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## Bridging the pragmatic gap between native and non-native English instructors: A comparative analysis of apology patterns<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

The communicative movement, which emerged in the early 1970s, has been pivotal in shifting the focus of language study towards the contextual use of language. Within this movement, the field of pragmatics has come to the forefront, illuminating the intricate relationship between language and context. Pragmatics presents a unique challenge in language acquisition. It encompasses two critical dimensions: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. Pragmalinguistic knowledge involves the ability to employ specific linguistic forms to convey intended meanings within a given context. In contrast, sociopragmatic knowledge delves deeper, demanding an understanding of the temporal and societal norms that govern when and where linguistic forms should be employed. The successful execution of speech acts serves as a vivid illustration of this duality, requiring proficiency in both pragmalinguistic forms and adherence to sociocultural norms within a language community. The present study seeks to address this gap (with **the research aim**) by investigating the pragmatic competence of non-native English teachers in comparison to their native counterparts. We specifically focus on their speech act productions, aiming to shed light on any discernible differences. Our research **findings** carry broader **conclusions** and some **implications** for language pedagogy as they contribute to our understanding of the complex interplay between language acquisition, contextual factors, and pragmatic competence. This study investigates the pragmatic competence of non-native English teachers, comparing it to that of native English teachers, with a specific focus on their speech act productions. By shedding light on these differences, this research contributes to our understanding of the intricate interplay between language acquisition, context, and pragmatic competence. Ultimately, it underscores the importance of incorporating explicit pragmatics training in teacher development programs, equipping educators with the tools needed to foster comprehensive language proficiency.

**Keywords:** Apologies; pragmalinguistic knowledge; pragmatic gap; native & non-native comparison; speech acts.

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## Introduction

The communicative movement, which began in the early 70s, has primarily centered on language use in context, giving rise to the concept of 'pragmatics.' Pragmatics can be challenging to grasp, as it heavily relies on context. Success in pragmatics entails not only an understanding of linguistic nuances but also a grasp of sociopragmatic knowledge. Linguistic forms must serve specific purposes within a given context, and they must align with the cultural norms of the language community.

Cohen (2005) emphasizes the significance of this distinction, highlighting that effective speech acts necessitate both a command of pragmalinguistic forms and alignment with the sociocultural norms of the language community. Notably, sociopragmatic knowledge does not entirely hinge on overall language proficiency (McNamara & Roever, 2006). Proficiency in structural language forms does not guarantee competence in making pragmatic judgments, a skill that typically develops later (Barron, 2003). This gap isn't confined to language learners; even language teachers may exhibit deficiencies in pragmatic competence. Cohen (2005) notes, L2 pragmatics with an explicit focus... has traditionally been underrepresented in teacher development programs (p. 285). This suggests that while language teachers may excel in structural aspects of the language they teach, they may lack the necessary context to apply acquired language pragmatics effectively.

Consequently, this study delves into an investigation of the pragmatic competence of non-native English teachers in their speech act productions, comparing them to native English teachers.

## Pragmatic Competence

As opposed to Chomskyan linguistic competence, Hymes et al. (1979) introduced 'communicative competence,' heralding a significant transformation in foreign language teaching. Hymes et al. (1979) can be credited as a pioneer in integrating pragmatics into the field, proposing a novel approach to language instruction and evaluation.

Canale and Swain (1980) delineated communicative competence into grammatical competence (knowledge of phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics), sociolinguistic competence (structural rules in discourse), and strategic competence (communication strategies), with discourse competence later added by Canale (2014). Pragmatic competence was implicit in sociolinguistic competence, as Kasper (2001) noted, it had just not yet come to its own name.

Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic competence as the ability to effectively use language to achieve specific goals and achieve comprehension in context. Bachman (1991) distinguishes between pragmatic competence (related to the functions of linguistic structures in language use) and organizational competence (understanding and producing structurally sound sentences with cohesive devices).

Bachman's (1991) model is pivotal in language teaching, as it clarifies the relationships between sub-components of communicative competence, a limitation in earlier models like Hymes's (1979) and Canale and Swain's (1980). Pragmatic competence encompasses knowledge of pragmatic and sociolinguistic conventions for appropriate language function in specific situations.

Other definitions highlight the importance of appropriateness. For instance, Chapelle (2004) views it as the knowledge guiding speakers to choose linguistically appropriate responses in given contexts. Belz (2004) characterizes it as the ability to engage in proper communicative processes with the right people, in the right places, and at the right times.

Barron (2003) offers a comprehensive definition, encompassing knowledge of linguistic resources for specific illocutions, sequential aspects of speech acts, and appropriate contextual use of linguistic resources.

