How do Alexandrians and Najdis Apologize?
A Variational Pragmatic Study of Arabic

Dina Abdel Salam El-Dakhs[1]
Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia

Mervat M. Ahmed
Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, Egypt

Jawaher Nasser Alhaqbani
Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia

Afrah Alenezi
Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia

Abstract: There is a paucity of variational pragmatic research that compares the realization of the speech act of apology across dialects of one and the same language. The current study aimed at comparing the realization of the speech act of apology between two Arabic dialects, namely Alexandrian Arabic in Egypt and Najdi Arabic in Saudi Arabia. Data were collected from 120 participants using role-play. The participants were undergraduate students, equally divided into males and females. Half the participants were Najdis, while the other half were Alexandrians. The apology strategies were coded using Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) model. Additionally, initiators and internal/external modifications were analyzed. The results showed that the two groups of participants adopted a similar apology behavior, a finding which was explained in terms of the unifying influence of religion. The results also showed a strong influence for social dominance on the participants' apology behavior. This influence was larger than the moderate influence for social distance and the limited influence for gender. Based on the findings, we recommend conducting further variational pragmatic research on the Arabic language.
Keywords: speech act, apology, Arabic, variational pragmatics, culture.

The pluricentric nature of languages was long ignored in the literature due to the focus of the discipline of dialectology on linguistic variations within single nations and its neglect of the pragmatic aspect of variation. However, the emergence of variational pragmatics (VP), which endorses the examination of intralingual variations in dialects that span within and across nations (e.g., British English, American English, Australian English; French French, Canadian French, Cameroon French) has transformed our perspective to languages and highlighted their pluricentric nature. Thus, VP has attracted the attention of several scholars from around the world (e.g., Barron, 2017, 2022; El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2021; Farenkia, 2011; Lochtman, 2022; Ren, 2015; Su & Chang, 2019; Yang & Deng, 2020; Yujie, 2021).

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[1] Corresponding Author: A Chair of the Linguistics and Translation Department and the Director of the Applied Linguistics Research Lab at Prince Sultan University, Saudi Arabia. E-Mail: ddakhs@psu.edu.sa

Inspired by the VP approach, the current study examines the realization of the speech act of apology in two dialects of the Arabic language as spoken in Alexandria, Egypt, and Najd, Saudi Arabia. Alexandria is a coastal city that overlooks the Mediterranean Sea and lies to the North-West of Egypt. It is considered the most important port and as a second capital city to Egypt after Cairo. The Najd area is the central area of Saudi Arabia and it encompasses Riyadh, which is the capital city of the Kingdom. The two regions are separated by 1117 miles by air and 1540 miles by road. In fact, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are close geographic neighbours that are separated only by the Red Sea. They also enjoy extensive language contact because a large number of Egyptian expatriates work in Saudi Arabia and a large number of Saudi tourists visit Egypt regularly. Despite this geographic closeness and extensive contact, recent studies have shown pragmatic variation between the two regions in the speech acts of complaints (El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2021), compliments and compliment responses (El-Dakhs, 2021) and consent to/refusal of requests (El-Dakhs, 2018a). Hence, the current study aims to see if these variations extend to the speech act of apology as well.

The speech act of apology can be defined as "a speech act addressed to [the victim's] face needs to remedy an offence for which [the apologist] takes responsibility, and thus to resolve equilibrium between the [apologist] and the [victim]" (Holmes, 1989, p. 196). According to the politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), apologizing is considered a remedial action by the speaker to make up for a wrong action that harmed the addressee' face-wants. Thus, the speech act of apology is considered a face-threatening act for the speaker and a face-saving act for the hearer. More recently, however, this view has been challenged as some scholars (e.g., Ogiermann, 2009) propose that apologizing can be a face-supportive act or even beneficial to the speaker in terms of image restoration. This new perspective calls for a careful examination of the context prior to reaching final conclusions. In this perspective, several variables will influence the status of the apology, including the interlocutors' culture.

Significance of the Study

The current study is significant for three reasons. First, it explores the intralingual variation of the Arabic language, which is greatly underrepresented in the pragmatic literature. This is particularly important since Arabic is spoken in 22 countries spanning over 5,070,420 square miles. Second, the current study contributes to the newly emerging discipline of VP, a field that requires much more extensive research to be rightly situated. Third, the current study will have implications for the theories of politeness and relevant cultural models.

Since VP constitutes the main theoretical framework in the current study, the following section elaborates more on this newly emerging discipline. Then, we survey a number of relevant studies and list our research questions. This will be followed by an explanation of the methods and the relevant results will be presented and discussed. Finally, pertinent conclusions, including future directions for research, will be drawn.

Theoretical Background

VP refers to "the study of intralingual macrosocial pragmatic variation" (Barron, 2014, p. 1). Hence, VP focuses on the variations in one and the same language (e.g., British English, American English, Australian English; Carieen Arabic, Najdi Arabic, Jordanian Arabic) with a special interest in macrosocial factors, including region, age, and socioeconomic class. VP thus lies at the interface of two disciplines, namely, pragmatics and dialectology (Barron, 2014; Felix-Brasdefer, 2021). VP directs the attention of pragmatics to the importance of intralingual variation while it directs the attention of dialectology to the significance of pragmatic analysis of different dialects. It is important to note that VP is also concerned with several other macro (e.g., religion and education) and micro (e.g., distance and dominance) social factors.

According to Schneider (2010) and Schneider and Barron (2008), VP, as a framework for intralingual pragmatic variations among regional dialects, works at five different levels. First, the formal level deals with the pragmatic functions of relevant linguistic forms. Second, the actional level addresses the intralingual variations of speech acts. Third, the interactional level investigates how large units of discourse are formed by combinations of speech acts. Fourth, the topic level investigates the discourse topics, including the selection and management of topics. Finally, the organizational level studies the turn-taking of conversations, including minimal responses and back-channels.

The current study is most relevant to the action level of VP as it investigates the pragmatic variation of the speech act of apology among Alexandrians and Najdis, who speak two regional dialects of Arabic. Within this framework, we focused on region and gender as two macrosocial factors and on social distance and dominance as two microsocial factors. It must also be noted that cultural classifications are relevant to the current study due to its focus on the region. As regions change, cultures can also vary. Hence, we will refer to two cultural models in our study as well. First, Hall's (1976) high-context versus low-context cultures is relevant. In this classification, high-context cultures, including the Arab World, tend to utilize more internalized and implicit messages and preserve close connections with others than low-context cultures, such as Western communities. Second, Hofstede (2001) classifies the Arab World as a collectivist region where people highly value family relations, loyalty, and mutual support. These cultural models will be indispensable in our regional approach to explain intralingual variation in Arabic.

In addition to the VP approach, the apology data in the current study were analyzed based on the apology model of Olshtain and Cohen (1983). This model comprises 8 main strategies with a number of sub-strategies. Below is a list of these strategies, along with illustrative examples:

1. An expression of apology
   a) An expression of regret, e.g., I'm sorry.
   b) An offer of apology, e.g., I apologize.
   c) A request for forgiveness, e.g., Forgive me.

