

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The present study aims to investigate the sociopragmatic (perception) and pragmalinguistic (production) competencies of the speech act of apology by Jordanian second language speakers (JL2Ss) compared to that of Jordanian non-English speakers (JNESSs) and English native speakers (ENSs). Pragmatic transfer from first language (L1) to second language (L2) was investigated at both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic levels. In this respect, this chapter discusses the following: research background, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, conceptual framework, significance of the study, limitations of the study and definition of terms.

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Speech acts have traditionally been regarded as one of the major areas of pragmatic studies in second language research (Levinson, 1983). Searle (1969) postulates that

speech acts are the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication such as requesting, apologizing, thanking, complaining, complimenting and others.

The study of speech as a cultural phenomenon has shown that different communities vary in their production and interpretation of linguistic behaviours (Bella, 2014; Ifantidou, 2014; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; McNamara, 2006). Olshtain and Cohen (1991) explain that every language develops a set of patterned utterances that speakers use regularly to perform a variety of functions. Moreover, speech act theory is developed to identify the aim of the language in use and its underlying meaning (Cutting, 2008; Searle, 1969).

This present study is only interested in the speech act of apology, which is defined as “a speech act intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially mal-affected by a violation” (Olshtain, 1989.p. 165). Apology has received considerable attention in the field of sociolinguistics due to its significant importance as a remedial interchange that aims to re-establish social harmony and equilibrium after a real or virtual offence has been performed (Al-Sobh, 2013; Bella, 2014; Binasfour, 2014; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1981; Kousar, 2015). Speech acts research from cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP henceforth) or inter-language pragmatics’ (ILP henceforth) perspectives could be very significant since they contribute by shedding light on the universal principles that govern the speech act production. Further, the linguistic approach to the study of speech acts could provide a detailed description of the interactional styles corresponding to different speech communities (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Roever, 2011; Savić, 2014).

Thus, ILP, which is the focus of the present study, is a part of pragmatic studies that focus on the acquisition and the use of the pragmatic norms in second language (L2 henceforth) and how second language speakers (L2Ss henceforth) produce and comprehend speech acts over time (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Blum-Kulka (1993) explains that ILP is the study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic patterns in a second language with emphasis on the pragmatic research concerned with people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context. Although speech acts are universal concepts embedded in all languages, their usage varies cross-culturally (Al-Issa, 1998; Banikalef & Maros, 2013; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Olshtain & Cohen, 1991).

Recently, researchers of ILP of various speech acts have paid great attention to the importance of pragmatics in second language acquisition i.e. the need to report the rules that govern the use of language in context so as to avoid any possible misinterpretation and miscommunication across cultures (Al-Issa, 1998; Al-Momani 2009; Al-Zumor, 2011; Banikalef & Maros, 2013; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Fukushima, 1996; Mirzaei, Roohani & Esmaili, 2012; Nureddeen, 2008; Trosborg, 1995). Not only do L2Ss need to master the grammar of the target language, they also need to recognize the rules of speaking that govern the specific target language in a specific context (Ifantidou, 2014; Thomas, 1983; Trosborg, 2010; Yates, 2010). L2Ss who have considerable grammatical competence in the target language but lack the sociolinguistic awareness related to this language may encounter communication difficulties with the native speakers due to their lack of the target language's pragmatic knowledge (Ifantidou, 2014).

The lack of pragmatic knowledge might lead to what is called a pragmatic failure, which refers to the inability to understand what is meant by what is said, thus, impeding the success of cross-cultural communication (Al-Issa 1998; Al-Momani, 2009; Al-Zumor, 2011; Banikalef & Maros, 2013; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Fukushima, 1996; Mirzaei et al., 2012; Nureddeen, 2008; Trosborg, 1995; Thomas, 1983). This failure is due to the cultural differences among different cultures with different social and conceptual norms. It is argued that pragmatic failure occurs when the L2Ss pragmatically transfer their native language forms and concepts when performing the target language (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Beebe & Zhang-Waring, 2001; Liu & Ou, 2004; Olshtain, 1983).