Thomas (1983) introduces 'pragmatic failure' to describe incompetence in pragmatic competence, particularly among non-native speakers. She asserts that pragmatically competent speakers navigate social norms effortlessly, whereas non-native speakers may struggle to be taken seriously when using pragmatically inappropriate language structures. Grammatical mistakes are more

forgivable because they pertain to surface structure, while pragmatic breakdowns affect the deeper structure of sentences. Thomas concludes that language teaching should go beyond mere training and sensitize learners to cross-cultural differences in linguistic politeness and truthfulness, making it truly educational.

### Apologies in English

Apology speech acts play a crucial role in interpersonal relationships by facilitating communication and preventing conflicts, thereby preserving or repairing relationships. These speech acts are culturally influenced and can vary significantly across different cultures.

In dictionary terms, an apology is defined as a statement expressing regret for a wrongdoing or offense (Kanık, 2010). Holmes (1997) categorizes these offenses into six types, including space, talk, time, possession, social gaffes, and inconvenience offenses. Offenders often need to apologize to manage or restore their social image (Meier, 2004), and the appropriateness of apology strategies depends on the cultural context (Harris et al., 2006).

Apology strategies are not straightforward and can lead to relationship breakdowns in cases of misunderstanding. They tend to be highly formulaic, particularly in English (Intachakra, 2004), with some strategies being more effective than others. For instance, Exline et al. (2007) highlight strategies like acknowledging wrongdoing, expressing remorse, and offering compensation as influential.

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) propose five key strategies within an apology speech act set: Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID), expression of responsibility, account of the situation, offer of repair, and promise for forbearance. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) present a similar set of strategies called CCSARP, including IFID, explanation, expression of responsibility, offer of repair, promise of forbearance, and apology intensifications. Peeters et al. (1998) identify alterers, head acts, and modifications as three categories of apology strategies, each with its own sub-strategies, which facilitate cross-cultural communication.

These foundational studies have paved the way for further research in the field, resulting in various studies (e.g., Cesur, 2010; Shahrokhi & Jan, 2012; Salehi, 2014; Nasiri & Forutan, 2015). Based on these studies, apology strategies likely to occur are demonstrated in Table 1:

**Table 1.** The strategies in apology speech acts

<b>HEAD ACTS</b>	
<b>IFID</b>	I am sorry
	I am afraid
	I apologize
	Forgive me
	Excuse me
<b>Expression of responsibility</b>	I assume all responsibility for missing the
<b>Account of situation</b>	I am sorry I missed the bus
<b>Offer of repair/reparation</b>	I will replace this with a new one
<b>Promise of forbearance</b>	It will never happen again
<b>Statement of fact</b>	The bus was late
<b>Minimize offense/brushing off incident as unimportant</b>	It doesn't look too bad
<b>Cost minimizer</b>	It is important for him to have this treatment
<b>Expressing gratitude / Thanking</b>	Thanks for waiting
<b>Distract from offense</b>	Let's look at those pictures
<b>Upgrading of offense</b>	Those papers look important
<b>Requests</b>	Please, how do you pronounce your name?
<b>Accepting blame</b>	I have nothing to excuse my behavior.

<b>Expressing self-deficiency</b>	I did not realize what I was doing
<b>Self-castigation / self-blame</b>	Oh, it is very dumb of me.
<b>Expression of embarrassment</b>	Gosh, I am so embarrassed
<b>Recognizing B as deserving apology</b>	You deserve an apology
<b>Expressing lack of intent</b>	I did not mean it
<b>Statement / question of dismay</b>	What should I do?
<b>Avoidance of discussion</b>	Let's not talk about it
<b>Concern for hearer</b>	Are you all right?
<b>Blaming victim</b>	You should not have stood in the middle
<b>Offending victim</b>	You are so dumb.
<b>Asking victim not to be angry</b>	Please, don't get mad at me
<b>Denial</b>	I don't think there is something wrong
<b>Laughing it off / distract with humor</b>	I'm all thumbs
<b>ALERTERS</b>	
<b>Surname</b>	Mr. Brown
<b>Title/role</b>	John
<b>Undetermined name</b>	X
<b>First name</b>	Professor
<b>MODIFICATIONS</b>	
<b>DOWNGRADERS</b>	
<b>Politeness markers</b>	Please
<b>Subjectivizer</b>	I suppose...
<b>Hedge</b>	Somehow
<b>Appealer</b>	Okay?
<b>Pause filler</b>	Well
<b>Understater</b>	A bit
<b>Cajoler</b>	You know / you see
<b>UPGRADERS</b>	
<b>Intensifier</b>	Very / terribly
<b>Emotional expression</b>	Oh, God
<b>Lexical Uptoner</b>	(Written underlining, exclamation, etc.)
<b>Expletive</b>	Damn
<b>Emphasis</b>	As soon as

(Kank, 2010; 59-60)

## Native Speaker Debate

### *Non-Native Foreign Language Teachers*

In recent years, the debate over the effectiveness of non-native foreign language teachers has grown due to their increasing presence in language classrooms (Lazaraton, 2004). Concerns center on whether non-native teachers possess the qualifications necessary to foster their students' language development, including language proficiency, cultural awareness, and pedagogical expertise (Lazaraton, 2004, p. 49). Furthermore, there is apprehension regarding non-native teachers' communicative competence, with doubts about their ability to meet learners' needs (p. 51).