2. An explanation or account of the situation, e.g., The bus was late.
3. An acknowledgment of responsibility
   a) Accepting the blame, e.g., It was my fault.
   b) Expressing self-deficiency, e.g., I was confused.
   c) Recognizing the other person as deserving apology, e.g., You are right.
   d) Expressing lack of intent, e.g., I didn't mean to.

4. An offer of repair, e.g., I'll help you get up.
5. A promise of forbearance, e.g., It won't happen again.
   When the need to apologize is rejected, the offender is likely to apply the following strategies:

6. No response/apology
7. A denial of the need to apologize, e.g., There was no need for you to get insulted.
8. A denial of responsibility
   a) Not accepting the blame, e.g., It wasn't my fault.
   b) Blaming the other participant, e.g., It's your own fault.

More description of the model is found in the methods section.

Literature Review

Several studies on the speech act of apology were interlingual in nature. That is, the focus of these studies was to examine the development of the language learners' pragmatic competence (e.g., Ahmet et al., 2021; Al-Harbi & Mahfoodh, 2021; Chen et al., 2022; El-Dakhs, 2018b; Eslami et al., 2022). Other studies focused on the teaching of the speech act of apology to language learners, particularly learners of English (e.g., Bagherkazemi, 2018; Katchamat, 2018; Pourmousavi & Zenouzagh, 2020; Shakki et al., 2021; Simin et al., 2014). However, studies on the speaker's second language are not relevant to the current study in which variation is examined in the speakers' first language. Hence, this section of the literature review will cover the apology studies in which the speaker's first language was examined.

Global Apology Studies

The studies examining the speech act of apology in the speaker's first language either focused on one language or were cross-cultural in nature. An example of monolingual studies is Page (2014), who examined corporate apologies posted on Twitter in English. The researcher analyzed 1183 apologies and considered their distinctive components as well as their rapport-building potential. The results showed that corporate apologies were characterized by their relatively infrequent use of explanations and their comparatively greater use of offers of repair. The results also showed that these strategies of apologies were often combined with follow-up moves, such as imperatives and questions. Additionally, corporate apologies were distinctive in their recurrent use of formulaic greetings and signatures. Another example is Shahrokhi (2019) which examined the effect of the contextual variables of social distance and severity of the offense on the internal intensification of the apology speech act in Persian. Data were collected from 120 Persian male native speakers through a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The data were analyzed using an internal intensification model developed by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989). The results revealed that while the variable of severity of the offense motivated more internal intensification of apologies, the variable of social distance did not prompt a differential use of intensification.

In the same vein, Chejnová (2021) examined the apology strategies employed in 200 Czeck students' emails that were sent to lecturers. The results showed that the students combined a variety of strategies, including direct expressions of apology, explanations, and acknowledgment of responsibility, to create a positive self-image. They also primarily employed direct forms of apology, which is a recurrent feature of apologies in the Slavic culture. Overall, the students employed several strategies of negative politeness throughout their emails while they tended to close their emails with positive-politeness strategies, such as thanking and complimenting their lecturers. Similarly, Farenkia (2022) examined how 222 university students who were native speakers of Cameroon French apologized to friends and superiors. The analysis of the DCTs showed that participants often apologized in speech act sets, including combinations of direct and indirect apologies and supportive acts. The results also showed that the students attempted to mitigate the negative influence of apologizing through the use of nominal address terms, code-switching and some indigenized patterns of French. Additionally, the results revealed a clear influence for the variables of degree of familiarity and social distance on the realization of the speech act of apology.

In addition to the monolingual studies, the apology speech act was examined in several cross-cultural studies. For example, Chamani and Zareipur (2010) investigated the realizations of the speech act of apologies among British and Persian participants based on a corpus of elicited data. The results indicated that the two groups of participants used relatively the same set of apology strategies, but they exhibited significantly different preferences. For example, the British showed a strong tendency to use a single expression of apology in the majority of

situations, while Persian speakers preferred to use an explicit apology with added strategies. Additionally, while "sorry" was the most common expression of apology for the British, the Persians preferred the use of "forgive" and another culture-specific expression of apology.

As for VP studies, they are relatively limited. One important study was conducted by Yang and Deng (2020), who compared the apology behavior of Irish speakers in Northern Ireland with those of speakers in the Republic of Ireland. Data were extracted from the Irish component of the International Corpus of English. The results showed no significant difference between the two regions in the strategy frequency of occurrence and the types of apology formulae. However, the political borders influenced the choice of apology formulae, which were much less frequently used in the Republic of Ireland than in Northern Ireland. Another sample study is Su and Chang's (2021), which investigated regional variations of apologies in Standard Mandarin versus Taiwanese Mandarin. Data were collected from 74 participants with the use of an oral DCT. The results showed that the participants from the two regions employed a similar sequence of strategies and shared similar preferences with respect to context-dependent strategies. The results also showed an interaction effect of power relations and region, with Taiwanese speakers sounding less apologetic than their Mainland counterparts.

Apology Studies in the Arab World

Several monolingual studies on the speech act of apology were conducted in the Arab World. For example, Banikalef et al. (2015) investigated the influence of contextual factors on the choice of apology strategies in Jordanian Arabic by examining a corpus of 1100 naturally occurring apology events and conducting semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that "acknowledging responsibility" was the most frequently used apology strategy, while the set of "acknowledging responsibility" and "swearing by God's name" was the most common combination of apology strategies. The results also revealed that the choice of apology strategy is greatly influenced by social status. In fact, the effect of social status was more prominent than the influence of the degree of severity and social distance. Another example is Hodeib (2019), who investigated the apology strategies of native speakers of Syrian Arabic. Data were collected from 45 university students through a DCT. The results showed that the participants used language and culture-specific strategies, such as the use of God's name and the use of proverbs and folk expressions. The results also showed that the choice of apology strategy was influenced by the social variables of age, distance, and dominance.

Monolingual studies were not confined to Jordanian and Syrian Arabic. They covered other dialects. For example, Morsi (2022) focused on Cairene Arabic. Data were collected from 88 participants from different social classes through the DCT. The results showed that the most frequently used strategies were expressions of apology or expressions of apology combined with explanations. This was followed by offers of repair and taking on responsibility. The results also showed that the choice of apology strategies was influenced by the participants' social class. In the same vein, Derki (2023) studied Algerian Arabic. Data were collected from 60 participants through the DCT. The results indicated that male and female Algerian participants employed the same apology strategies but to varying frequencies. For instance, male participants showed a stronger tendency to employ confrontational strategies like blaming the victim, while the female participants opted for more compassionate strategies like explanations.