This pragmatic transfer is explained by Kasper (1992) as “the influence exerted by L2Ss of the knowledge of languages and cultures of their L1 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information” (p.207). Wolfson (1989) explains that unlike grammatical errors that are expected from L2Ss, pragmatic failure is more difficult to be detected and may result in misjudgement in cross-cultural interaction. Thus, it is undoubtedly very essential for L2Ss to have pragmatic knowledge and to be pragmatically competent so as to avoid any possible pragmatic failure.

Taguchi (2009) argues that pragmatic competence is the ability to use language appropriately in context and the ability to convey and interpret meaning appropriately in a social situation that “has become an object of inquiry in a wide range of disciplines including linguistics, applied linguistics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, communication research, and cross-cultural studies” (p.1). Pragmatic

competence can be divided into two parts: pragmalinguistic competence (production) and sociopragmatic competence (perception). Pragmalinguistic competence is the knowledge of forms and strategies to convey particular speech acts i.e. the linguistic resources (including strategies such as direct, indirect and hedging) to convey communicative acts and perform pragmatic functions (Kasper & Rose, 2001; Kasper & Roever, 2005).

Sociopragmatic competence (perception) is the knowledge of the use of these forms and strategies in an appropriate context (Kasper & Rose, 2001; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Further, sociopragmatic competence refers to “the social perceptions underlying participants’ interpretation and performance of communicative action” (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2) i.e. the knowledge of the relationships between communicative action and power, social distance, imposition, and the social conditions and consequences of what you do, when, and to whom.

To be pragmatically competent, L2Ss should map their sociopragmatic knowledge on pragmalinguistic forms and strategies and be able to use their knowledge under the constraints of a communicative situation (Ifantidou, 2014; McNamara, 2006). Liu and Ou (2004) point out that pragmalinguistic failure is the linguistic deficiency caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force, while sociopragmatic failure results from a lack of sociocultural knowledge i.e. L2Ss are unaware of the cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour.

There is a pressing need for improving the pragmatic awareness of L2Ss to avoid pragmatic failure and to achieve politeness, which refers to a mixture of formal as well as functional features accompanying inherently face-threatening speech acts such as apology in order to minimize their potential face threat (Al-Issa, 1998; Banikalef & Maros, 2013; Bardovi-Harli, 2015; Blum-Kulka, 1991; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998; Ifantidou, 2014; Liu & Ou, 2004; Mohammad-Bagheri, 2015; Trosborg, 2010). Therefore, the change of emphasis from grammatical to communicative competence in language use is held to be the contributing factor of the rising need for pragmatic awareness (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972).

The importance of pragmatic competence could be explained with reference to context, for example in Japan saying “I am sorry” might be sufficient in many situations, whereas in other cultures (e.g. Jordan) an explanation for the offense might be required (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008; Blum-Kulka, 1991; Trosborg, 2010).

ILP studies of speech acts have revealed that even L2Ss who are proficient in English face problems in applying speech acts and have insufficient pragmatic competence when interacting with native speakers of the target language (Abdulrahman, 2012; Al-Issa, 1998; Arghamiri & Sadighi, 2013; Banikalef & Maros, 2013; Chen, 1993; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981; Farashaiyan & Hua, 2012; Tabatabaei & Farnia, 2015). The variations of speech act of apology by L2Ss and ENSs have been investigated by many researchers including Yemeni Arabic and American English (Alfattah, 2010), Sudanese Arabic (Nureddeen, 2008), Thai and American English (Thijitang, 2010), between Arabs and American and British English speakers (Al-

Zumor, 2011) and Chinese and English (Hou, 2006). However, in Jordanian context, research on speech act of apology is limited and little is known about JL2Ss' sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence. The following section will address in detail the problem statement of the present study.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Speech acts have been traditionally considered as a major problematic area for English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) speakers and is one of the most compelling notions in the study of language use. Moreover, speech acts are depicted as difficult tasks faced by the non-native speakers of the target language due to the complexity and variability of these speech acts that require the non-native speakers to understand the multiple functions they serve (Blum-Kulka, 1991; Lin, 2014; Trosborg, 2010).