Language teachers' cultural awareness and linguistic knowledge have become pivotal in the field, with scholars emphasizing their importance. For instance, Berns (1992) highlights the significance of understanding the social and cultural context in language development for effective teaching. However, non-native language teachers often lack specific knowledge of the target culture, particularly related to pragmatic appropriateness. Consequently, learners miss exposure to a full range of styles, structures, and speech acts necessary for acquiring native-like proficiency because non-

native teachers struggle to provide sufficient communication opportunities for pragmatic competence development (McKay, 2003, pp. 6-10).

Compared to native language teachers, non-native teachers may lack native-like intuitions regarding language use, particularly in terms of pragmatics. They also find it challenging to create language use opportunities in the relevant context. Some argue that non-native teachers excel at teaching beginners, as these learners do not yet require a deep understanding of pragmatics but, advanced learners benefit from native teachers who can more effectively foster pragmatic knowledge (Walker, 2006).

While many scholars acknowledge a disparity between non-native and native language teachers regarding language use, these are subjective viewpoints. Consequently, there is a need for a more comprehensive analysis of non-native teachers' pragmatic competence. Assessing their pragmatic competence based on native speaker norms raises questions about the validity of these norms, particularly in the context of English as both a foreign language and a lingua franca.

#### *Native Speaker Norms and the Language of English*

In recent years, English has seen a significant increase in usage due to factors like immigration, colonization, and globalization (Kuo, 2006). This usage encompasses native English speakers, non-native speakers, and those using English as a second language. Notably, the number of non-native English speakers now surpasses other groups, as English has become widely accepted as a lingua franca (Erling, 2005; Jenkins, 2009; Crystal, 2016).

With the changing role of English as a lingua franca, Seidlhofer (2005) argues that non-native speakers are increasingly influencing the language. This has created a paradox: while language teaching is traditionally aimed at achieving native-speaker standards, the definition of these norms is no longer clear.

This debate continues, with some scholars asserting that native speaker norms are well-defined (Kuo, 2006; Mollin, 2006), while others question their relevance in language teaching (Jenkins, 2009; McArthur, 2001; Seidlhofer, 2001). Critics like Barbara Seidlhofer and Jennifer Jenkins argue that imposing these norms on non-native speakers does not lead to native competence but rather results in a wide variety of Englishes spoken by both native and non-native speakers, raising doubts about the validity of native speaker norms. In contrast, proponents of these norms suggest that common linguistic features occurring in conversations should be scrutinized (Kuo, 2006). Consequently, several studies have explored the existence of shared linguistic features among English speakers worldwide (Kayman, 2004; Kuo, 2006; Mollin, 2006). The findings reveal that English learners often strive for native-like competence by adhering to native-speaker norms rather than developing their own non-native standards.

Overall, Kanik (2010) maintains that native-speaker norms should continue to serve as a model in language teaching, as learners of English tend to pursue native-like competence through these established norms rather than formulating their own non-native standards.

Keeping all these in mind, the primary aim of the present study is to identify whether native and non-native English instructors' production of the speech act set of apologies differs. In order to vary out proper analysis the following research questions are posed:

1. Are there differences between native and non-native English instructors;
  - a. in the use of individual/overall apology strategies?
  - b. in the length of their apology speech acts?
2. Are there differences between the native and non-native English teachers in the number of strategies they use for each situation?

## Methodology

### Participants

Two groups of participants took part in the present study. The first group is composed of 20 non-native English instructors working at a state university in Turkey, whose mean age is 31,5 ranging from 25 to 59, whereas the second group includes 11 native American English teachers originating from differing countries, whose mean age is 37,7 ranging from 22 to 60. All the necessary permissions and approval were taken from the Ethics Committee.