Fewer studies were conducted on cross-cultural comparisons. A good example of these studies was Bataineh and Bataineh (2008), which investigated the apology strategies used by the speakers of American English and Jordanian Arabic. Data were collected from 100 American and 100 Jordanian undergraduates using a questionnaire. The results showed that the two groups of participants used the apology strategies differently as motivated by differences in the two cultures. For example, Jordanians tended to exaggerate their expressions of apology to win the victim's sympathy. This was clear in the Jordanians' use of more apology

manifestations (e.g., three expressions of apology per turn) than their American counterparts. Jordanians also preferred to use proverbs and sayings in order to ease their responsibility and pacify the victim, a behavior that was not common among Americans. A similar study was conducted by Rabab'ah and Al-Hawamdeh (2020), who examined the apology strategies of Jordanian and British speakers. Data were collected from 30 Jordanian and 30 British participants through a DCT. It was found that the British significantly outperformed the Jordanians in their use of two strategies, namely, concern for the hearer and taking on responsibility.

As noted in the above survey of literature, there is a wealth of research on the speech act of apology from several perspectives, including monolingual and cross-cultural studies. However, there is a dearth of research on VP studies that compare dialects of one and the same language from a regional perspective. This is the gap that the current study aims to address through comparing the apology behaviour of Alexandrians and Najdis, who speak different dialects of the Arabic language in two different countries.

Research Questions

The current study addresses the following questions:

1. How do Alexandrians and Najdis realize the speech act of apology?
2. How similar are apology strategies in Alexandrian and Najdi Arabic?
3. What is the influence of gender on the apology behavior of Alexandrians and Najdis?
4. What is the influence of social distance on the apology behavior of Alexandrians and Najdis?
5. What is the influence of social dominance on the apology behavior of Alexandrians and Najdis?

Methods

Participants

A total of 120 participants took part in the study. Half of the participants were Egyptians residing in Alexandria, an important coastal city in Egypt. The participants, who were native speakers of the Alexandrian Arabic dialect, were recruited from a private Egyptian university in Alexandria. Half the Egyptian participants were male (aged 18 to28, M=20.6), and the other half were female (aged 19 to 23, M= 20.2). The other half of the participants were Saudis residing in Riyadh, the capital city of Saudi Arabia. The participants, who were native speakers of the Najdi Arabic dialect, were recruited from a private Saudi university in Riyadh. Half the Saudi participants were male (aged 18 to 24, M=20.4), while the other half were female (aged 19 to 25, M= 21.6). All the participants were undergraduate students who participated voluntarily in the study.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through role-play consisting of six situations (Appendix A). The situations were prepared based on feedback from a focus group with undergraduate students concerning the situations that trigger their apologies in real life. The participants were instructed to read the situations one at a time and respond in their natural Arabic language. To further encourage the participants to respond in their everyday language, the interlocutor was Najdi for Najdi participants and Alexandrian for Alexandrian participants. Additionally, the participants performed an example situation with the interlocutors before starting the actual

study. The situations were divided in terms of social distance and dominance, as shown in Table 1. While half the situations depicted relationships between distant speakers, the other half involved intimate speakers in the role-plays. Likewise, the situations varied in terms of social dominance to include addressees of higher, equal, and lower dominance. It must also be noted that the situations matched the gender of the participants. In other words, female participants responded to female addressees, whereas the male participants responded to male addressees. This arrangement was designed to accommodate the segregated education in Saudi universities.

Table 1
Social Distance and Dominance in Role-Plays

Situation	Social Distance	Social Dominance
1	Distant	High
2	Distant	High
3	Distant	Equal
4	Intimate	Equal
5	Intimate	Low
6	Intimate	Low

Although role-plays may result in simulated responses that reflect the participants' intuitions rather than their authentic language, role-plays were effective for the purpose of our study for two main reasons. First, they allow us to exercise control over the micro-social variables in the study (i.e., distance and dominance) (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2018). Second, they allowed us to compare between male and female participants and also across groups of participants. Hence, the use of role-plays fits our study perfectly, although it is generally recommended to use naturally occurring and ethnographically collected data (e.g., Duranti, 2009; Wolfson, 1989).

Data Coding

Data were analyzed for apology strategies, initiators, and internal/external modifiers. The apology strategies were coded based on Olshtain and Cohen's (1983) model of apology (see the Theoretical Background above). The model distinguishes between the strategies employed when the apology is accepted and when it is rejected. When the apology is accepted, the speaker can use an expression of apology (e.g., *I'm sorry*), give an explanation (e.g., *I was busy*), acknowledge responsibility (e.g., *It was my fault*), offer repair (e.g., *I'll get you a gift instead*) or promise forbearance (e.g., *I won't do it again*). However, when the apology is rejected, the speaker can offer no response, deny the need to apologize (e.g., *You don't need to be angry!*), or deny responsibility (e.g., *It was your fault!*).

As for initiators and external modifiers (see Appendix B), they were coded as they emerged in the data. Hence, initiators included terms of endearment (e.g., *dear*), attention grabbers (e.g., *Look!*) and greetings (e.g., *Hello!*) while external modifiers included several types, such as requests (e.g., *Can you give me further information?*), suggesting alternatives (e.g., *Why don't you buy a book instead?*), exclamations (e.g., *Oh!*) and prayer to hearer (e.g., *May God grant you peace and happiness!*). Regarding the internal modifiers (see Appendix C), we followed Trosborg's (1995) model,, which classifies internal modification into upgraders, such as intensifiers (e.g., *very*) and plus committors (e.g., *of course*), and downgraders, such as hedges (e.g., *kind of*), cajolers (e.g., *you know*) and subjectivizes (e.g., *I think*). The following are illustrative coded examples from the data with their English translations:

سوري يا دكتور كنا مطبقين علشان الامتحانات وكده وراحت عليا نومه بس إن شاء الله
اسلمه النهارده. افتح لي بس الـ deadline شويه وأنا هسلمه إن شاء الله.

Sorry [expression of apology] Dr. [address term]. We did not sleep at night because of exams and other stuff, so we overslept [explanation of the situation]. InshaaAllah [God's willingness], I will submit it today [offer of repair]. Please, extend the deadline [request] and I will submit it [offer of repair] inshaaAllah [God's willingness]. (Egyptian male participant)

معلش يا دكتور أنا أسفه جدا بس حصل ظروف أمبارح فمقدرتش أخلص الـ *assignment*
اللي حضرتك طلبه .

Sorry [expression of apology], Dr. [address term]. I'm very [intensifier] sorry [expression of apology], but I couldn't finish the assignment which you requested yesterday because of some circumstances [explanation of the situation]. (Egyptian female participant)

العذر والسموحه منك لكن حصلي ظرف طارئ و ماقدرت أسويه إذا كان فيه إحتمالية إني
أسلمها في وقت ثاني حسلمها الحين.

I apologize [expression of apology] and my apologies [expression of apology], but I had an emergency and could not do it [explanation of the situation]. If it's possible to submit it at another time [request], I will submit it now [offer of repair]. (Najdi male participant)

أنا اسفه أعتذر أعرف إن المفروض أسلمه قبل بس حصلت لي ظروف و ما قدرت أبد إني
أحله

I'm sorry [expression of apology]. I apologize [expression of apology]. I know that I should have submitted it [acknowledgement of responsibility], but I faced some circumstances and I could not solve it [explanation of the situation]. (Najdi female participant)

Results

The results section is divided into five sub-sections as per the research questions.

