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## **GENDER DIFFERENCES IN THE ACQUISITION OF L2 SOCIOPRAGMATIC COMPETENCE**



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The aim of the article is to present and discuss the sociopragmatic dimension of linguistic competence acquired by Polish male and female advanced adult learners of English. The instrument used to elicit data was a discourse-completion task adapted from Blum-Kulka (1982) and modified for the sake of the research. There were 88 questionnaires administered in Polish (50 for females, 38 for males) and 89 questionnaires administered in English (50 for females, 39 for males). Inquiry forms contained a set of nine tasks eliciting apologies. The subjects were asked to write the utterances that they would use if they encountered such situations. Moreover, their task was to estimate which situation is the most difficult to face and which is the easiest.

### **1. Theoretical background**

As Iragui (1996: 53-4) puts it, “sociopragmatic competence refers to contextual distribution of the linguistic expressions and how this distribution relates to the relevant contextual factors such as social power and social distance.” Apprehending and producing contextually appropriate language is often perceived as a necessary factor of general communicative competence for the learners of a foreign language (Armaşu 2007-08; Bachman 1990; Olshtain 1989). Sociopragmatic competence is a sub-type of communicative competence, first defined by Hymes (1972) as consisting of grammatical competence and awareness of appropriate language use in a social context. Bachman (1990, in: Barron, 2001) additionally notices that communicative language skills consist of three elements:

- language competence,

- strategic competence,
- physiological mechanisms.

Language competence is furthermore divided into pragmatic competence and organisational competence. Pragmatic competence “is understood (...) as knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realising particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts, and finally knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular languages’ linguistic resources” (Barron, 2001: 10). Johnson and Johnson (1999: 76) explain after Chomsky (1980) that pragmatic competence “accounts for the speaker-hearer’s knowledge of the conditions of appropriate and effective use of the formal system.” Thomas (1983) distinguishes two types of pragmatic competence:

- pragmalinguistic competence,
- sociopragmatic competence.

Armaşu (2007-08: 110) provides similar characteristics of pragmatic competence, dividing it into:

- illocutionary competence,
- knowledge of speech acts and speech functions,
- sociolinguistic competence.

One of the most important elements in the notion of sociopragmatic competence is context, that is circumstances in which a communicative event occurs. Context determines politeness strategies, social distance, genre, register, meaning and interpretation of an utterance, producer’s communicative intentions and discourse analysis. Kopytko (2003: 45) argues that “context is a constitutive concept” for two disciplines: pragmatics and discourse analysis, and adds that “without it they simply would not exist.” Leech (1983: 13, cited by Kopytko, 2003) defines the notion of context as “any background knowledge assumed to be shared by speaker and hearer and which contributes to the hearer’s interpretation of what speaker means by a given utterance.” Recognising the context allows avoiding pragmatic errors between the speakers and gives the ability to produce socially acceptable language. However, Armaşu (2007/08) notices that learners’ L1 linguistic knowledge affects their L2 linguistic performance which is the most difficult aspect of second language learning. It has been observed that even the advanced students make pragmatic mistakes, and, moreover, “native speakers are often unaware of pragmatic rules until they are broken” (Armaşu, 2007/08: 110). That is why pragmatics should be taught in class. By explaining the role of convention in linguistic competence, Mercier (2003) notices that only because people believe that they act in a conventional way does not mean that they really act in a conventional way, as the grammatical development resulting from school education does not ensure a compatible proficiency in pragmatic competence. Coultas (2003: 5) confirms that “there is much to be learnt about how to use language appropriately in the many different contexts and for the many different purposes that we need it.” It also needs to be remembered that the use of language reveals the speaker’s personal features, beliefs and hierarchy of values. The view is confirmed by Saville-Troike (2003: 28) who is interested in “the extent to which language is shaping and controlling the thinking of its speakers” and in “the extent to which it is merely reflecting their world view”. The author also notices that there is a connection between the structure and “the content of a language and the beliefs, values and needs present in the culture of its speakers”. Pragmatic error, as Armaşu (2007-08: 109) puts it, “may hinder good communication between speakers (...), may make the speaker appear abrupt or brusque in social interactions (...), or may make the speaker appear rude or uncaring (...).” Čubajevaitė and Ruzaitė (2007: 69-70) underline that “the influence of context on the use of apologies is of high importance”, as “apologies are context-dependent.”