### Instruments

The data collection instrument used is a Discourse Completion Test with two sections. The first section gathers biographic information from participants to ensure they meet the study's specific target profile. The second section contains eight prompts, each requiring participants to provide an apology. These scenarios were developed by Kanık (2010) based on sociopragmatic elements, including the speaker's power, social distance between interlocutors, and the degree of imposition, as categorized by Peeters et al. (1998). The distribution of these sociopragmatic variables across the eight situations is detailed in Table 2:

**Table 2.** The distribution of sociopragmatic variables

	Sit. 1	Sit. 2	Sit. 3	Sit. 4	Sit. 5	Sit. 6	Sit. 7	Sit. 8
<b>Power</b>	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	-
<b>Distance</b>	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
<b>Imposition</b>	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-

### Data Analysis and Coding

Following data collection, the subjects' responses were meticulously analyzed by coding the strategies they employed. The coding process involved collaboration with another English instructor, a native speaker of American English, for accuracy.

The coding guide developed by Kanık (2010), based on the categorization by Peeters et al. (1998), was utilized. This guide categorizes strategies into major groups: alerters, head act strategies, downgraders, and upgraders. Importantly, Kanık (2010) grouped similar strategies together during guide development, resulting in 6 strategies in the alerters category, 27 in head act, 8 in downgraders, and 6 in upgraders. In total, 47 strategies were applied to each situation, resulting in the analysis of 376 strategies.

After coding, all data was entered into SPSS 20 to facilitate comparisons between native and non-native groups. Since much of the data is categorical, particularly the strategy use of participants, the chi-square test for independence was employed. Additionally, for analyzing parametric data such as speech length in words and the number of strategies used by subjects, independent samples t-test analysis was conducted.

## Findings

### Situation 1: Damaged Documents

Regarding Situation 1, in the head act strategy category, 13 out of 20 strategies were not employed by any participants, including Afraid, Forgive, Excuse, Promise of forbearance, Upgrading Offense, Justify Hearer, Lack of Intent, Regret, Concern for Hearer, Blaming victim, Denial, Distract with Humor, Atypical Action, and Pardon. Among the remaining strategies, only two showed statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.05.

The first significant strategy was Offer of Repair. All native speakers used this strategy, while only 13 out of 20 non-native teachers did so,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 7.220, p < .05$ . In terms of overall head

act strategies, a statistically significant difference was found between native and non-native groups,  $\chi^2(4, N = 31) = 15.371, p < .005$ .

For alerters in Situation 1, three out of six alerters were not used by either group, and the ones that were used showed minimal differences between native and non-native teachers, which were not statistically significant.

In the downgraders category, only three strategies were employed by both groups, but the differences in their usage were not statistically significant.

In the upgraders category, intensifier was the most commonly used strategy, with no significant difference between native and non-native teachers. However, only the strategy expletive showed a significant difference, with none of the native participants using it, while 5 out of 20 non-native teachers did,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.989, p < .05$ . In the overall distribution of strategies, no statistically significant difference was found between native and non-native groups,  $\chi^2(9, N = 31) = 13.448, p > .05$ .

Finally, an independent samples t-test analysis was conducted and the t-test analysis confirmed statistically significant differences in the mean values of apology length and the number of strategies used between native and non-native teacher groups.

In summary, the analysis revealed that the most common strategies employed in Situation 1 were sorry, offer of repair, intensifier, emotional expression, and emphasis in both native and non-native groups. Notably, non-native subjects differed from native teachers in their use of the expletive strategy during apologies.

## Situation 2: Car Accident

In Situation 2, concerning head act strategies, none of the participants used 9 strategies, including Excuse, Gratitude, Upgrading Offense, Requests, Justify Hearer, Blaming victim, Denial, Atypical Action, and Pardon. Among the remaining strategies, only three showed statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.05.

The first significant strategy was Account of situation, used by 6 out of 11 native speakers and only 4 out of 20 non-native teachers for apologizing in Situation 2,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 3.811, p = .05$ . The second significant strategy was Lack of Intent, employed by 4 out of 11 native teachers, but only one out of 20 non-native teachers used it,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 5.031, p < .05$ . In terms of overall head act strategies, no statistically significant difference was found between native and non-native groups,  $\chi^2(5, N = 31) = 5.582, p > .05$ .

The analysis of alerters in Situation 2 indicated that 3 out of 6 alerters were not used by either group, and the ones that were used showed minimal differences between native and non-native teachers. Only the first name strategy showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 5.031, p < .05$ . Overall distribution of alerters between the groups did not reveal any statistically significant difference.

For the downgraders category, all strategies except Hedge and Pause Fillers were employed by both groups, but no statistically significant difference was observed with these strategies between native and non-native English teachers. Only with Politeness Markers was there a statistically significant difference between native and non-native teachers,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.898, p < .05$ . The overall distribution of downgraders did not show any statistically significant difference.