1. How do Alexandrians and Najdis realize the speech act of apology?

Tables 2 and 3 below answer Research Question 1 by showing the number of frequencies of apology strategies and the number of initiators and modifiers used by Alexandrians and Najdis.

Table 2
Participants' Use of Apology Strategies

Strategy	Alexandrians	Najdis
Expression of apology	341 (34.1%)	349 (36.9%)
An explanation or account of the situation	213 (21.3%)	220 (23.3%)
An acknowledgment of responsibility	154 (15.4%)	150 (15.9%)
An offer of repair	273 (27.3%)	222 (23.5%)
A promise of forbearance	1 (0.1%)	3 (0.3%)
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
A denial of the need to apologize	16 (1.6%)	1 (0.1%)
A denial of responsibility	3 (0.3%)	1 (0.1%)

As shown in Table 2, both Alexandrians and Najdis made great use of expressions of apology, followed by offers of repair, explanations of the situation, and acknowledgments of responsibility. However, they used the other apology strategies to the minimum.

Table 3
Participants' Use of Initiators and Modifiers

Strategy	Alexandrians	Najdis
Initiators	209	194
External modifiers	83	150
Internal modifiers	226	271

It must also be noted that the number of internal modifiers exceeded the external ones and the initiators in both groups as shown in Table 3. However, the Najdis produced more modifications than the Alexandrians.

    2. How similar are apology strategies in Alexandrian and Najdi Arabic?

Table 4 below answers Research Question 2 through presenting Chi-square comparisons in the use of apology strategies, initiators and modifiers between Najdis and Alexandrians.

Table 4
Chi-square Comparisons Between Najdis and Alexandrians

	Najdis No. (%)	Alexandrians No. (%)	χ^2	p
Apology	**946**	**1001**		
Expression of apology	349 (36.9%)	341 (34.1%)	1.698	0.193
An explanation or account of the situation,	220 (23.3%)	213 (21.3%)	1.099	0.294
An acknowledgement of responsibility	150 (15.9%)	154 (15.4%)	0.082	0.774
An offer of repair	222 (23.5%)	273 (27.3%)	3.715	0.054
A promise of forbearance	3 (0.3%)	1 (0.1%)	1.119	[FE]p=0.361
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
A denial of the need to apologize	1 (0.1%)	16 (1.6%)	12.521*	<0.001*
A denial of responsibility	1 (0.1%)	3 (0.3%)	0.893	[FE]p=0.625
Initiators	**194**	**209**		
Name	41 (21.1%)	33 (15.8%)	1.917	0.166
Greeting	55 (28.4%)	8 (3.8%)	45.875*	<0.001*
Address term	82 (42.3%)	134 (64.1%)	19.308*	<0.001*
Term of endearment	11 (5.7%)	29 (13.9%)	7.577*	0.006*
Attention grabber	5 (2.6%)	5 (2.4%)	0.014	[FE]p=1.000
External	**150**	**83**		
Calming down	25 (16.7%)	15 (18.1%)	0.074	0.785
God willing	53 (35.3%)	40 (48.2%)	3.684	0.055
Request	29 (19.3%)	20 (24.1%)	0.730	0.393
Suggestive alternative	3 (2.0%)	3 (3.6%)	0.555	[FE]p=0.669
Exclamation	30 (20.0%)	2 (2.4%)	13.955*	<0.001*
Prayer to hearer	7 (4.7%)	0 (0.0%)	3.993	[FE]p=0.053
Expression of destiny acceptance	0 (0.0%)	2 (2.4%)	3.646	[FE]p=0.126
Thanks	3 (2.0%)	1 (1.2%)	0.200	[FE]p=1.000
Internal	**271**	**226**		
Downgraders	20 (7.4%)	6 (2.7%)	5.550*	0.018*
Upgraders	251 (92.6%)	220 (97.3%)	5.550*	0.018*

Note. χ^2: Chi square test; FE: Fisher Exact; *: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

As shown in Table 4, no significant differences are noted between Alexandrians and Najdis in the use of apology strategies. The only exception to this finding is in relation to the denial of the need to apologize, which Alexandrians employed significantly more frequently than Najdis. As for initiators, Alexandrians produced significantly more greetings, while Najdis used significantly more address terms and terms of endearment. Regarding modifications, Alexandrians used significantly more exclamations and upgraders, while Najdis produced significantly more downgraders than Alexandrians.

3. What is the influence of gender on the apology behavior of Alexandrians and Najdis?

Tables 5 and 6 provide answers to Research Question 3 regarding the influence of gender on the apology behavior of Alexandrians and Najdis.

Table 5

Chi-square Comparisons of Gender Differences in the Alexandrian Dialect

	Gender		χ^2	p
	Male No. (%)	Female No. (%)		
Apology	**510**	**491**		
Expression of apology	180 (35.3%)	161 (32.8%)	0.698	0.403
An explanation or account of the situation,	112 (22.0%)	101 (20.6%)	0.289	0.591
An acknowledgement of responsibility	78 (15.3%)	76 (15.5%)	0.007	0.936
An offer of repair	128 (25.1%)	145 (29.5%)	2.479	0.115
A promise of forbearance	1 (0.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0.964	FEp=1.000
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
A denial of the need to apologize	8 (1.6%)	8 (1.6%)	0.006	0.939
A denial of responsibility	3 (0.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2.897	0.250
Initiators	**116**	**93**		
Name	16 (13.8%)	17 (18.3%)	0.781	0.377
Greeting	3 (2.6%)	5 (5.4%)	1.092	FEp=0.471
Address term	74 (63.8%)	60 (64.5%)	0.012	0.914
Term of endearment	21 (18.1%)	8 (8.6%)	3.899	0.048*
Attention grabber	2 (1.7%)	3 (3.2%)	0.498	FEp=0.658
External	**51**	**32**		
Calming down	7 (13.7%)	8 (25.0%)	1.688	0.194
God willing	28 (54.9%)	12 (37.5%)	2.385	0.123
Request	12 (23.5%)	8 (25.0%)	0.023	0.879
Suggestive alternative	0 (0.0%)	3 (9.4%)	4.961	FEp=0.054
Exclamation	1 (2.0%)	1 (3.1%)	0.113	FEp=1.000
Prayer to hearer	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
Expression of destiny acceptance	2 (3.9%)	0 (0.0%)	1.286	0.520
Thanks	1 (2.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0.635	FEp=1.000
Internal	**116**	**110**		
Downgraders	2 (1.7%)	4 (3.6%)	0.799	FEp=0.436
Upgraders	114 (98.3%)	106 (96.4%)	0.799	FEp=0.436

Note. χ^2: Chi square test; FE: Fisher Exact; *: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

As shown in Table 5, no significant gender differences were noted in the use of apology strategies by Alexandrians. However, the effect of gender was minimally noted in the use of initiators and modifiers. Alexandrian males produced significantly more terms of endearment than Alexandrian females.