Bachman (1990) argues that pragmatic competence is one of the vital components of communicative competence. Hence, L2Ss have to pay more attention to the cultivation of pragmatic competence in order to improve communicative competence so as to conduct decent, effective and successful cross-cultural communication. To apologize in a second language appropriately is a complex task, as L2Ss have to be able to first recognize the occurrence of an event that calls for an apology to assess the severity of the offense and the weight of contextual variables such as power and distance and to select appropriate output strategies (Bergman and Kasper, 1993).

Hence, L2Ss should be pragmatically competent and avoid sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic failure. Sociopragmatic failure occurs when the speaker demonstrates no concern for the social status and identity of the listener during the conversation, or the speaker may produce pragmatic failure by addressing a remote person or someone of a higher social status with an intimate form. On the other hand, pragmalinguistic failure occurs when the speaker takes for granted that the listener is able to understand what the speaker says, but in fact the listener commits pragmatic failure by deducing the meaning of the speaker's utterance incorrectly (Bu, 2011; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Tang & Zhang, 2009; Thomas, 1983; Yule, 2014; Ziran, 1988).

It is noted that the majority of EFL speakers do not acquire pragmatics of the target language on their own. Therefore, pragmatic instruction has become a crucial component in achieving the communicative competence that is widely recognized as a major pedagogical goal in second or foreign language teaching (Arsie, 2012; Bardovi-Harlige, 2010; Bataineh, 2014). Hence, incorporating pragmatic instruction in the EFL curricula should be based on systematic investigations of the speech acts by using empirically established procedures (Al-Momani, 2009; Arsie, 2012; Bataineh, 2014; Farahian & Rezaee, 2012; Ifantidou, 2014).

In Jordanian context, researchers such as Al-Momani, (2009), Al-Shboul (2013), Al-Adaileh (2007) and Bataineh (2008) indicated that research concerning JL2Ss' pragmatic competence is limited and thus, little is known about JL2Ss' pragmatic competence. Although Jordanian students begin studying English in Grade 1 (six years old) in primary schools and continue until grade 12 (18 years old) in

secondary schools, they still encounter problems in communicating effectively with English native speakers. This problem has been observed by many researchers who affirmed that Jordanians lack the necessary pragmatic competence which consequently hinder them from communicating efficiently in the target language (Al-Khresheh, 2010; Al-Momani, 2009; Al-Shboul, 2013; Bataineh, 2014).

There is a lack of studies that deal with the difficulties that JL2Ss experience when performing speech acts including apology. This study supports the argument that learning a language is not merely acquiring a simple understanding of grammar of the target language, rather, L2Ss must be able to use the language beyond the classroom as well and in variety of situations where politeness and tact help to sooth tension and open door for successful cross-cultural communication (Ayden, 2013; Cohen, 2010; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010; Ifantidou, 2014).

Pragmatic competence is considered as a major component of cross-cultural communication yet little attention has been paid to either teach it or test it in the Jordanian context. There are studies that have been conducted in Jordan to investigate lexical, syntactical and phonological errors made by the Jordanian speakers of English (Al-Khresheh, 2010; Rababah, 2003; Zayed, 2014). Findings of these studies revealed that Jordanian speakers of English encounter problem in both speaking and writing. Moreover, it was found that the speakers' knowledge about how conversations work and the specific socio-cultural norms and practices for the target language is lacking in most of the English language textbooks that are used in the learning institutions in Jordan (Al-Khresheh, 2010; Bataineh, 2014; Rababah 2003; Zayed, 2014).