Moreover, Brody, Lovas and Hay (1995) emphasise that context, and precisely situational context is of crucial importance as far as gender differences in language production

are concerned. It needs to be emphasised that apologies are of emotional character as via the speech act of apologies speakers express their feelings. "Thus, the gender difference is most striking when situational factors make gender more salient, such that women tend to report greater emotional experiences than men in situations that involve interpersonal rather than impersonal emotion elicitors" (Kelly, Hutson-Comeaux, 1999: 107-120). Beinstein-Miller, Lewy and Peckham (1997: 723-751) agree that "situational cues activate gender expectations and individuals, acting in anticipation of their expectations, evoke gender-appropriate behavior." Canary and Dindia (1998: 133) enumerate the following elements characteristic of male language: "references to quantity, (...) judgmental adjectives, (...) elliptical sentences, (...) directives, (...) locatives (...) and 'I' references." Women, on the other hand, use adverbial intensifiers, questions and hedges, they refer to emotions, express uncertainty and produce longer utterances. Women's speech style is oriented to values of connection and affiliation while men's style reflects their concern with status. Lazare (2005), Holmes (1995, 2002) and Tannen (1996) claim that women apologise more often than men. It is partially caused by women's weak position resulting from the lower social status.

Čubajevaitė and Ruzaitė (2007: 67-8) emphasise that "apologies are of special importance in any communication since they have illocutionary force and thus are considered as speech acts. (...) Apologizing helps to enhance mutual respect and to keep the relationship between colleagues stable." Because of their function, Owen (1983) defines apologies as 'remedial interchanges' and Leech (1983: 125) similarly explains that "apologizing (...) can be regarded as an acknowledgement of an imbalance in the relation between *s* [speaker] and *h* [hearer], and to some extent, as an attempt to restore the equilibrium." Iragui (1996) observes that apologies uttered by native speakers are characterised by the use of politeness markers (for instance please, sir, madam), providing the name of the addressee and the use of intensifiers (especially adverbials). As far as the typical features of apologies uttered by non-native speakers, the following have been noticed: lack of emphasis accompanied by understatements and the extensive use of performative verb 'sorry' in direct apologies.

Speakers of British English are widely known for apologising in advance which is confirmed by Hatipoğlu (2004: 22), who observes that "apologies are used frequently in British culture, and (...) British people apologised a lot even before doing anything wrong or when they knew that they were not responsible for the problem."

There are several types of apologies enumerated by Aijmer (1996), Hatipoğlu (2004), Čubajevaitė and Ruzaitė (2007), the existence of which will be the subject of the analytical part of the article:

- explicit apology (I'm sorry, Excuse me),
- implicit apology (Forgive me),
- explanation (The bus hasn't arrived on time.),
- acknowledgement of responsibility (It's my fault),
- offer of repair (I will help you with the car),
- promise of forbearance (I promise I'll never do that again),
- emphatic / emotional apology (I'm terribly sorry),
- compound apologies (I'm so sorry, please accept my apologies),
- tentative apologies (I'd like to express my apology),
- self justification (I'm sorry but I've done what I could to avoid the situation),
- apologies with interjections (Oh, I haven't noticed you.),
- denial of acknowledgement of responsibility (Sorry, it's not my fault),
- apologising for language malfunctioning (Sorry, can you repeat it? / Sorry for interruption but I've misheard the last sentence).

According to Lazare (2005) there are some specific reasons why people apologise. The motives can be internal (caused by strong emotional states), external (caused by external pressure and manipulating the circumstances) or a combination of the two.


## 2. The research

The questionnaire mentioned in the introductory part of the article consisted of nine tasks requiring apologies in the following situations:

- 1) During the lecture your professor wants you to answer one question. You haven't heard the question. What do you say?
- 2) You've promised your child to see its performance at school, but you have to stay at work overtime. Your child is disappointed. What do you say?
- 3) You're a doctor whose patient died during the surgery. Your patient's family blame you for this. What do you say?
- 4) You bump into an old lady at the supermarket and she is irritated. What do you say?
- 5) You've cheated on your partner but he / she knows the truth. What do you say?
- 6) Your neighbour had lent you a car. You went to a doctor but after the visit you discover that the car has been stolen. What do you say to the neighbour?
- 7) You get to work late and your boss is looking at the watch. What do you say?
- 8) You've parked your car on the place for the disabled. A handicapped man has no space to park his car. What do you say?
- 9) You've sold a chewing gum which was past its sell-by date. Your client complains about it. What do you say?