Table 6
Chi-square Comparisons of Gender Differences in the Najdi Dialect

	Gender			
	Male No. (%)	Female No. (%)	χ^2	P
Apology	**421**	**525**		
Expression of apology	163 (38.7%)	186 (35.4%)	1.085	0.297
An explanation or account of the situation,	104 (24.7%)	116 (22.1%)	0.890	0.345
An acknowledgement of responsibility	63 (15.0%)	87 (16.6%)	0.452	0.501
An offer of repair	88 (20.9%)	134 (25.5%)	2.778	0.096
A promise of forbearance	3 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	3.753	[FE]p=0.088
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
A denial of the need to apologize	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)	0.803	[FE]p=1.000
A denial of responsibility	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)	0.803	[FE]p=1.000
Initiators	**74**	**120**		
Name	15 (20.3%)	26 (21.7%)	0.054	0.817
Greeting	11 (14.9%)	44 (36.7%)	10.711*	0.001*
Address term	41 (55.4%)	41 (34.2%)	8.461*	0.004*
Term of endearment	6 (8.1%)	5 (4.2%)	1.329	[FE]p=0.339
Attention grabber	1 (1.4%)	4 (3.3%)	0.716	[FE]p=0.651
External	**58**	**92**		
Calming down	10 (17.2%)	15 (16.3%)	0.022	0.881
God willing	26 (44.8%)	27 (29.3%)	3.731	0.053
Request	8 (13.8%)	21 (22.8%)	1.861	0.172
Suggestive alternative	0 (0.0%)	3 (3.3%)	1.930	[FE]p=0.284
Exclamation	7 (12.1%)	23 (25.0%)	3.718	0.054
Prayer to hearer	6 (10.3%)	1 (1.1%)	6.853*	[FE]p=0.014*
Expression of destiny acceptance	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
Thanks	1 (1.7%)	2 (2.2%)	0.037	[FE]p=1.000
Internal	**112**	**159**		
Downgraders	7 (6.3%)	13 (8.2%)	0.357	0.550
Upgraders	105 (93.8%)	146 (91.8%)	0.357	0.550

Note. χ^2: Chi square test; FE: Fisher Exact; *: Statistically significant at p ≤ 0.05

As shown in Table 6, no significant gender differences were noted in the use of apology strategies by Najdis. However, Najdi males produced significantly more address terms and prayers to the hearer than the Najdi females while the Najdi females used significantly more greetings than the Najdi males.

4. What is the influence of social distance on the apology behavior of Alexandrians and Najdis?

Tables 7 and 8 show the results of Chi-square comparisons regarding the effect of social distance on the realization of the apology speech act in Alexandrian and Najdi Arabic.

Table 7
Chi-square Comparisons of Social Distance Differences in the Alexandrian Dialect

	Situations			
	1, 2 &3 No. (%)	4, 5 & 6 No. (%)	χ^2	P
Apology	**530**	**471**		
Expression of apology	199 (37.5%)	142 (30.1%)	6.078*	0.014*
An explanation or account of the situation,	104 (19.6%)	109 (23.1%)	1.844	0.174
An acknowledgement of responsibility	88 (16.6%)	66 (14.0%)	1.286	0.257
An offer of repair	135 (25.5%)	138 (29.3%)	1.842	0.175
A promise of forbearance	1 (0.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0.890	FEp=1.000
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
A denial of the need to apologize	3 (0.6%)	13 (2.8%)	7.632*	0.006*
A denial of responsibility	0 (0.0%)	3 (0.6%)	3.386	FEp=0.104
Initiators	**119**	**90**		
Name	16 (13.4%)	17 (18.9%)	1.142	0.285
Greeting	5 (4.2%)	3 (3.3%)	0.105	FEp=1.000
Address term	89 (74.8%)	45 (50.0%)	13.687*	<0.001*
Term of endearment	5 (4.2%)	24 (26.7%)	21.641*	<0.001*
Attention grabber	4 (3.4%)	1 (1.1%)	1.111	FEp=0.393
External	**43**	**40**		
Calming down	7 (16.3%)	8 (20.0%)	0.194	0.660
God willing	22 (51.2%)	18 (45.0%)	0.315	0.574
Request	12 (27.9%)	8 (20.0%)	0.708	0.400
Suggestive alternative	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.5%)	3.346	FEp=0.108
Exclamation	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.0%)	2.203	FEp=0.229
Prayer to hearer	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
Expression of destiny acceptance	1 (2.3%)	1 (2.5%)	0.003	FEp=1.000
Thanks	1 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0.942	FEp=1.000
Internal	**131**	**95**		
Downgraders	2 (1.5%)	4 (4.2%)	1.535	FEp=0.242
Upgraders	129 (98.5%)	91 (95.8%)	1.535	FEp=0.242

Note. χ^2: Chi square test; FE: Fisher Exact; *: Statistically significant at p ≤ 0.05

As shown in Table 7, the effect of social distance is somehow small. For Alexandrians, expressions of apology and address terms were used more significantly with distant than intimate addressees while the denial of the need to apologize and terms of endearment were used significantly more with the intimate than the distant addressees.

Table 8

Chi-square Comparisons of Social Distance Differences in the Najdi Dialect

	Situations 1, 2 &3 No. (%)	4, 5 & 6 No. (%)	χ^2	P
Apology	**467**	**479**		
Expression of apology	193 (41.3%)	156 (32.6%)	7.793*	**0.005***
An explanation or account of the situation,	97 (20.8%)	123 (25.7%)	3.191	0.074
An acknowledgement of responsibility	62 (13.3%)	88 (18.4%)	4.601*	0.032*
An offer of repair	112 (24.0%)	110 (23.0%)	0.137	0.712
A promise of forbearance	2 (0.4%)	1 (0.2%)	0.360	FEp=0.620
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
A denial of the need to apologize	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.2%)	0.976	FEp=1.000
A denial of responsibility	1 (0.2%)	0 (0.0%)	1.027	FEp=0.494
Initiators	**110**	**84**		
Name	25 (22.7%)	16 (19.0%)	0.387	0.534
Greeting	28 (25.5%)	27 (32.1%)	1.049	0.306
Address term	53 (48.2%)	29 (34.5%)	3.641	0.056
Term of endearment	3 (2.7%)	8 (9.5%)	4.113	FEp=0.059
Attention grabber	1 (0.9%)	4 (4.8%)	2.816	FEp=0.168
External	**87**	**63**		
Calming down	15 (17.2%)	10 (15.9%)	0.049	0.824
God willing	28 (32.2%)	25 (39.7%)	0.899	0.343
Request	27 (31.0%)	2 (3.2%)	18.186*	<0.001*
Suggestive alternative	2 (2.3%)	1 (1.6%)	0.094	FEp=1.000
Exclamation	11 (12.6%)	19 (30.2%)	7.006*	0.008*
Prayer to hearer	1 (1.1%)	6 (9.5%)	5.760*	FEp=0.042*
Expression of destiny acceptance	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
Thanks	3 (3.4%)	0 (0.0%)	2.217	FEp=0.264
Internal	**132**	**139**		
Downgraders	12 (9.1%)	8 (5.8%)	1.102	0.294
Upgraders	120 (90.9%)	131 (94.2%)	1.102	0.294

Note. χ^2: Chi square test; FE: Fisher Exact; *: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Regarding Najdis, the participants produced significantly more expressions of apology and requests with distant than intimate addressees whereas they used significantly more expressions of acknowledging responsibility, exclamations and prayers to the hearer with intimate than distant addressees as shown in Table 8.