It is noteworthy to mention that these English language textbooks are designed by native speakers of English and evaluated and adapted by Jordanian authors who are attached to Ministry of Education in Jordan. Examples of the English textbooks which are used in the institutions in Jordan are Action Pack 12 for twelve grade by Haines (2010) and Action Pack 9 for nine grade by Paris (2013).

Rababah (2003) indicates that students in Jordan learn English in their home country where the native language is Arabic, and the only way to learn English in Jordan is through formal instruction i.e. in classroom where the English teachers are native speakers of Arabic with little opportunity to practice English through natural interaction in the target language. He adds that even the English language graduates in Jordan encounter difficulties in using English in communication and they often lack the necessary vocabulary they need to get their meaning across during actual communication.

Consequently, they cannot keep the interaction going for an extended period of time. In addition, when JL2Ss engage in conversation with English native speakers, difficulty may arise due to their lack of mastery of the conversational norms involved in the perception and production of speech act (Rababah, 2003; Zayed, 2014). Such conversational difficulties may in turn cause break-down in cross-cultural communication. It is argued that Jordanians' EFL curriculums lack the inclusion of pragmatic aspects of language teaching and pragmatic aspect of language and pragmatic-focused instruction. According to Al-Adaileh (2007), many Jordanian students pursue their high studies in England. Therefore, equipping the JL2Ss with the appropriate pragmatic knowledge might help them to communicate effectively in

international communication settings where English is widely used (Al-Momani, 2007; Al-Shboul, 2012; Bataineh, 2015; Rababah, 2003; Zayed, 2014).

Pragmatic knowledge is not viewed as an aspect of communication skills in Jordanian educational curriculums, despite the significance of such skills in communication with ENSs (Al-Issa, 1998; Al-Momani, 2009; Al-Shboul, 2014; Bataineh, 2006; Sa'ida & Al-Sayyed, 2015). There is a rising need for research on JL2Ss' pragmatic competence in which the findings of such research may be used to identify the potential problems and provide educated solutions to the possible pragmatic challenges faced by JL2Ss in Jordan (Al-Momani, 2009; Bataineh, 2014; Farahian & Rezaee, 2012; Ifantidou, 2013) and thus, raise JL2Ss' pragmatic awareness (Al-Issa, 2003; El-Khalil, 1998; Banikalef & Maros, 2013; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008; Bataineh, 2006; Bataineh & Aljamal, 20014; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998).

The literature of apology in English by JL2Ss show that most of the studies addressed the pragmalinguistic competence (production) of JL2Ss in performing apology (Al-Adaileh, 2007; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008; El-Khalil, 1998; Hussein & Hammouri, 1998). These studies particularly investigated the similarities and differences between JNESs and ENSs in the production of the apology strategies i.e. pragmalinguistic competence and the strategies used between genders in both cultures. Other important aspects such as the sociopragmatic competence (perception), of speech acts of apology by JL2Ss and pragmatic transfer of apology strategies from L1 to L2 were not major focus of these studies. According to Chen (2006), sociopragmatics is viewed as very significant to the investigation of a

culture of a specific language, that is, it goes beyond what the speakers say to fulfil certain linguistic function to investigate the attitudes, values and weights that let them choose these linguistic strategies.

Additionally, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, very few studies investigated the influence of pragmatic transfer of apology strategies from L1 to L2 and the influence of social power and social distance context-external variables on the context-internal variables such as the severity, possibility, difficulty and likelihood of apology acceptance. Pragmatic transfer is thought to have a negative impact on the performance of speech acts in L2 and may cause a cultural misunderstanding among interlocutors from different cultures (Kasper, 1992; Takahashi, 1996; Thomas, 1983). Moreover, previous research on speech act of apology in Jordanian context has some methodological shortcomings. Most of which employed a single instrument, i.e. DCT. Therefore, for this particular study, triangulation method by means of DCT, SRQ and semi-structured interviews are used in order to overcome the shortcomings of DCT and to enhance the reliability of the current research.