The additional task was to assess which of the nine situations is the most difficult for the respondents and which is the easiest. The answers to the additional question are presented in the chart below:

**Fig. 1:** *The most / the least difficult situation according to the respondents*

The most difficult situation  The easiest situation	according to women	according to men
		3
	6	5
	5	6
	2	2
	8	8
	7	7
	9	9
	4	4
	1	1

As it can be seen in the table above, the most difficult situations to respond were 3, 6, 5 and 2 and the easiest situations were 1, 4, 9 and 7. Men and women answered almost identically. The only difference concerns situation 5 and 6 – men perceive the fifth situation as more difficult than the sixth situation, whereas women assess the two circumstances inversely. Whether similar perception translates into similar reactions in Polish and English will be the subject of further inquiries. The strategies used by the respondents are presented by means of quantitative data in the tables below. The first table focuses on the answers provided by males and the second table reflects women's reactions to the nine situations.



		SITUATION NUMBER					
		1		2			
		Pol	En	Pol	En	Pol	En
<b>S</b>		95	97				
<b>T</b>		72	42				15
<b>R</b>				36	8		
<b>A</b>		54	55	41	5	5	5
<b>T</b>				23	5	62	
<b>E</b>				3	5		
<b>G</b>							10
<b>Y</b>		21	24	51	45	67	
<b>I</b>					8	36	
<b>N</b>				3	3		
<b>P</b>				77	63	3	
<b>E</b>		8	3	18	29	41	
<b>R</b>					3		
<b>C</b>							
<b>E</b>							
<b>N</b>			3				
<b>T</b>							

**Fig. 3: Strategies used by female respondents (in percent)**

		SITUATION NUMBER																	
		3		4		5		6		7		8		9					
		LANGUAGE																	
		En	Pol	En	Pol	En	Pol	En	Pol	En	Pol	En	Pol	En	Pol	En	Pol	En	
		34	2		4		4	2											
				10	8		42												
		64	98	100	32	56	28	48	82	84	70	76	64	70					
		6	2		42	18	40	2	2	2	2	2	12						
				22	22				2	2	2	6	6	8					
		10	2		4	2	4	6		2			6	10					
		62	28	36	4	10	30	26	10	24	44	44	38	40					
		34	2		20	4	42	52	42	54	2	4	4	8					
					10	22			32	12		2		2					
		8	12	2	2		58	42	10	4	82	66	60	66					
		52	56	36	10	10	38	20	18	14	28	8	30	20					
				14		6			4	2	4	12	6	2					
							2							2					

	1		2	
	Pol	En	Pol	En
	Pol	En	Pol	En
Asking for repetition	96	100		
Expressing negative politeness	86	48		24
Expressing positive politeness			52	38
Explicit apology	78	54	4	82
Implicit apology			38	
Acknowledgement of responsibility				4
No acknowledgement of responsibility				4
Self justification	26	10	66	62
Explanation	2		6	34
Promise of forbearance				2
Offer of repair			74	72
Intensifiers	2		34	4
Interjections				
No apology				
Tentative apology				

*Situation 1 - During the lecture your professor wants you to answer one question. You haven't heard the question. What do you say?*

The first situation was evaluated as the easiest one requiring formal response. It is clearly visible that men and women provided quite similar answers. Both groups mostly decided to ask for repetition, use politeness markers (*sir, please*) and express explicit apology (*sorry*). However, men did not apologise as often as women and they did not use as much politeness markers as females. On the other hand, men used more intensifiers (*very, terribly*) which does not confirm the expectations. Women, however, confirmed that they are more polite and able to use more linguistic forms to express the apology. English answers analysed from gender perspective seem to be similar, but quite different from those expressed in Polish from content point of view. The most popular technique of apologising was asking for repetition which was accompanied by explicit apologies and politeness markers. This time men used not only more intensifiers, but also they justified themselves more often than women which may suggest that males do not feel so confident while using a foreign language. 3% of men did not apologise at all. Summarising the results, it can be said that in the situation which was perceived as the easiest one, Poles use quite a big number of politeness markers and explicit apologies, more in their native language than in the second language.