5. What is the influence of social dominance on the apology behaviour of Alexandrians and Najdis?

Tables 9 and 10 show the Chi-square comparisons regarding the influence of social dominance on the influence of social dominance on the realization of the speech act of apology among Alexandrians and Najdis.

Table 9

Chi-square Comparisons of Social Dominance Differences in the Alexandrian Dialect

	Situations			χ^2	p
	1+4 No. (%)	2+5 No. (%)	3+6 No. (%)		
Apology	**357**	**323**	**321**		
Expression of apology	121 (33.9%)	100 (31.0%)	120 (37.4%)	2.965	**0.227**
An explanation or account of the situation,	80 (22.4%)	103 (31.9%)	30 (9.3%)	49.721*	<0.001*
An acknowledgement of responsibility	63 (17.6%)	30 (9.3%)	61 (19.0%)	13.855*	0.001*
An offer of repair	92 (25.8%)	87 (26.9%)	94 (29.3%)	1.079	0.583
A promise of forbearance	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	1.888	MCp=0.641
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
A denial of the need to apologize	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	15 (4.7%)	28.501*	<0.001*
A denial of responsibility	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)	1 (0.3%)	0.442	1.000
Initiators	**128**	**41**	**40**		
Name	5 (3.9%)	15 (36.6%)	13 (32.5%)	35.330*	<0.001*
Greeting	4 (3.1%)	4 (9.8%)	0 (0.0%)	4.596	MCp=0.072
Address term	115 (89.8%)	3 (7.3%)	16 (40.0%)	104.426*	<0.001*
Term of endearment	4 (3.1%)	16 (39.0%)	9 (22.5%)	36.268*	<0.001*
Attention grabber	0 (0.0%)	3 (7.3%)	2 (5.0%)	8.811*	MCp=0.008*
External	**33**	**36**	**14**		
Calming down	1 (3.0%)	5 (13.9%)	9 (64.3%)	25.662*	<0.001*
God willing	20 (60.6%)	18 (50.0%)	2 (14.3%)	8.530*	0.014*
Request	10 (30.3%)	8 (22.2%)	2 (14.3%)	1.501	0.472
Suggestive alternative	0 (0.0%)	3 (8.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2.848	0.204
Exclamation	2 (6.1%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2.251	MCp=0.465
Prayer to hearer	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
Expression of destiny acceptance	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.6%)	0 (0.0%)	1.898	MCp=0.648
Thanks	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (7.1%)	3.445	MCp=0.165
Internal	**86**	**76**	**64**		
Downgraders	2 (2.3%)	2 (2.6%)	2 (3.1%)	0.331	MCp=1.000
Upgraders	84 (97.7%)	74 (97.4%)	62 (96.9%)	0.331	MCp=1.000

Note. χ^2: Chi square test; FE: Fisher Exact; *: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

For Alexandrians, 9 significant differences were noted in their apology behaviour. For example, they produced significantly more explanations, names, terms of endearment and attention grabbers with equal addressees, more address terms and expressions of God-willingness with more powerful addressees and more expressions of acknowledging/denying responsibility and calming down with less powerful addressees.

Table 10

Chi-square Comparisons of Social Dominance Differences in the Najdi Dialect

	Situations			χ^2	p
	High No. (%)	Equal No. (%)	Low No. (%)		
Apology	**295**	**348**	**303**		
Expression of apology	97 (32.9%)	134 (38.5%)	118 (38.9%)	2.975	0.226
An explanation or account of the situation,	73 (24.7%)	101 (29.0%)	46 (15.2%)	17.920*	<0.001*
An acknowledgement of responsibility	64 (21.7%)	45 (12.9%)	41 (13.5%)	10.997*	0.004*
An offer of repair	59 (20.0%)	68 (19.5%)	95 (31.4%)	15.454*	<0.001*
A promise of forbearance	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.7%)	2.125	MCp=0.296
No response/apology	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
A denial of the need to apologize	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.3%)	1.907	MCp=0.625
A denial of responsibility	1 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1.961	MCp=0.310
Initiators	**112**	**52**	**30**		
Name	10 (8.9%)	17 (32.7%)	14 (46.7%)	25.912*	<0.001*
Greeting	26 (23.2%)	26 (50.0%)	3 (10.0%)	17.703*	<0.001*
Address term	74 (66.1%)	3 (5.8%)	5 (16.7%)	62.451*	<0.001*
Term of endearment	1 (0.9%)	4 (7.7%)	6 (20.0%)	14.645	MCp<0.001*
Attention grabber	1 (0.9%)	2 (3.8%)	2 (6.7%)	3.922	MCp=0.082
External	**61**	**58**	**31**		
Calming down	7 (11.5%)	8 (13.8%)	10 (32.3%)	6.954*	0.031*
God willing	14 (23.0%)	33 (56.9%)	6 (19.4%)	19.360*	<0.001*
Request	20 (32.8%)	7 (12.1%)	2 (6.5%)	12.341*	0.002*
Suggestive alternative	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.5%)	3.528	MCp=0.108
Exclamation	15 (24.6%)	7 (12.1%)	8 (25.8%)	3.737	0.154
Prayer to hearer	3 (4.9%)	3 (5.2%)	1 (3.2%)	0.492	MCp=0.869
Expression of destiny acceptance	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	–	–
Thanks	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.5%)	3.528	MCp=0.107
Internal	**92**	**127**	**52**		
Downgraders	9 (9.8%)	10 (7.9%)	1 (1.9%)	3.088	0.214
Upgraders	83 (90.2%)	117 (92.1%)	51 (98.1%)	3.088	0.214

Note. χ^2: Chi square test; FE: Fisher Exact; *: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Regarding Najdis, 10 more significant differences were noted in relation to social dominance. Najdis produced significantly more explanations, names, greetings and expressions of God-willingness with equal addressees, more expressions of acknowledging responsibility, address terms and requests with more powerful addressees and more offers of repair and expressions to calm down with less powerful addressees.

Discussion

The current study aimed to compare the apology behaviour of Alexandrians and Najdis. The results in relation to Research Questions (RQ) 1 and 2 show a major similarity between the two regions when it comes to the frequency of occurrence of the apology strategies. Both groups

of participants produced expressions of apology (e.g., *I'm sorry*) the most, followed by offers of repair, explanations and acknowledgements of responsibility. This similarity comes in stark contrast with earlier VP studies between the two regions which always found significant variations (e.g., El-Dakhs, 2018a, 2021; El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2021). What could explain the unexpected similarity in the present study is the type of speech act under examination. Apologizing is at the heart of Islam which is the religion of the majority of Saudis and Egyptians. Hence, the power of religion could have been unitary in this context and led to exaggerated apologies to win the victim's empathy, similar to the findings of Bataineh and Bataineh (2008) with Jordanians. Due to the significance of apologizing in Islam, the Quran mentions that God taught Adam how to apologize and seek forgiveness for his initial sin as in the following verse: "Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful" (AlBaqara – Verse 37 – from King Saud University's online translation of Quran).