Speech acts research in Jordanian context revealed that even JL2Ss who have high English proficiency still lack the pragmatic competency and still commit pragmatic transfer (Al-Momani, 2007; Al-Shboul, 2012; Bataineh, 2006; Rababah, 2003; Zayed, 2014). Thus, this particular study focuses on proficient JL2Ss and findings of the study could further shed more light on the relation between English proficiency and pragmatic transfer by JL2Ss.

Thus, in order to reduce and avoid pragmatic failure, JL2Ss should have both sociopragmatic as well as pragmalinguistic competencies of L2 (Blum-Kulka, 1991; Ifantidou, 2014; Liu & Ou, 2004; Trosborg, 2010; Yates, 2010). This study investigates the speech act of apology i.e. the sociopragmatic (perception) and pragmalinguistic (production) competence and negative pragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 by JL2Ss in the perception and production aspects of apology.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To investigate the perception of apology
 - 1.a. To investigate the similarities and differences in the perception of apology by JL2Ss, JNESs and ENSs in terms of context-internal variables below:
 1. The assessment of the severity of the offence
 2. The assessment of the possibility of the speaker apology
 3. The assessment of difficulty of the apology by the speaker
 4. The assessment of the likelihood of apology acceptance
 1. b. To investigate how the context-external social variables: (a) social power (high, equal, and low) ; and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) influence JL2Ss' perception of the context-internal variables compared to that of JNESs and ENSs.
 1. c. To investigate whether there is negative sociopragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 in JL2Ss perception of the contextual variables or not
 1. d. To investigate the JL2Ss' justifications for their perception rating given by them

2. To investigate the production of apology

2.a. To investigate the similarities and differences in the production of apology by JL2Ss, JNESs and ENSs.

2.b. To investigate how the context-external social variables: (a) social power (high, equal, and low) ; and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) influence JL2Ss' production of apology strategies compared to that of JNESs and ENSs.

2.c. To investigate whether there is negative pragmalinguistic transfer from L1 to L2 in JL2Ss' production of apology or not

2.d. To investigate the JL2Ss' justifications for their apology production given by them

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study is based on a major assumption in ILP research, which argues that perception and production of an illocutionary act by L2Ss is influenced by their L1 and often deviates from L2 rules of speech and cause pragmatic failures (Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper & Rose, 2002). The perception of speech acts has an influence on speech acts production, therefore, it is essential to find out how JL2Ss perceive the social variables and how these perceptions are reflected in their output strategies (Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Kasper & Dahl, 1991). To achieve the research objectives, the following questions are raised:

RQ1.a. What are the similarities and differences in the perception of apology by JL2Ss, JNESs and ENSs in terms of context-internal variables below?

1. The assessment of the severity of the offence

2. The assessment of the possibility of the speaker apology
3. The assessment of difficulty of the apology by the speaker
4. The assessment of the likelihood of apology acceptance

RQ1.b. How do the context-external social variables: (a) social power (high, equal, and low) ; and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) influence JL2Ss' perception of the context-internal variables compared to that of JNESs and ENSs?

RQ1.c. Is there negative sociopragmatic transfer from L1 to L2 in JL2S's perception of the contextual variables?

RQ1.d. What are JL2Ss' justifications for their perception rating given by them?

Questions related to production of apology

RQ 2.a. What are the similarities and differences in the production of apology by JL2Ss, JNESs and ENSs?

RQ 2.b. How do the context-external social variables: (a) social power (high, equal, and low) ; and (b) social distance (familiar and unfamiliar) influence JL2Ss' production of apology strategies compared to that of JNESs and ENSs?

RQ 2.c. Is there negative pragmalinguistic transfer from L1 to L2 in the production of speech act of apology?

RQ.2.d. What are JL2Ss' justifications for their apology production given by them?