*Situation 2 - You've promised your child to see its performance at school, but you have to stay at work overtime. Your child is disappointed. What do you say?*

In the second situation, requiring informal response, the most often occurring answer in Polish was offer of repair (77% of men and 74 % of women) and self justification that was used by 51 % of men and 66 % of women. Explicit apologies were expressed by 41 % of males and 40 % of females. 52 % of women tend to manifest close relationship compared to

36 % of men. Women also have a tendency to express implicit apologies and use intensifiers more often than men. Men, on the other hand use two more strategies in order to apologise, namely acknowledgement of responsibility (3%) and promise of forbearance (3%). In English the majority of women (82%) decided to apologise explicitly (32% more than men) and the most often used strategy by men was offer of repair (63%). As much as 40 % of women used intensifiers compared to 29% of men. A striking difference is visible as far as showing close relationship is concerned – as much as 38% of women decided to use compared to only 8% of men. Women also used self justification and intensifiers more often than men. Men again produced more varied answers than women, responding via implicit apology (5%) and interjections (3%). Less than 10% of respondents decided to use explanations, promise of forbearance and acknowledgement of responsibility. More apologising strategies were used in English. The second situation revealed that apologising in the parent-child context differs in the two languages. In the foreign language respondents (especially women) used more explicit apologies and men did not show close relationship. Implicit apologies in this situations were more often used in Polish as only 5% of men and none of the women used this strategy in English.

*Situation 3 - You're a doctor whose patient died during the surgery. Your patient's family blame you for this. What do you say?*

The third situation was assessed by both groups as the most difficult to face with. It requires formal response. Respondents decided that the third situation described in Polish first of all requires self justification (67% of men, 60% of women) and implicit apologies (62% of men, 70% of women) that were accompanied by intensifiers expressed by 41% of men and 50% of women. Explanations were offered by 36% of men and 34% of women. Smaller number of Polish native speakers used utterances suggesting social distance (15% of males, 24% of females). Some of the interviewees (10% of men and 4% of women) denied acknowledgement of responsibility. Not many people expressed their explicit apologies (8% of women and 5% of men). Men were the only group that decided to offer compensation for the existing situation.

There is one element that requires further investigation, namely self justification strategy. By means of self justification both men and women tried to avoid acknowledgement of guilt to some degree:

- 42% of self justifications expressed by men consisted of plural form 'we',
- 63% of self justifications expressed by women consisted of plural form 'we',
- 27% of self justifications expressed by women contained masculine verb forms 'zrobił-em', 'dokonał-em' [the typical feminine verb form in Polish ends with *-am*].

It seems that in this difficult situation Poles try to minimise their guilt by using avoidance strategies and non-emotional expressions (self justification strategies, non-emotional explanation, implicit apologies outnumbering explicit apologies and denial of acknowledgement).

In English eight strategies were involved in expressing apologies by men and six strategies were used by women. 45% of men and 62% of women used self justification which again shall be investigated in detail as it contained certain avoidance scheme:

- 35% of self justifications expressed by men consisted of plural form 'we',
- 29% of self justifications expressed by women consisted of plural form 'we'.

This time not as many people wanted to avoid the acknowledgement of guilt as in the previous example. English answers differed from the Polish ones to a greater extent which can be seen on the basis of explicit apologies (expressed by 42% of men and 64% of women) and implicit apologies (uttered by 5% of men and 6% of women). Intensifiers were used by

32% of men and 52% of women. More respondents involved denial of acknowledgement into answers (16% of men and 10% of women). Besides, Poles do not emphasise social distance between the interlocutors. The answers given by the respondents may suggest that in very difficult social contexts Poles tend to use negative politeness strategy in Polish and positive politeness strategies in English. When using Polish they try to avoid responsibility for the event, when using English they are more likely to apologise explicitly for the situation. Foreign language allows Poles to be more courageous and direct towards other people. As it was observed by Iragui (1996) native speakers of English use more politeness markers, intensifiers and negative politeness strategies. Poles implement those strategies while using Polish but they are not likely to apply the same scheme while using a foreign language. The same situation presented in two languages and assessed in a similar way does not evoke the same linguistic reactions.