In the upgraders category for Situation 2, intensifier was the most commonly used strategy by both groups, with no statistically significant difference. For the other strategies, statistical analysis showed no significant differences between the two groups, as they did not frequently employ these strategies while apologizing. In the overall distribution of strategies, no statistically significant difference was found between native and non-native groups,  $\chi^2(10, N = 31) = 15.487, p > .05$ .

Finally, independent samples t-test analysis was conducted and it revealed that the mean values of the length of the responses by subjects are proved to be statistically significant. That is to say, the length of apologies presented by native American teachers ( $M=36.55, SD=20.603$ ) is

significantly longer than those of non-native Turkish teachers ( $M=23,765$ ,  $SD=12,240$ ),  $t(29) = 2,197$ ,  $p = .035$ ,  $p < .05$ .

To sum up, the overall investigation indicated that the most common strategies for Situation 2 are sorry, account of situation, admission of fact, offer of repair, minimizing offence and preparator in both native and non-native groups. However, native participants differ from non-native teachers in that they also employ strategies of lack of intent and first name more frequently while apologizing in Situation 2.

### Situation 3: Burning Customer's Hand

In Situation 3, concerning head act strategies, none of the subjects used 14 strategies, including Afraid, Excuse, Promise of Forbearance, Minimizing Offense, Gratitude, Requests, Embarrassment, Justify Hearer, Statement of Dismay, Blaming victim, Denial, Distract with Humor, Atypical Action, and Pardon. Among the remaining strategies, only four showed statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.05.

The first significant strategy was Sorry; none of the native speakers used this strategy, whereas only 4 out of 20 non-native teachers used it for apologizing in Situation 3,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 3.826$ ,  $p = .05$ . The second significant strategy was Distract with Humor, employed by 3 out of 11 native teachers, while 16 out of 20 non-native teachers did not use this strategy to apologize for Situation 3,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 8.474$ ,  $p < .05$ . Most other strategies were minimally used by both groups, resulting in non-significant differences. In terms of overall head act strategies, no statistically significant difference was found between native and non-native groups,  $\chi^2(4, N = 31) = 8.976$ ,  $p > .05$ .

The analysis of alerters in Situation 3 indicated that only the Title/Role strategy was employed by both groups of subjects, but it was not statistically significant when these groups were compared. The overall distribution of alerters between groups did not reveal any statistically significant difference.

For the downgraders category, only Politeness Markers and Subjectivizer were employed by both groups of participants. However, Politeness Markers showed a statistically significant difference between the groups,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.898$ ,  $p < .05$ . Concerning the overall distribution of downgraders, native teachers' strategy use differed significantly from non-native teachers',  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 6.028$ ,  $p = .014$ ,  $p < .05$ .

In the upgraders category for Situation 3, Lexical Uptoner was the only strategy that showed a statistically significant difference between native and non-native teachers,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.898$ ,  $p = .027$ ,  $p < .05$ . The overall distribution of all strategies under the upgrader class did not present any statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups.

In conclusion, an independent samples t-test analysis was carried out and the analysis revealed that the length of apologies presented by native American participants ( $M=29.45$ ,  $SD=12.291$ ) was significantly longer than those of non-native Turkish subjects ( $M=19.05$ ,  $SD=12.249$ ),  $t(29) = 2.260$ ,  $p = .035$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Overall, the most common strategies for Situation 3 included sorry, offer of repair, distract, concern for hearer, emotional expression, intensifier, and expletive in both native and non-native groups. However, non-native participants differed from native teachers in that they also employed the strategy of title/role and lexical uptoner more frequently while apologizing in Situation 3.

### Situation 4: The Wrong Signature

In Situation 4, none of the subjects used 10 strategies in head acts, including Minimizing Offense, Upgrading Offense, Requests, Justify Hearer, Concern for Hearer, Blaming victim, Distract with humor, Atypical Action, and Pardon. Among the remaining strategies, none showed a statistically significant difference at a significance level of 0.05, as these strategies were minimally used by both native and non-native subjects. Overall, there was no statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups in terms of head act strategies,  $\chi^2(4, N = 31) = 6.071$ ,  $p > .05$ .



Analysis of alerters in Situation 4 suggested that First Name and Underdetermined Name strategies were not employed by any of the participants in both groups. The rest of the strategies were so minimally employed by the participants that no statistically significant difference was found. When the overall distribution of alerters between groups was examined, a statistically significant difference was revealed between native and non-native teachers,  $\chi^2(3, N = 31) = 12.267, p < .01$ .

In the downgraders category, strategies like Hedge, Appealer, Cajoler, and Pause Fillers were not employed by any of the participants. Regarding the other utilized strategies, as the ratings were not very high, no statistically significant difference was observed between native and non-native English teachers. As for the overall distribution of downgraders, no statistically significant difference between the two groups was found.

