AMERICAN AND ARABIC POLITICAL APOLOGIES: CONTRASTIVE APPROACH FROM A CULTURAL POINT OF VIEW

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Abstract: In everyday world, apologies help to establish social balance and harmony between people. Apologies are speech act within politeness theory and the theory of politeness doesn't appear equally in all societies (Lyons, 1981, p. 188). Politeness principles also vary from culture to culture, for example it is interpreted differently in Chinese than American societies (Leech, 1983, p.10). The present study aims to identify the different uses of apologies within two different cultures, Arabic and American, in the field of politics, and to depict and examine to what extent the cultural factor influences the strategies that both Arab and American politicians use in their speech act of apology. For this study we have chosen some excerpts selected from Arabic and American discourses held by presidents, ministers, prime ministers, and, politicians.

Keywords: America, apology, culture, discourse analysis, Iraq, pragmatics.

1. Introduction

As a mean of communication, language has all the properties to define culture, and being a part of culture, language has all the prerogatives inherent to culture, including the right to protection(J. Mey as cited in Kecsekes, Horn, 2007, p. 172).The realization of (im)politeness can be determined by some kinds of linguistic expressions, which equally well form part of politic behavior of social interaction, such as *I'm so sorry* are highly routinized, ritualistic linguistic formulae (Watts, 2003, p.31). A social process such of that of education and acculturation help to polish our minds"

> "The social process has its goals, and the degree and the kind of this goal is ideologically constructed and, since it is determined not by the individual her/himself but by repeated habitual interactions with other it is socially reproduced and is therefore institutionalized" (ibid, 38)**.**

An interesting language is the one who can be used to express humble or even repugnant thoughts or ideas, not the one who is just noble**.** The linguistic culture is inseparable from language and politics but it is separated from both text and language itself.Within the linguistic culture, we consider language as the most elaborate cultural construct that we have, being also the primary vehicle of acculturation, of learning one's culture, constructed though it may be.The members of linguistic culture often cherish the myths and beliefs about language which exist within linguistic cultures. These beliefs or myths affect policy in the area of attitudes toward the language, attitudes about other languages (and their speakers), the rights of other language speakers, and in challenges to the established policy**.**

Within Arabic linguistic culture the language and the use of language is affected by the holy Quran. For this Glasse (1989), and Matloob (1980) state that Quran helps to shape the Arabic language and the reflection of this holy book is clear on language use. The command of the holy book has its impact on speech act theory.This helps the Arabic language to be 'sacred language' and to specify it as a direct language (Glasse, 1989, 46). The way through which the society (Arabic society) expresses and acts is conducted by some beliefs and myths (Schiffman, 1996, 68-70). The myths as mentioned by Schiffman (ibid) are: " (1) the superiority of Arabic, (2) the classical-colloquial diglossia, (3) thoughts about the ranking

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of various dialects, (4) the structure of Arabic, (5) the "sacredness of Arabic". But are there any reflections of these myths on Arabic political speeches while apologizing? Is there any reflection of religion while apologizing by Arabic politicians? Do they use a direct or indirect way of apologizing frequently?

On the other hand, the American linguistic culture, different from the English one, however affined to by the seed of monolingualism inherited from the latest one, deals also with some myths. The most important is the hegemonistic aspect of the English language, a sort of imperialism that rolls over the other languages and subjugates them (Schiffman, 1996, pp. 2012-14). Regarding the American culture, the question we need to ask here is that; Do Americans use certain effective words to reflect their superiority and their power or no?. Such perspective argues that languages do not reflect social structure, they are social structure; they do not reflect power, they are power. Schiffman (ibid) contradicts it by emphasizing the confusion that this perspective makes between code and context, as well as between language and use of language.