*Situation 4 - You bump into an old lady at the supermarket and she is irritated. What do you say?*

The fourth situation was evaluated as the second easiest to face with. The most frequently used strategies expressed in Polish were: explicit apologies (87% of men, 98% of women), showing social distance (44% of men, 34% of women), intensifiers (33% of men, 56% of women) and self justification (26% of men, 28% of women). Other, less frequently used methods of apologising were: offer of repair, acknowledge of responsibility, interjections, implicit apology, explanation, denial of acknowledgement and finally 3% of men did not express their apologies at all. Similarly to Polish, the most often produced answers in English were explicit apologies uttered by 100% of men and women. The most striking difference between the two languages is showing social distance which was more often emphasised in Polish than in English where only 11% of men and 2% of women decided to use some politeness markers. The use of interjections also varies depending on the language used – as far as English is concerned, interjections were used by 11% of men and 14% of women. As a response to the fourth situation the majority of respondents used explicit apologies, both in English and Polish. There were more strategies used in Polish than in English. In spite of the fact that the situation was evaluated as rather easy, there were many negative politeness strategies used in Polish which may suggest that apologies uttered in native language threaten the face of the recipient to a smaller extent.

*Situation 5 - You've cheated on your partner but he / she knows the truth. What do you say?*

The fifth situation was evaluated as one of the most difficult to face with. There were as much as twelve strategies used in Polish. Implicit apologies were uttered most frequently by 36% of men and 42% of women. The second most numerous reaction was acknowledgement of responsibility. Explicit apologies were used by 13% of men and 32% of women. 20% of women wanted to explain the situation and the same decision was made by 8% of men.

As opposed to the Polish version, the majority of English responses to the fifth situation were explicit apologies (34% of men and 56% of women). Promise of forbearance was offered by 16% of men and 22% of women. Men tend to explain the situation and refuse acknowledgement of guilt more often than women. Women, on the other hand, use more intensifiers and interjections than men. The same situation described in two different languages again evokes different reactions of Polish respondents. There were more strategies involved in Polish replies. The situation is strictly connected with emotions which is especially visible in Polish responses which mostly consisted of implicit apologies.

*Situation 6 - Your neighbour had lent you a car. You went to a doctor but after the visit you discover that the car has been stolen. What do you say to the neighbour?*

Respondents evaluated the example as one of the most difficult situations. The most often provided answers in Polish were explanations, showing close relationship and offers of repair. Implicit apologies accompanied by intensifiers outnumbered explicit apologies. Respondents' idea was to provide specific forms of address, showing either close relationship (for instance names) or social distance.

In English both males and females expressed their apologies by means of explanations, offers of repair and explicit apologies which predominated over implicit apologies. Men were the only group that decided to use interjections. As far as the comparison of the two languages is concerned, it shall be pointed out that Polish answers represent more strategies than English replies. Strong emotional attitude towards the circumstances presented in the situation was visible especially in Polish. Using their native language Poles refer to social relationships and use more implicit apologies. The only similarity of reactions in both languages is visible in explanations and offers of repair.

*Situation 7 - You get to work late and your boss is looking at the watch. What do you say*

This situation was assessed as moderately difficult. The most often occurring reactions in Polish were explanations (62% of men, 42% of women) and explicit apologies (54% of men, 82% of women). More women than men used intensifiers (18% and 13% respectively).

The most popular answers in English were explicit apologies (55% of men, 84% of women) and explanations (50% of men, 54% of women). They were rarely accompanied by intensifiers. Contrary to the Polish version, the tendency to promise forbearance was characteristic of men rather than women. In the situation considered relatively easy to face with, reactions of the respondents were non-emotional in both languages, but still more direct in English.

*Situation 8 - You've parked your car on the place for the disabled. A handicapped man has no space to park his car. What do you say?*

Eighth situation was perceived by the interviewees as not too difficult. There were four most popular answers in Polish: offer of repair, explicit apology, self justification and intensifiers. It is worth noticing that 4% of women's self justifications were expressed in masculine form. Respondents also implemented acknowledgement of responsibility and interjections. Answers were not affected by emotions or feelings and direct responses outnumbered indirect responses.