In the upgraders category, the most commonly used upgrader for Situation 4 was intensifier in both groups, but the ratings were not as high as in previous situations, resulting in no statistically significant difference. Overall, when considering the overall distribution of strategies for Situation 4, no statistically significant difference was found between native and non-native groups,  $\chi^2(6, N = 31) = 2.313, p > .05$ .

In terms of the length of apologies and the number of strategies utilized, an independent samples t-test analysis was conducted and the analysis revealed that the length of apologies presented by native American teachers ( $M=35.82, SD=13.288$ ) was significantly longer than those of non-native Turkish teachers ( $M=22.35, SD=12.820$ ),  $t(29) = 2.764, p = .013, p < .05$ .

In conclusion, the analysis showed that the most common strategies used by non-native teachers in Situation 4 were sorry, account of situation, politeness markers, and intensifier, whereas native participants most commonly employed account of situation and preparator while apologizing in Situation 4.

### **Situation: 5: Running Late**

In Situation 5, none of the subjects employed 15 strategies in head acts, including Afraid, Excuse, Admission of Facts, Offer of Repair, Promise of Forbearance, Upgrading Offense, Requests, Accepting blame, Embarrassment, Justify Hearer, Statement of Dismay, Regret, Blaming victim, Denial, Atypical Action, and Pardon. Among the remaining strategies, only one showed a statistically significant difference at a significance level of 0.05, which is Apologize. Four out of 11 participants from the native group employed this strategy, whereas none of the non-native teachers resorted to Apologize in Situation 5,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 9.421, p = .002$ . All the other strategies were minimally used by both groups of subjects, indicating non-significant differences. Overall, there was no statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups in terms of head act strategies,  $\chi^2(5, N = 31) = 8.019, p > .05$ .

Analysis of alerters in Situation 5 indicated that 2 out of six alerters were not employed at all by both groups of participants. The strategies that were employed while apologizing were so minimally used that no statistically significant difference was observed between responses of native and non-native teachers of English. However, strategies of Attention Getters and Underdetermined Name indicated statistically significant differences between the target groups,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 10.019, p < .05$ ;  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.400, p < .05$  respectively. When the overall distribution of alerters between groups was examined, they proved to significantly differ from each other,  $\chi^2(2, N = 31) = 6.181, p < .05$ .

In the downgraders category, all of the strategies except Hedge and Pause Surprise were employed by both groups of participants. Only with Cajoler, there was a statistically significant difference between native and non-native teachers,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.898, p < .05$ . Concerning the overall distribution of downgraders, no statistically significant difference was observed between the two groups.

In the upgraders category, intensifier was the most commonly employed strategy in both groups. Eight out of 11 native teachers and 5 out of 20 non-native teachers used this strategy, which

indicated statistically significant differences between the target groups,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 6.781, p > .01$ . Regarding the rest of the strategies, only repetition was used by 3 native and just 1 non-native teacher. The others were not employed at all. When the distribution of all upgraders was considered, native teachers significantly differed from non-native teachers in their use of upgraders,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 9.322, p = .009$ .

As for the overall analysis of all 4 categories of strategies, a statistically significant difference between American and Turkish teachers was observed,  $\chi^2(7, N = 31) = 16.614, p = .020$ . In other words, native teachers employed more different strategies than non-native teachers in situations like Situation 5 while providing apologies.

In conclusion, the overall investigation indicated that the most common strategies employed by both target groups were sorry, statement of facts, and distract. In addition to these, American teachers resorted to strategies of intensifiers and attention-getters, whereas Turkish teachers used the concern for hearer strategy for Situation 5.

### **Situation: 6: Knocking over a Vase and a Picture**

In Situation 6, none of the subjects used 16 strategies in head acts, including Afraid, Forgive, Excuse, Account of Situation, Admission of Facts, Statements of Facts, Minimizing Offense, Upgrading Offense, Requests, Embarrassment, Justify Hearer, Lack of Intent, Statement of Dismay, Concern for Hearer, Regret, and Atypical Action. Among the remaining strategies, only two showed a statistically significant difference at a significance level of 0.05.

The first significant strategy was Sorry. All of the native speakers used this strategy, whereas 12 out of 20 non-native teachers employed it for apologizing in Situation 6,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 8.483, p = .004$ . The rest of the strategies were minimally used by both groups of subjects, and no statistically significant difference was found between native and non-native teachers concerning these strategies. Overall, there was no statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups in terms of head act strategies.

Regarding alerters in Situation 6, only 2 out of six strategies were employed by the groups, and only one of them indicated statistically significant differences between native and non-native teachers, which is Underdetermined Name. Turkish teachers differed significantly from American teachers in their use of this strategy,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 6.821, p < .05$ . When the overall distribution of alerters between groups was investigated, no statistically significant difference was observed.