The Quran also teaches Muslims how to apologize and seek repentance for their faults through several verses, some of which are spoken by Prophets: "[Noah] said, 'My Lord, I seek refuge in You from asking that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have mercy upon me, I will be among the losers'" (Hud – verse 47 – from King Saud University's online translation of Quran).

Additionally, Islam highlights the importance of apologizing by stating that the wrongdoings that violate others' rights cannot be forgiven except if the wrongdoer seeks forgiveness from the victim. In fact, God forgives everything in Islam except polytheism and wrongdoings against the rights of others. A relevant hadith that urges Muslims to apologize for their wrongdoings to others is the following:

Narrated Abu Huraira:

> *Allah's Apostle said, 'Whoever has wronged his brother, should ask for his pardon (before his death), as (in the Hereafter) there will be neither a Dinar nor a Dirham. (He should secure pardon in this life) before some of his good deeds are taken and paid to his brother, or, if he has done no good deeds, some of the bad deeds of his brother are taken to be loaded on him (in the Hereafter).'* (Sahih al-Bukhari 6534 / Book 81, Hadith 123 – from Sunnah.com)

Another interesting part of the results to RQs 1 and 2 is that offers of repairs was the second most commonly used strategy after the use of expressions of apology. This finding was aligned with the work of Morsi (2022) on Cairene Arabic. This again can have religious groundings due to the religious rule that "whoever breaks/destroys something must fix it" and the concept of "deyya" which allows people to accept compensations for others' wrongdoings, including physical harm. With this background, Muslims often tend to seek forgiveness through offering repair to their wrongdoing. This is particularly important since they emphasize the need to be forgiven. In fact, an important Saudi expression—Samhoona, which means "forgive us"—is commonly used by Saudis when they say farewell to others after having spent some time with them to ensure forgiveness for any wrongdoings they may have unconsciously performed.

Another important aspect of the findings in relation to RQ2 is that Najdis produced significantly more greetings and downgraders than Alexandrians while Alexandrians used significantly more address terms, terms of endearment and upgraders. The Najdis' use of greetings shows the greater importance they attach to interpersonal relations than Alexandrians who may act more pragmatically and initiate the conversations without several greetings. This result is aligned with earlier comparisons between the two regions (e.g., El-Dakhs, 2021; El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2021). Additionally, this result shows that the two dialects reflect varied levels of collectivism (Hofstede, 2001) as the Najdis showed more concern about the relationship with

the interlocutors than Alexandrians did. As for the internal modifications, they showed that both groups tend to use internal modifications frequently. This is aligned with the suggestions of Hall (1976) that the Arab World prefer to communicate in an implicit manner. However, while Najdis used more downtoners than Alexandrians, Alexandrians used more upgraders than Najdis. This reflects that Najdis seem to tone down their apologies more than Alexandrians since Najdis seem to be a more conservative society (El-Dakhs, 2021; El-Dakhs & Ahmed, 2021).

When it comes to the effect of gender, the answer to RQ3 showed no significant differences due to gender in the choice of apology strategies among men and women in the two regions. This result comes to the contrary of earlier research in the Arab World in which gender differences often emerged in the use of speech acts (e.g., Derki, 2023). Again, it seems the unitary power of religion in this speech act superseded the influence of gender. However, minor gender differences were noted with initiators and modifiers. Men used more terms of endearment than women in Alexandrian Arabic, which reflects the actual use of Alexandrian Arabic in which men often call each other with several nicknames (e.g., ghost, friend, brother, etc.). As for Najdis, women used significantly more greetings than men, which reflects women's increasing emphasis on interpersonal relations. On the contrary, Najdi men showed stronger preference to produce address terms and prayers to the hearer. This reflects a more direct approach to handle apologies since Najdi men preferred to address the interlocutor and initiate their apologies with few preceding greetings. Additionally, Najdi men employed more religious discourse in their utterances in the form of prayers to the hearer, probably due to Najdi men's more extensive involvement with religious institutions, such as the masjid (mosque) than Najdi women.

In addition to the effect of gender, the current study addressed the variables of social distance and dominance in RQs 4 and 5. Similar to earlier studies globally (e.g., Farenkia, 2022; Su & Chang, 2021) and in the Arab World (e.g., Banikalef et al., 2015; Hodeib, 2019), significant differences were noted for the two variables. However, the influence of social dominance was significantly greater than the influence of social distance, which was similar to the case in Jordanian Arabic (Banikalef et al., 2015). As for social distance, both groups produced significantly more expressions of apology with distant relations. This reflects special sensitivity when dealing with distant interlocutors, which is aligned with the collectivistic nature of the Arab World (Hofstede, 2001). Additionally, Alexandrians produced significantly more address terms and Najdis produced significantly more requests to distant than intimate relations. The addressees of intimate relations received significantly more terms of endearment from Alexandrians and acknowledgements of responsibility and prayers from Najdis. The special treatment that intimate relations received, particularly in the form of increased use of terms of endearment and prayers, further highlights the importance of solidarity with intimate connections in the Arab World.

As mentioned above, the influence of social dominance was the most prominent in the current study. A total of 19 significant differences were noted for the two groups. The great significance the two groups attach to social dominance can be explained in terms of their collectivistic nature in which hierarchical relations play a prominent role (Hofstede, 2001). An additional variable could be the religious and social cultures in which emphasis is placed on forming good relations with less and more powerful addressees as shown in the following hadith:

Anas bin Malik narrated that:

> *An older man came to talk to the Prophet, and the people were hesitant*
> *to make room for him. The Prophet said: He is not one of us who does*
> *not have mercy on our young and does not respect our elders.* (Jami'
> atTirmidhi 1919/ Book 27, Hadith 25 – from Sunnah.com)

It must be mentioned that some similarities were noted in the behaviour of Alexandrians and Nadjis regarding social dominance. Both groups used explanations and names more frequently with equal addressees, more address terms with more powerful addressees, and calming down expressions with less powerful addressees. This pattern reflects the special sensitivity to status in the community since more powerful addressees are called with specific address terms, not with their initial names, while equal addressees are called with their first names and are offered explanations to situations. As for less powerful addressees, calming-down expressions are appropriate since they can be in a position of fear from their interlocutors (e.g., a young child addressing his older brother or a janitor talking to a university student).

Conclusion

The current study adopted a VP approach to compare the realization of the speech act of apology between Alexandrian and Najdi Arabic. The results showed great similarity in the choice and frequency of occurrence in the apology strategies in the two regions. The results also showed varying effects for social factors on the apology behaviour of the two groups of participants; namely, a strong effect for social dominance, a moderate effect for social distance and a limited effect for gender.

