيد.

المواقف:

1. الموقف الأول:

اتفق صديقين قراب من بعض إنو يطلعوا سوا. واحد من الأصدقاء معروف بإنو عطول متأخر وما بيلتزم بموعد وهالمرة كمان متأخر عن الموعد.

الدور الأول:

عم تستنى رفيقك اللي متأخر عن الموعد متل العادة. بتتصل فيه لتشوف وينو وليش تأخر كل هالقد.

الدور التاني:

أنت متأخر عن الموعد مع رفيقك اللي بيتصل فيك عم يسأل عم شو صار معك وعم يتأفف من تأخيرك. شو بتقول لرفيقك؟ كيف بترد عليه؟

2. الموقف التاني:

بالصف انتوا مجموعة طلاب بالمحاضرة عم تتناقشوا بموضوع طلب الدكتور منكن تحضيرو. واحد من زملاءك بالصف بتعرفو معرفة سطحية فقط بيقول شغلة ما بتتفق فيا معو أبداً. وقت بتعبر عن رأيك بوجهة نظرو بصراحة زيادة شوي بتحس إنو زميلك انزعج منك. بعد ما تخلص الحصة بتروح لتحكي مع زميلك لتوضح الموقف.

الدور الأول:

بتحس إنك أسأت لزميلك خلال المناقشة رغم أنك ما بتقصد هالشي وحابب توضح الأمور لترطب الجو، شو بتقول؟

الدور التاني:

بعد انتهاء المحاضرة زميلك اللي خالف وجهة نظرك بيجي ليحكيك بالموضوع لأنو حس إنو أساء إلك وزعجك. شو بتقلو؟

3. الموقف التالت:

بتستعير كتاب من عند مشرفك/مشرفتك بالجامعة اللي بيتصل فيك بيطلب منك ترجع الكتاب وقت تلتقوا هالأسبوع. بتنسى تجيب الكتاب معك وقت تجي تشوفو.

الدور الأول:

دكتورك بيسألك عن الكتاب اللي طلب منك ترجعو. الموضوع راح عن بالك تماماً و نسيت تجيب الكتاب. شو بتقول لدكتورك؟

الدور التاني:

طالبك عم يخبرك إنو نسي يجيب الكتاب. الكتاب لازملك كتير شو بترد عطالبك؟

4. الموقف الرابع:

قرب الموعد النهائي لتسليم الأطروحة تبع طالبك وبقي فصل واحد من الرسالة ما صححتلو ياه. بتعطيه موعد يجي ياخد التصحيح بعد أربع أيام. بتنشغل كتير هالأربع أيام فبتنسى تصحح الفصل وما بتتذكر هالشي غير وقت يجي طالبك عالموعد.

الدور الأول:

بيجي طالبك عالموعد مشان ياخد الفصل اللي وعدتو تصححلو ياه. أنت نسيان تصحح الفصل و جبت الطالب عالفاضي. بدك تخبرو بهالشي. شو بتقلو؟

الدور التاني:

بيخبرك دكتورك إنو ما صحح الفصل اللي جاي تاخدو وأنت عندك ديدلاين لتسليم الأطروحة ولازم تاخد التصحيح بأقرب وقت. شو بتقول للدكتور وقت بيخبرك إنو ما صححو؟

شكراً جزيلاً

Appendix C: The role-play situations in English

Instructions:

Please read the following situations and choose the role you want to play. There is not a pre-defined scenario for what you need to say. You have one minute to think about what you want to say. Please remember to speak spontaneously and honestly and that nothing you say is wrong. Everything you say is important and beneficial.

The situations:

Situation one:

Two close friends arrange to go out together. One of the friends is always late and never makes it on time. This time, s/he is also late.

Role one:

You are waiting for your friend, who is late as usual. You call to ask him/her where she is and what took him/her so long.

Role two:

You're late for an appointment with your friend who calls you complaining about what took you so long. What would you say to your friend? How would you respond?

Situation two:

You are in the classroom discussing a topic that the professor has assigned to you. One of your classmates, whom you only know superficially, says something that you completely disagree with. When you express your opinion in a direct manner, you get the feeling that your classmate was upset. After the class is over, you go over to your classmate to explain the incident.

Role one:

You feel that you have offended your classmate during the discussion although you don't mean it. You would like to explain things and set things right. What would you say?

Role two:

After the class is over, the classmate who disagreed with you comes over to talk to you as s/he felt that you were upset and offended. What would you say to him/her?

Situation three:

You borrow a book from your supervisor, who calls you and asks you to bring it back when you meet this week. When you come to the meeting, you forget to bring the book.

Role one:

Your professor asks you about the book he has told you to bring back. You completely forgot about it and you didn't bring the book back. What would you say to your professor?

Role two:

Your student tells you that s/he has forgotten to bring back the book. Your need the book badly. What would you say to your student?

Situation four:

The deadline for the final submission of your student's dissertation is close fast approaching. There is still one chapter you haven't corrected. You tell the student to stop by the office in four days to get the corrections. You get very busy in the meantime and you forget to correct the chapter. You only remember about it when the student shows up in the office.

Role one:

Your student comes to the appointment to take the correct chapter. You have forgotten to correct the chapter, and the student has come in vain. What would you say to him/her?

Role two:

Your professor tells you that he hasn't corrected the chapter you came for. You have a deadline for the submission of the thesis, and you need the corrections as soon as possible. What would you say to the professor when s/he tells you the chapter is not corrected?

Notes

[i] As Deutschmann (2003) explains, apologies can be used not only to address a past offense but to foreshadow an upcoming offense and disarm it. The discussion section below contains more details on the function of apologies.

[ii] There is a great deal of similarity between this taxonomy and the ones developed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983) and Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984).

[iii] In this situation, and throughout the situations, the participants use a Syrian Arabic expression, which is roughly equivalent to 'excuse me.' This expression is لا تآخزني. I categorize this expression under 'excuse me' in all the situations.

[iv] Initials are used to keep the participants anonymous.

[v] I use ritualistic in this context with the meaning of habitual. Not to be confused with the technical term used by Goffman (1967) and more recently Kádár and House (2020).

[vi] In the transcription, the dots … are meant to show overlap between turns. They may show in any position in the utterance.

[vii] In this discussion, I use 'conventionalized,' 'routinized,' and 'formulaic' interchangeably.