In the downgraders category, subjectivizer, appealer, and understater were the strategies employed by all both groups of participants in Situation 6. However, as they were minimally used by the participants, no statistically significant difference between groups was observed. Concerning the overall distribution of downgraders, no statistically significant difference was found to occur.

In the upgraders category, intensifier was the most commonly used upgrader in both groups, and no statistically significant difference was observed with this strategy. For the other strategies, statistical analysis showed that these two groups did not differ from each other while apologizing, as they did not employ these strategies frequently. However, strangely, the distribution of strategies under the upgraders category was found out to be statistically significant. When the overall distribution of strategies was considered, a statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups was revealed.

Finally, in order to investigate the length of apologies and the number of strategies utilized, independent samples t-test analysis was conducted. T-test analysis revealed that the mean values of the length of the responses by subjects were not statistically significant.

To sum up, the overall investigation indicated that the most common strategies used by both native and non-native teachers for Situation 6 are sorry, accepting blame, and intensifier. Native participants also employed underdetermined name, whereas non-native subjects utilized emphasis and expletives as well as the previously mentioned strategies.

### **Situation: 7: Dropping Books**

In Situation 7, none of the subjects used 15 strategies in head acts, including Afraid, Excuse, Account of Situation, Admission of Facts, Statements of Facts, Minimizing Offense, Gratitude, Upgrading Offense, Requests, Embarrassment, Justify Hearer, Blaming Victim, Denial, and Atypical Action. Among the other strategies, only four of them showed a statistically significant difference at a significance level of 0.05.

The first significant strategy was Forgive. None of the non-native teachers employed it, but two out of the 11 native teachers used this strategy in Situation 7, resulting in statistically significant differences,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.400, p = .036$ . The second statistically significant strategy was Accepting Blame. This strategy was employed by 6 out of 11 native teachers; however, out of 20 native teachers, three of them resorted to this strategy,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 5.285, p < .05$ . On the other hand, as most of the other strategies were minimally used by both groups of subjects, no statistically significant difference was observed. Overall, there was no statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups in terms of head act strategies in Situation 7.

Regarding alerters in Situation 7, 3 out of 6 alerters were not utilized at all by both groups of participants. The ones that were employed while apologizing were so minimally used that no statistically significant difference was observed between the responses of native and non-native teachers of English. When the overall distribution of alerters between groups was investigated, no statistically significant difference was revealed.

In the downgraders category, Politeness Markers, Subjectivizer, Understater, and Cajoler were the strategies used by both groups of participants, and the rest of the strategies under the downgrader category were not employed in Situation 7 at all. However, as the ratings were not so high, no statistically significant difference was observed with these strategies between native and non-native English teachers. Concerning the overall distribution of downgraders, no statistically significant difference was found to occur.

In the upgraders category, emotional expression was the most commonly used upgrader in both groups, and the second most commonly employed strategy was intensifier; however, no statistically significant difference was observed with this strategy. For the other strategies, statistical analysis showed that these two groups did not differ from each other while apologizing, as they did not employ these strategies frequently. Regarding the overall distribution of upgraders, the analysis revealed non-significant differences between American and Turkish teachers. When the overall distribution of strategies was considered, no statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups was found.

Finally, in order to examine the length of apologies and the number of strategies utilized, independent samples t-test analysis was conducted. Independent samples t-test analysis revealed that the mean values of the length of the responses by subjects were not statistically significant.

To sum up, the overall investigation indicated that the most common strategies used for Situation 7 are sorry, distract, emotional expression, and intensifier in both native and non-native groups. However, non-native participants differ from native teachers in that they also employ strategies of offer of repair and understater much more frequently while apologizing in Situation 7. Instead of these strategies, native teachers use accepting blame.

### **Situation: 8: Keeping a Customer Waiting**

In Situation 8, none of the subjects used 15 strategies in head acts, including Forgive, Excuse, Account, Admission of Facts, Minimizing Offense, Upgrading Offense, Accepting Blame, Embarrassment, Justify Hearer, Lack of Intent, Statement of Dismay, Blaming Victim, Denial, Distract with Humor, and Atypical Action. Among the other strategies, only three of them showed a statistically significant difference at a significance level of 0.05.

The first significant strategy was Gratitude; 5 out of 11 native speakers used this strategy, whereas none of the non-native teachers used it for apologizing in Situation 8,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) =$

312.234,  $p = .000$ . The second statistically significant strategy was Distract. This strategy was employed by 7 out of 11 native teachers; however, out of 20 native teachers, 5 of them used this strategy  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.467, p < .05$ . On the other hand, most of the other strategies were minimally used by both groups of subjects, resulting in non-significant differences.