2. Speech act and culture

Crystal (1987, 52) points that in our social interaction some 'ritual expressions' play a vital role in all our forms, written or spoken, and any omission of these 'ritual expressions' can lead to a critical atmosphere, or even social sanction. Therefore politeness is a matter of showing consideration to others which can be manifested through general social behavior as well as by linguistics (Jenny, 1995, p.150). But politeness may operates differently in different cultures and Leech (1983, 10) points that for socio-pragmatics, it is clear that politeness principle and cooperative principle operate variably in different cultures or language communities, in different social situations, among different social classes, etc. For example, politeness is interpreted differently in Chinese than American societies. When we use these 'ritual expressions' in our everyday speech we do not merely use a combination of meaningless words. When we speak we perform actions within our speech, many of our speech acts are specific i.e. culture-specific and this is the case of institutionalized speech acts, which is typically the use of standardized and stereotyped formula, such in ceremonies. From other side, a given speech act may be presented only in certain cultures. Furthermore, a speech act can be carried out differently in different languages/cultures. In this regard the use of the same speech act may differ in its directness/indirectness in different cultures. The differences within those speech acts are generally associated with the different means that languages use, i.e. the purpose within which the language is used for, to realize speech acts. The aims of this study is to analyze the way through which the American and the Arab politicians use apology directly or indirectly and the influenced the culture may have on it. Huang, (2007, pp.119-123) affirms that the cultural differences in directness versus indirectness in the expression of a speech act frequently lead speakers from one culture to misinterpret speakers from another culture.

The way apology is perceived and interpreted is different from one culture to another. For example, in West Africa, the use of an excuse – or equivalent expression – does not necessarily or uniquely connote any guilt or direct responsibility on the part of the speaker. In Japan, one can utter Sumimasen in situations where an excuse would be highly inappropriate in our culture, such as when we offer a gift or when we accept an invitation. The use of speech act of apologizing can serve everywhere, since there will be always this need to make sure that all social and psychological mechanisms are set back to normal, and the green light is given further for safe interaction at the unmarked level: business as usual. (May, 2001, 286)**.**

3. Apology and political discourse

Language is used for various purposes. The use of language is governed by the conditions of society, inasmuch these conditions determine the users' access to and control of

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their communicative means (Mey, 1993, p.42). Discourses in political field are communicated through a bundle of multiple kinds of political texts which focus on the subject of language, used in the field of national affairs, competition among politicians, elections, international affairs, etc (Van Dijk, 1997, p.12). Political texts as Van Dijk (ibid) defines, is the text which can be define by its actors or authors, in another word by its politicians. Fairclough and Isabela (2012, p.17) define the political context as institutional one, i.e. contexts which make it possible for actors to exert their agency and empower them to act on the world in a way that has an impact on matters of common concern. In politics, written texts are different from the spoken ones because of the politicians' impact on the others. While in spoken texts politicians use verbal impact to control and affect others, written texts, on the other hand, seem to lack all these features, and, therefore, are obliged to encode lexically and syntactically meaning (Crystal, 1995. P. 291). In political discourse the meaning can be stated only in actions (political actions). Using the language in political field and its active aspect can be stated through orders to be obeyed, making laws, issuing rights, etc. Specifying the meaning and stating the properties of the discourse that can be determined by its structure of language can help us to explain the illocutionary force from the language used by the users. The whole procedure and the relation of the text and context's structure refer to Pragmatics discourse (Van Dijk, 1977, p. 205).

Apologies in political field may have the same principles in public arena, because in both public and private circumstances apologies presuppose that an offence has occurred. To apologies is to regret your action or more clearly to apologies is to say or to write that you have caused pain, upset, hurt, annoy, or cause trouble to others (Collin, 1993, p. 36). Trosborg (1987) asserts that, apologizing involves two participants: an apologizer and a recipient of the apology. The apologizer (or offender) needs to apologize when he/she performs an act (action or utterance), for which he/she (apologizer) is responsible. In political apologies the offender is a political actor but the offended may not be one and besides the national political apologies we may face international apologies.When it comes to apologies in political discourse Thompson (2005, p.1) defines political apology as "an official apology given by a representative of a state, corporation, or other organized group to victims, of injustices committed by the group's officials or members". The valuation of apology act is important because this speech act has the potential power to establish good relations and good feelings between members and to trust the relationship between those members (ibid: 2). Focusing on political apologies, scholars like Govier and Werwoerd prove that the central important power of apologies is in its ability to supply to victims the acknowledgement of their dignity. However, with some other scholars apology is a paradoxical act. Being a paradoxical act, Tavuchis (1989, p. 115) refers to one of those paradoxical points; If the speaker or the one who offers the speech act of apology is not the same responsible one of doing the offence, then the act will lose its sincerity. One of the main characteristics of apology is the acknowledgement of the responsibility and remorse of the committed act. Hence, this cannot be applied to someone who offers the apology instead of the real offender, being therefore a paradoxical apology. In other word, the fake identity of the apologizer moves us to consider the apology as a paradoxical act. The other aspect discussed by Celermajer (2008, p. 20) attaches the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. In most of the situations, the relationship between them won't be like before (ibid).