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the present study includes speech act theory, politeness theory, cultural dimensions of individualism vs. collectivism, classifications of apology strategies, pragmatic competence and pragmatic transfer. The theory of

speech acts as presented by British philosopher John Austin (1962) has been actively discussed in philosophy, anthropology, sociolinguistics and linguistics. The theory assumes that the minimal units of human interaction are not linguistic expressions, but rather, a certain kind of acts, such as apologizing, requesting, refusing and others. Austin (1962) explains that communication is a matter of doing things in which he realizes that some utterances communicate meanings and perform actions simultaneously. He developed a system to distinguish between three types of acts that are simultaneously performed through uttering something: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act. The locutionary acts are performance of an act of saying something that is what the utterance is about; for instance, when someone says *I'm thirsty*; this utterance is a statement shows that this speaker experiences a thirst. This statement also could be understood as a request for someone to bring water to the speaker which is called the illocutionary act; it is also called illocutionary force. The last component is the perlocutionary act which is performed with the intention of achieving some kind of effect on the hearer by means of uttering the sentence. For the above example, the perlocutionary act will be performed by the hearer after hearing the sentence *I'm thirsty*, the hearer might offer water or something to the speaker to drink.

Regarding politeness theory, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory has influenced most of the theoretical and analytical works related to politeness. They based their theory on Goffman's (1967) notion of face. According to this theory, there are two aspects of people's feelings involved with face in the process of communication. These two aspects are positive face and negative face. In one hand,

the positive face is the desire of the individual to be liked or approved of. Negative face, on the other hand, is the desire of the individual not to be imposed on. Brown and Levinson (1987) proposed some Face Threatening Acts (FTAs henceforth).

These acts are categorized into four kinds of acts: acts threaten the hearer negative face such as requesting, ordering, advising. Acts threaten the hearer positive face such as complaining, criticizing and disagreeing. Acts threaten the speaker negative face such as accepting an offer or thanks. The main focus of the present study is on acts that threaten the speaker negative face which is apologizing.

As for the cultural dimension of individualism vs. collectivism, it is considered as one of the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (1991). This dimension is the most broadly adopted one in investigating the similarities and differences in cross-cultural communication (Al-Adaileh, 2007; Al-Shboul, 2013, Bella, 2014). In the present study, collectivism is characterized by individual subordination of personal goals to the goals of the collective groups while individualism is characterized by subordination of a group's goals to an individual's own goals Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (1991). The basic conviction of people in collectivist cultures is that the smallest unit of survival is in the collectivist power. On the other hand, in individualist cultures the smallest unit of survival is the individuals themselves (Triandis, Brislin & Hui 1988).

Plethora of classifications for speech act of apology has been proposed by many researchers. In the present study, Olshtain and Cohen (1983) apology classification model is used to investigate JL2Ss' production of speech act of apology

for the following reasons: first, this model has been used in the cornerstone project in the field of second language pragmatics i.e. A Cross-cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP henceforth) by Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984). Second, this model could be considered as a universal classification model since it has been successfully employed and tested on several languages in CCSARP project and in Arabic context.

Another significant concept in the realm of speech act research employed by the researcher in this study is called pragmatic competence, which is defined as “the speakers’ knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness, which dictate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts” (Koike, 1989, p. 279). Further, Thomas (1983) breaks down pragmatic competence into sociopragmatic competence (perception) which is related to the use of the proper speech act in the appropriate context and pragmalinguistic competence (production) which refers to the use of appropriate language to realize a particular speech act.

Pragmatic transfer is also referred to in the present study; the focus is put on negative pragmatic transfer due to its potential impact for leading to pragmatic failure. Similar to classification of apology strategies, pragmatic transfer also has numerous definitions proposed by different researchers. However, the present study adopts Kasper’s (1992) definition to pragmatic transfer since it deals with sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic transfer. Kasper (1992) defines pragmatic transfer as “the influence exerted by learner’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information” (p. 207).