When the overall head act strategies were considered, a statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups was observed,  $\chi^2(3, N = 31) = 15.371, p = .002, p < .05$ . That is to say, native teachers differed significantly from non-native teachers in their use of all head act strategies in Situation 8.

Apart from that, the analysis of alerters in Situation 8 showed that 3 out of 6 alerters were not utilized at all by both groups of participants. The ones that were employed while apologizing were so minimally used that no statistically significant difference was observed between the responses of native and non-native teachers of English. Nevertheless, just the strategy of underdetermined name showed statistically significant differences between native and non-native teachers,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 6.821, p = .009$ . When the overall distribution of alerters between groups was investigated, no statistically significant difference was revealed.

The next category is the downgraders, and only the strategies of politeness markers, subjectivizer, and cajoler were employed by both groups of participants in their responses to Situation 8. The rest of the strategies were not used at all. Among the utilized strategies, only the subjectivizer indicated a statistically significant difference between American and Turkish teachers,  $\chi^2(1, N = 31) = 4.400, p < .05$ . Concerning the overall distribution of downgraders, no statistically significant difference was found to occur.

As for the last category analyzed, upgraders, the most commonly used upgrader was lexical uptoner for non-native teachers and intensifier for native teachers; however, no statistically significant difference was observed with the intensifier strategy. Not the strategy of intensifier but lexical uptoner revealed statistically significant differences between the target groups,  $\chi^2(6, N = 31) = 3.826, p = 0.50$ . For the other strategies, statistical analysis showed that these two groups did not differ from each other while apologizing, as they did not employ these strategies frequently.

As for the overall analysis of upgraders, no statistically significant difference was observed between native and non-native teachers in terms of the use of upgraders in Situation 8. When the overall distribution of strategies was considered, a statistically significant difference between native and non-native groups was revealed,  $\chi^2(6, N = 31) = 15.210, p = 0.19, p < .05$ .

Finally, in order to investigate the length of apologies and the number of strategies utilized, an independent samples t-test analysis was run. T-test analysis revealed that the mean values of the length of the responses by subjects were not statistically significant.

In summary, the overall investigation indicated that the most common strategies for Situation 8 are sorry and distract in both native and non-native groups. However, native participants differ from non-native teachers in that they also employ the strategy of gratitude more frequently while apologizing in Situation 8. Instead of gratitude, Turkish teachers preferred to use the lexical uptoner in their apologies.

### Discussion & Conclusion

The overall findings highlight significant differences between Turkish and American instructors in their language use. These differences raise important questions about the urgency of achieving native-like English proficiency, especially in a global context where non-native speakers increasingly use English. While some argue that these differences are normal and the concept of native-like English may be evolving due to the growing number of non-native English speakers, this argument requires further scientific research, which is currently limited.

Additionally, the attitudes of teachers and language learners play a crucial role in shaping language proficiency standards. Research suggests that both teachers and learners often aspire to native-like proficiency. Language learners tend to seek exposure to native models to achieve native-

like competence, emphasizing the need for non-native English teachers to provide accurate language models.

However, the present study reveals a significant difference between native and non-native English instructors in terms of their apology use. Addressing this gap may require specific actions, as cultural and pragmatic knowledge are essential aspects of language teaching proficiency, alongside language skills, pedagogical knowledge, and teaching abilities. Integrating pragmatic knowledge into language teaching is particularly important when considering the teacher's role as a facilitator or authority in the classroom.

To bridge the divide between native and non-native English teachers in terms of their pragmatic knowledge, several approaches can be considered. Current teachers may benefit from in-service training that delves deeply into language use within specific contexts. Teacher training programs should also be adapted to include courses that focus on the pragmatic functions of language. Furthermore, language teaching programs should be revised to incorporate pragmatic information into the contextual teaching of the target language. This comprehensive approach can help enhance the overall language proficiency and teaching abilities of non-native English instructors, ultimately benefiting both educators and learners.

The main purpose of the current study was to identify whether native and non-native English instructors' production of the speech act set of apologies differs. Concerning the findings, it could be acknowledged that non-native English teachers differ from native teachers in their use of apology strategies. That is to say, non-native English teachers do not meet the native norms with regard to their knowledge of pragmatics. Since language learners are prone to prefer native-like competence as their top proficiency, the findings of the present study call for an urgent need for modifications on current teacher training programs.

Overall, it should be claimed that this study was just an attempt to provide insight into differences between native and non-native language teachers with respect to pragmatic knowledge. Further studies, by making some improvements and changes on the design of research might shed light on the issue of pragmatics with a comparison of native and non-native speakers.

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