4. Speech act of apology analysis. Comparative approach

The lexemes of expressing apologies don't occur in one syntactic framework but in a number of different syntactic frameworks (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 52ff). The following analysis of American and Arabic texts will help us to examine the impact of cultural factors on the use of apology by politicians from the two different cultures.

5. American apologies

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Text (1): "*In that speech, I was talking about the impact violent crime and vicious drug cartels were having on communities across the country and the particular danger they posed to children and families" Clinton told the Washington Post on Thursday. "Looking back, I shouldn't have used those words, and I wouldn't use them today.*" (Hillary Clinton: February 25, 2016).

In extract (1) Hillary Clinton uses her discourse to constitute an act of apology for using words like "superpredators" in order to describe kids with "no conscience, no empathy". The term is considered to be unsuitable because of its referring to dangerous youth and also considered to be a racist term and mostly used to describe African American youth. Pragmatically, it is an apology but syntactically Hillary does not use any detached verb to describe her apology or at least one of the apologies forms that can suggest her insincerity. In her discourse, Hillary gives justifications to her offence towards the offended kids and gives excuses like she was "talking about the impact violent crime and vicious drug cartels were having on communities". She plays with the syntactic form of the utterance. She did not refer to her offence, did not mention it but instead she refers to her offence that she committed by "words" instead of saying "superpredators" which is another way for being away from the responsibility. Within this excerpt we can realize the hegemonic and the imperialism of American language. By using the indirect way, Hillary reflects the power of their language as stated by Schiffman (1996, 2012-14), according to whom languages don't reflect power, they are power.

Text (2): "*You know Bill Clinton made a lot of mistakes on Bin Laden, and I think he should apologize too. But I was at the wheel. It happened on my watch. I was warned. I didn't listen. And I am sorry. I really am. I could have done more to prevent these tragedies*" (Bush: September 11, 2013).

In extract (2), former president George W. Bush uses an apology for not preventing the attack and the tragedy that happened on 9/11. In the very early of the interview with Oprah, Bush started giving several excuses and justifications for the action committed by Bin Laden on 9/11. He says "Bin Laden wasn't really on my radar", "I was so focused on Saddam Hussein that I couldn't see anything else, there was a general lack of awareness. I'm sure Condi Rice didn't even known who Bin Laden was" and "Bill Clinton made a lot of mistakes on Bin Laden, and I think he should apologize too". All of these justifications are used to minimize the action and its traces or in other way to minimize his responsibility from the act committed towards the victims. After all using the coordinating (but) gives a new turning in Bush speech. Bush admitted that it was his mistake and he "was warned and didn't listen". However, by using the coordinating (and), he links the previous with the coming sentences i.e. admitting of being mistaken and offering the apology. Bush offers his apology by using the "fully expanded form" (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 52ff) of apology i.e. "I am sorry". However, some scholars consider the lexeme "sorry" as a multi-pragmatic functional verb and it expresses insincerity while apologizing. We can affirm that this extract it is pragmatically, semantically and syntactically an apology. And it is a direct way of apologizing.

Text (3): "*I have made it clear that the United States government had nothing to do with this video, and I believe its message must be rejected by all who respect our common humanity" Obama told the U.N. General Assembly. "It is an insult not only to Muslims, but to America as well – for as the city outside these walls makes clear, we are a country that has welcomed people of every race and religion*." (Obama: September 25, 2012).

In extract (3), Obama offers his apology to UN for a short movie entitled "The Innocence of Muslims" which Obama's administration suggested that this trailer movie may have been one of the inspirations for attacking the U.S consulate in Benghazi by a mob. Pragmatically this is an indirect way of apologizing but syntactically and semantically there is

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no single sign to prove that his speech is an apology. The absence of the detached verb from the whole extract makes it clear that there is no apologizing act. All what Obama did is to say "it is an insult not only to Muslims, but to America as well". The indirect way of apologizing and the way of expressing almost all his speech as:

- "I have made it clear" - like if someone is trying to reject any discussion about the matter later on;

- "its message must be rejected by all who respect our common humanity" – obligation to respect Americans common humanity;

- "we are a country that has welcomed people of every race and religion" – talking with proud of themselves and the country who did favor to others assert the imperialism of American language and it is a social structure rather than reflecting social structure (Schiffman, 1996, pp. 2012 – 2014).