Pragmatic transfer is argued to have two different levels: sociopragmatic and

pragmalinguistic transfer (Thomas, 1983). Sociopragmatic transfer is evident when the social perceptions underlying L1 users' interpretation and performance of linguistic action in L2 are influenced by their assessment of subjectively equivalent L1 context. Pragmalinguistic transfer is the NNSs' application of first language linguistic form to L2 that naturally influences the illocutionary force or the degree of politeness of the interlanguage utterance. The present study investigated the negative sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic transfer.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study derives its significance from several aspects that it addresses. First, the present study does not only investigate what the speakers say in a given situation, but rather, it goes beyond this to investigate why the language is used in specific ways. To understand this, the study examines the underlying perceptive rules, beliefs and values of both British and Jordanian cultures. Sociopragmatics examines the implicit operational rules and sociopragmatic patterns embedded in language use in deeper level (Chen, 1996; Mey, 2007).

Second, the present study is expected to contribute to the increasing body of research that support the need for pragmatic instruction by providing detailed assessment of JL2Ss' pragmatic abilities. Previous studies (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, Mossman & Vellenga, 2015, 1996; Bataineh, 2014, Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, Robinson, 1992) indicated that the pragmatic competence of L2Ss would not be concomitant with their language proficiency; specifically, even L2Ss with high language proficiency would still commit pragmatic mistakes.

Third, apology is considered as one of the most important speech acts (Searle, 1969). Speech acts are classified into five main categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Apology is under the category of expressives which plays a key role in human interaction as a face saving act of speech (Brown & Levinson, 1978). The significance of investigating the speech act of apology also stems from its role as a remedial act of speech that aims to save the speaker's face after committing an offence on the hearer (Al-Issa, 2003; Brown & Levinson, 1978; Goffman, 1971; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983).

Olshtain and Cohen (1983) refer to apology as a speech act occurring between two parties in which one of the parties expects or calls for a compensation or explanation because of an offence committed by the other. In that situation, one has a choice to apologize or deny the responsibility for the offence that is perceived to be made and if apology is done, it should be made appropriately and politely (Blum-Kulka, 1992; Brown & Levinson, 1978; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983). Therefore, it is important to investigate the speech act of apology due to its significant role for maintaining a good relationship between interlocutors across cultures.

Fourth, grammatical competence has usually been emphasised more than pragmatic competence in Jordan. It is argued that grammatical competence is not a criterion to measure the JL2Ss' pragmatic competence (Al-Issa, 1998; Bataineh, 2006; Blum-Kulka, 1991). It is pointed out that even the advanced JL2Ss often show pragmatic incompetence (Al-Issa, 2003). In the case of JL2Ss in Malaysia, the realization of speech act of apology in English is chosen as the indicator of JL2Ss

pragmatic competence since English is widely used either as a medium of instruction at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM henceforth), (especially for international postgraduates) or in their daily life communication in Malaysia (Banikalef & Maros, 2013).

To apologize appropriately in context is crucial to maintain a good relationship between interlocutors. Thus, the findings of the study could benefit EFL course designers and teachers in which the pragmatic knowledge of the target language and culture could be incorporated into the teaching and learning materials. This may remedy the lack of pragmatic knowledge of the target language and exposure to other cultures in the existing EFL textbooks, especially the ones used to teach JL2Ss (Al-Momani, 2009; Bradovi-Harlig, 2012; Kasper, 1997; Rose, 1992) and thus, improve JL2Ss' pragmatic knowledge and reduce pragmatic failure across cultures.

Fifth, the study focuses on both perception and production of socially appropriate language, and the use of a variety of elicitation procedures, which can also contribute to a better understanding of JL2Ss' pragmatic development and pragmatic knowledge that ultimately lead to the development of teaching materials that include pragmatic instruction in order to increase JL2Ss' communicative skills and intercultural communications.