Based on the current results, we can make two theoretical implications. First, apologizing may not be always a face-threatening act as proposed by Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987). It is important to consider the culture in which apologies take place. In the current study, the speech act of apology seems more of a face-supportive act since the act of apologizing is highly regarded and emphasized in the dominant religion of the two regions. The apologist is viewed as somebody who followed the preachings of Islam and may be forgiven in the Hereafter. Second, although Alexandrians and Najdis are classified as a high-context culture (Hall, 1976) and a collectivist society (Hofstede, 2001), they vary in the degree of implicit-explicit communication and their emphasis on the formation and support of interpersonal relations. Hence, these dichotomies may not fit describing human relations. Continuums of a variety of degrees/levels will be more suitable for human communication/relations.

Considering that data in the current study were collected from 120 participants, with 60 participants representing each region, it is recommended to replicate the current study with a larger number of participants to increase generalizability. It is also recommended to employ other ethnographic methods of data collection to increase the authenticity of the data. Additionally, with the rise of the VP approach and the pluricentric nature of the Arabic language, it is recommended to conduct similar studies across other Arabic dialects and to examine other speech acts across different parts of the Arab World.

Acknowledgement

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Notes on Contributors

Dina Abdel Salam El-Dakhs is the Chair of the Linguistics and Translation Department and the Director of the Applied Linguistics Research Lab at Prince Sultan University. She has extensive experience in teaching in and coordinating TESOL and Applied Linguistics programs. Her research interests are Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Psycholinguistics and Second Language Learning and Teaching. She has several publications in flagship journals.

Mervat M. Ahmed is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics & Vice-Dean for Training and Community Service at the College of Language & Communication (CLC) at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport. Her research interests are pragmatics, discourse analysis and stylistics.

Jawaher Nasser AlHaqbani is a research assistant at the Applied Linguistics Research Lab, College of Humanities and Sciences, Prince Sultan University. She has teaching experience in English language courses and coordination experience in academic accreditation. She is also a SAQF reviewer. She has several papers published in well-known journals. Her research interests are MALL, Pragmatics, Language Teaching and Learning and Discourse Analysis.

Afrah Alenezi is a research assistant at the Applied Linguistics Research Lab, College of Humanities and Sciences, Prince Sultan University. She completed her Master's degree in the field of Translation from Al-Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University in 2022. She has experience in teaching English language courses and translation experience with different academic institutes including King Saud University and Majmaah University. Her research interests include media translation, culture and translation, as well as technological areas of translation.

ORCID

Dina Abdel Salam El-Dakhs, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2943-987X
Mervat M. Ahmed, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7231-5410
Jawaher Nasser Alhaqbani, https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3346-3311
Afrah Alenezi, https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3864-9485

Appendix A: Apology scenarios (translated into English)

Please, note that two versions of these scenarios were used in the actual study to allow female participants to address female interlocutors and male participants to address male interlocutors.

<u>Situation (1)</u>
Professor Ahmed, who teaches one of your major courses, asks all of you to submit an assignment at a certain time, but you couldn't make it and it was out of your hands.

Professor: Hello Tarek. Where is your assignment? The deadline was yesterday and all your colleagues have already submitted it.

You: …………………………………………………………………………………..

<u>Situation (2)</u>
You are doing a major group project with one of your classmates that you don't know well. Both of you will get the same grade on this project. Your classmate asks you to submit your assigned part the day before, but you totally forgot about it. The next day, he/she asks you about your part.

Classmate: Where is your assigned part in the project, Selim? Why haven't you sent it so far? The submission deadline is soon and we need to revise it before submitting it.

You: ………………………………………………………………………………….

<u>Situation (3)</u>
You always have your English classes in Hall (#5) at your university. When you go to class, you notice that the janitor has just finished cleaning it. Accidentally, you spill your cup of coffee on the floor in front of the Janitor who is upset and disappointed.

Janitor: Why have you done that?! I have spent hours cleaning this room!
You: ………………………………………………………………………………….

<u>Situation (4)</u>

Your father wanted you to bring him an important postal parcel on your way back home, but you totally forgot about it. When you get back home, he asks you about it.

Father: Hi Mostafa. Please tell me you brought the postal parcel I told you about. It's really urgent.

You:
…………………………………………………………………………………………

<u>Situation (5)</u>
You made plans to go to a restaurant with a friend, but something came up and you had to cancel these plans at the last moment. You call your friend to cancel.

Friend: Hey pal! I have been waiting for you at the restaurant for some time now. Where are you?

You:

…………………………………………….……………………………………………..

Situation (6)

You use your younger brother's stationery without his permission. You hear him searching for it to do his H.W.

Brother: Where is my stationary? I had it on my desk. I need to finish my H.W.

You:

………………………………………………………………………………………….

Appendix B: Initiators and external modifiers

Initiators

1- Name (e.g., Ahmed)
2- Greeting (e.g., Hello)
3- Address term (e.g., Sir)
4- Term of endearment (e.g., sweetheart)
5- Attention grabber (e.g., Look!)

External modifiers

1- Calming down (e.g., Don't worry!)
2- God willing (e.g., InshaaAllah = God's willing)
3- Request (e.g., Can you allow me one more day?)
4- Suggested alternative (e.g., Why don't you go alone instead?)
5- Exclamation (e.g., Oh!)
6- Prayer to hearer (e.g., May God grant you good health!)
7- Expression of destiny acceptance (e.g., It's the degree of Allah and He does whatever He wills)
8- Thanks (e.g., Thank you!)

Appendix C: Coding Scheme for Internal Modifiers – Adapted from Trosborg (1995)

Type	Characteristic	Example
1. Downgraders		
1.1. Polite markers	Words of phrases that express politeness	"*Please*."
1.2. Understaters	Expressions that describe or represent (something) as being smaller or less important than it really is.	"*I think it's a bit salty for me, the soup.*"
1.3. Hedges	Mitigating word or construction used to lessen the impact of an utterance.	"*You are making kind of a statement with the pants though.*"
1.4. Downtoners	Words or phrases which reduce the force of another word or phrase.	"*Yes, I mean it might be but it still seems to me at the moment that perhaps it's not a good idea.*"
1.5. Cajolers	Flattery or insincere expressions to persuade someone to do something.	"*you know… you see*"
1.6. Subjectivizers	Expressions of subjective opinion that lower the assertive force of an act.	"*I think*" "*I feel*" "*I guess*" "*I believe*" "*I suppose*"
2. Upgraders		
2.1. Swear words	Rude or offensive words	"*damned*", "*bloody*"
2.2. Overstaters	Words or phrases that describe or explain something in a way that makes it seem more important or serious than it really is	"*absolutely*", "*terribly*"
2.3. Intensifiers	A word, especially an adverb or adjective, that has little meaning itself but is used to add force to another adjective, verb, or adverb:	"*very*", "*so really*"
2.4. Plus commitors	A word or phrase that reflects the speaker's strong commitment to the utterance	*of course*, *certainly*, *I am sure*
2.5. Swear by God	Swearing by God for assertion	*I swear*