Text (4): "*There is nothing to apologize for" the presidential hopeful, 69, told us. "Everything that I said is correct. People are flowing through the borders and we have no idea who they are, where they're coming from. They're not only coming from Mexico, they're coming from all over South America and the world*." (Trump: June 26, 2015).

In extract (4), Donald Trump refuses to apologize to his "racist" remarks towards the Mexican immigrants. Trump's refusal to apologize is manifested directly in this extract. In his discourse he refuses totally to apologize and insists that "there is nothing to apologize for". Trump emphasizes that he did nothing wrong rather everything he said was correct therefore there is no need to apologize for that ("Everything that I said is correct"). He completely ignores the identity of Mexican immigrants, and he points out that the immigrants are coming from all over South America which is one way to blur the identity of the offended one. By doing so he tries to be away from the responsibility towards Mexican immigrants. In this extract we can clearly observe the imperialism of American language which is reflected in the way Trump expresses his speech and his refusal to apologize to immigrants. The language used by him shows the power of American language and at the same time reflects the power.

Text (5): "*Hell, no. Hillary Clinton will not be apologizing to Donald Trump for correctly pointing out how his hateful rhetoric only helps ISIS recruit more terrorists*." (Clinton spokesman: December 21, 2015)

In extract (5), Hillary Clinton refuses to apologize to Donald Trump after demanding the latter to apologize to him for her speech. Brian Fallon, the spokesman of Hillary, says "Hell no. Hillary will not be apologizing to Donald Trump" emphasizing severe refusal to apologize. In this speech we can notice an assertion for refusing to apologize by using the modal verb "will" ("will not apologize"). The spokesman asserts the correctness of Hillary's comment. In this extract we can perceive the use of a strategy of non-apologizing directly. The power of the language used in this extract is very clear and refusing to apologize is asserting that. The power of the language encodes the imperialism of American language and makes it clear.

6. Arabic apologies

Text (1): "*This year everything will be fixed. Please accept our apologies for what happened... God willing... by next year there won't be a single church or house that is not restored*" (Al-Sisi: February 12, 2016)

In extract (1), the president of Egypt Al-Sisi apologizes to Coptic Christians for not reconstructing the churches which were destroyed by Muslims Brotherhood in 2013. In this extract he apologizes for an action that was not done by himself or during his reign. Al-Sisi offers his apology for what Muslims Brotherhood (the supporters of Mohammed Morsi) did in 2013 after Morsi being ousted. Semantically this is an apology but Al-Sisi played with the syntactic form of the verb *apology* and with the stylistic way of expressing the verb *apologize*.

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In order to convey the responsibility for the act committed, the speaker has to indicate the illocutionary force of the verb *apologize* as (S + apologize) or one of the forms of apologizing. Pragmatically what he offers is not apology; it is indirect speech act of requesting to apologize rather than direct apology which states insincerity. In this extract we can notice the reflection of religion as stated by Matloob and Glasse, meaning the reference to God. We also identified the superiority of Arabic language in the lack of directness of the way of apologizing that Glasse stressed to be characteristic to the Arabic language.

Text (2): "*I ask for pardon from all Yemeni men and women for any shortcoming that occurred during my 33-year rule and I ask forgiveness and offer my apologies to all Yemeni men and women*" (Saleh: January 23, 2012)

In extract (2), before going to US for treatment, the president of Yemen, Saleh, apologizes to Yemeni people for any shortcoming happened during his reign. Semantically this is an apology. Pragmatically Saleh requests Yemeni people for pardon and forgiveness which means that he uses indirect speech act, namely requesting to offer an apology. The use of coordinating (and), links his request for forgiveness and his declarative sentence to offer his apology**.** Syntactically this extract does not carry the verb of apology, but instead it carries a noun which Saleh considers it as an apology. To apologize is to express your sincere apology towards the wrong committed acts. Therefore we can affirm that this is not apologizing speech act and that it reflects the insincerity of Saleh towards his people. Once again we can notice the lack of directness which Glasse asserted to be with Arabic language. Also we can observe the the superiority of Arabic language in this excerpt.