Sixth, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, there is a lack of studies that addressed speech act of apology in English by JL2Ss i.e. the sociopragmatic (perception) and pragmalinguistic (production) of JL2Ss and the pragmatic transfer in perception and production of apology from Jordanian Arabic to English. Hence, this

could be the first study to investigate the JL2Ss' sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic development in the speech act of apology. This study, therefore, hopes to contribute to this area of research and fills the aforementioned gaps.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study has some limitations:

1-The study focuses only on JL2Ss who (at the time of data collection) were pursuing their postgraduate studies at UKM where the medium of instruction for international students is English. Further, those JL2Ss have passed UKM's English Placement Proficiency Test (EPPT) with band 4 and above or passed Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with more than 550 in paper test and 79 in TOEFL internet-based test or have achieved band 6.5 and above for their International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

2-For comparison purposes, the study only includes JNESs who (at the time of data collection) were pursuing their postgraduate studies at UKM who achieved band 2 and below in English Placement proficiency test (EPPT) by UKM and do not have either TOEFL or IELTS to participate in the study. Further, ENSs who (at the time of data collection) are currently working as the teaching staff at British Council in Amman, Jordan were approached to participate in the study.

3-Gender is not considered in this study due the lack of Jordanian female postgraduate students at UKM. Therefore, the study is restricted to the Jordanian male postgraduate students at UKM.

4-The study only focuses on investigating the negative pragmatic transfer of JL2Ss when performing their speech act of apology.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Pragmatics: Pragmatics is mainly concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker or a writer and interpreted by a listener or reader, consequently pragmatic is more to do with the intended meaning of the utterances more than the meaning of the utterances by themselves (Yule, 2014).

Speech acts: Speech acts are the “basic or minimal units of linguistic communications” (Searl, 1969.p. 16).

Apology: Apology is “a speech act which is intended to provide support for the hearer who was actually or potentially mal-affected by a violation” (Olshtain, 1989.p. 165).

Interlanguage Pragmatics: Interlanguage pragmatics is concerned with nonnative speakers’ comprehension and production of pragmatics and how that L2-related knowledge is acquired (Kasper & Dahl, 1991).

Pragmatic competence: Pragmatic competence is defined as “the speakers’ knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness, which dictate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts” (Koike, 1989, p. 279).

Politeness: Politeness refers to a mixture of formal as well as functional features accompanying inherently face-threatening speech act, such as apology, in order to minimize their threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Face-threatening acts: Face-threatening acts refer to acts which run contrary to the addressees' self-image (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Social distance: Symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference within which the interlocutors stand for the purpose of an act and material/non-material goods exchanged between them (Brown & Levinson, 1987. P, 76).

Social power: The degree to which the hearer can impose his own plans and his own self-evaluation (face) at the expense of the speaker's plans and self-evaluation (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 77).

Pragmalinguistic competence: pragmalinguistic competence (production) refers to the knowledge of forms and strategies to convey particular speech acts (Kasper & Roever, 2005).

Sociopragmatic competence: Sociopragmatic competence refers to "the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action" (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2).

Pragmatic failure: Pragmatic failure is defined as the inability to understand what is meant by what is said (Thomas, 1983).

Pragmalinguistic failure: Pragmalinguistic failure is the linguistic deficiency caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force (Thomas, 1983).

Sociopragmatic failure: Sociopragmatic failure results from a lack of sociocultural knowledge (Thomas, 1983).

Negative pragmatic transfer: is “the influence exerted by learner’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information” (Kasper, 1992 p. 207).

Sociopragmatic transfer: Sociopragmatic transfer is evident when the social perceptions underlying L1 language users’ interpretation and performance of linguistic action in L2 are influenced by their assessment of subjectively equivalent L1 context (Kasper, 1992).

Pragmalinguistic transfer: Pragmalinguistic transfer is the NNSs application of first language linguistic form to L2 that naturally influences the illocutionary force or the degree of politeness of the interlanguage utterance (Kasper, 1992).