Text (3): "*We apologize to the Syrian people over what our government's representatives declared at the Security Council*." (Houri: August 5, 2011)

In extract (3), the Lebanese parliamentary Ammar Houri apologizes to Syrian people for Lebanon's decision to abstain from voting on the UN Security Council presidential statement pertaining to the brutal crackdown in Syria. In this extract we can notice the direct way of apologizing. Pragmatically, semantically and syntactically this is a direct sincere apology towards the state of affairs. In his speech, Houri reflects the illocutionary force by using (S + Apologize) (we apologize).

Text (4): "*I stand before you today, before the entire world, to apologize for all the harm, all the crimes committed by that despot against so many innocents, to apologize for the extortion and terrorism he meted out on so many states*." (Magarief: September 27, 2012)

In extract (4), the newly appointed Libya's leader Magarief apologizes at the United Nations on Thursday for the crimes of ousted dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Semantically this is an apology. Pragmatically the statement used by Magarief expresses his desire to apologize for the harm and crimes committed by Gaddafi. From a syntactic point of view we can't consider it a speech act of apology because it lacks the sincere verb of apologizing. Within this excerpt we could notice one of the myths and beliefs mentioned by Glasse, meaning the superiority of Arabic. However, we could also perceive the lack of directness in the way of apologizing stressed by Glasse.

Text (5): "*It is quite unfortunate that such events would happen anywhere around the world and it is completely unacceptable to tolerate such a situation in Tunisia*." (Moncef Marzouki: October 5, 2012)

In extract (5), Tunisia's president Moncef Marzouki apologizes to a woman charged under an indecency law after being raped by two police officers.Pragmatically this is indirect way of apologizing. Syntactically we can't talk about an apology because of the absence of the detached verb (apology). The absence of the detached verb from the whole extract makes it clear that it is not an apologizing act. What Marzouki did was referring to such events as unfortunate and unacceptable events. The indirect way of apologizing stands against what

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Glasse asserted. The way of expressing the speech act of apology (indirectly) confirms the superiority of Arabic language as Schiffmann stated.

7. Findings and Conclusions

The analysis of the texts examined helped us to find different strategies used by Arabic and American politicians ranging from direct to indirect strategies. Within these strategies we have identified the use of some lexical and syntactic ways and also a reflection of belief or myth. Our analysis showed that, more frequently the politicians aimed to offer their apology indirectly in both cultures, which lacks most often the sincerity, rather looking for minimizing the responsibility of the act. However, the analysis showed that the way through which the Arabic politicians apologize is rather indirect by using different formal configurations indicating the illocutionary force of apology.

While Glasse characterize the Arabic language by directness that gives to the language a sacred character, we have pointed that, at least in the political speech act, the apology is conducted through an indirect way. Going further and recalling Schiffman observation: "modern languages have, on the whole, lost their sacred quality; the identity of the word and the object named is no longer direct, it has become obscure" (1996, p. 69)

We can strongly convey that, since the language spoken by Arab is modern Arabic, the indirectness is now one of the characteristics of the language, at least in political speech act. This is bringing upon the language the loss of its sacred character, confirming at the same time Glasse observation regarding the dependency between directness and sacredness.

Also our analysis showed that the way through which American politicians apologize is rather indirect one. Schiffman stated that the seed of monolingualism is inherited in American culture. The most important aspects which we noticed in this study are the hegemonistic aspect of the English language, a sort of imperialism that rolls over the other languages and subjugates them (Schiffman, 1996, pp. 2012-14). However, indirectness seems to function as the dominant marker in acts of apology in American public discourse. Of course, this culture-specific means for expressing an apology arises from a particular configuration of socio-cultural influences and historical experiences.

The intensification of the migration flow has determined the increase of the xenophobic attitudes that are reflected both in behavior and in public speeches. Furthermore, in our analysis of data from American political discourse a preference for refusing to make an apology emerges as growing in popularity, perhaps because apologizing is increasingly interpreted by some as an act of cowardice or backing down. The clearest case of the strategic use of the "non-apology" manifests itself in Donald Trump's discourse presented above.

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