Similarly to Polish version the most frequent answers were: offer of repair, explicit apology and self justification. The rest of the answers were not as numerous as the three mentioned above, however, quite considerable amount of interjections appeared in English which could not be observed in Polish. The situation did not influence emotions or evoke emotive replies in any language. Apologies were in most cases direct and implicit regrets were rather an exception than a rule.

*Situation 9 - You've sold a chewing gum which was past its sell-by date. Your client complains about it. What do you say?*

The last situation was evaluated by the respondents as the third easiest task. In Polish offering repair was the most preferred answer among men (51%) and explicit apologies were the most popular among women (64%). The third most frequent answer was self justification uttered more often by women, similarly to intensifiers. Men, on the other hand, denied the acknowledgement of responsibility almost four times more often than women. 30 % of offers of repair uttered by men were expressed in plural form and 5% of female self justifications were uttered in masculine form. 7 % of female apologies and 6% of male apologies were compound in form.

Explicit apologies and offers of repair prevail in the English version of answers. Respondents' replies are similar in the amount and proportion to the Polish version. Together with the first and the fourth situation, the last situation was assessed as one of the easiest to face with.

Answers to relatively easy situations are quite similar in both languages which can be seen on the basis of explicit apologies, intensifiers or self justifications that are used extensively.<sup>3</sup>

### **3. Concluding remarks**

The research has proven that despite almost the same perception of the situations, the reactions of the respondents in Polish were different from the reactions in English. It is visible at the first glance that women's replies are more varied than males' replies and contain more strategies. Generally women apologise (implicitly and explicitly) more than men in both languages, regardless the difficulty of the situation. The situations can be divided according to the responses into three categories: the easiest (1, 4, 9), moderately difficult (7, 8, 2) and the most difficult (5, 6, 3).

As far as the easiest situations are concerned, both men and women are aware of the register and the context, as depending on the context they use additional strategies and techniques of apologising (asking for repetition, showing social distance, self justifications, offers of repair). It has also been observed that easy situations do not require emotional involvement. Poles, and especially women, use more explicit apologies (positive politeness) in English and more implicit apologies (negative politeness) in Polish, so utterances expressed in L2 are more face threatening. Regardless the language, men tend to avoid responsibility via denial of acknowledgement.

Moderately difficult situations show that Polish men are not aware of social power in the context of close family relations presented in a foreign language. Approximately 30% more women than men show close relationship in English, whereas in Polish the difference is not so considerable. Poles again have proven to be context-aware, as, depending on the circumstances they used many additional strategies that were accompanying explicit apologies, like self justification, offer of repair or promise of forbearance. Women used more explicit apologies in both languages.

In the most difficult situations a significant difference is visible between implicit and explicit apologies, the former were used mainly in Polish and the latter in English which may suggest that the respondents do not identify themselves with the target language. Poles also tend to show social distance more often in Polish. The most difficult situations involve feelings and emotions which makes Poles particularly sensitive to face needs in Polish. When emotions come into play, men tend to use more intensifiers and interjections, which are typical of women, however, they also more often deny acknowledgement. On the basis of the most difficult situations it can be seen that the same situations described in two different languages evoke different reactions. Despite grammatical and lexical proficiency that would be obvious for the native speakers of English that respondents' first language is not English. Poles apologise more explicitly in English which makes the speech act more face threatening. The most striking phenomenon that has been observed during the research considered avoidance

strategies, namely plural forms of pronouns in both languages and male forms of verbs expressed by females in Polish apologies.

In the third situation both men and women tried to avoid acknowledgement of guilt to some degree:

- 42% of self justifications expressed by men consisted of plural form 'we',
- 63% of self justifications expressed by women consisted of plural form 'we,
- 27% of self justifications expressed by women contained masculine verb forms 'zrobił-em', 'dokonał-em' [the typical feminine verb form in Polish ends with -am].

It seems that in this difficult situation Poles try to minimise their guilt by using avoidance strategies and non-emotional expressions (self justification strategies, non-emotional explanation, implicit apologies outnumbering explicit apologies and denial of acknowledgement). In English eight strategies were involved in expressing apologies by men and six strategies were used by women. 45% of men and 62% of women used self justification which again shall be investigated in detail as it contained certain avoidance scheme:

- 35% of self justifications expressed by men consisted of plural form 'we',
- 29% of self justifications expressed by women consisted of plural form 'we'.

Women go one step further and use male forms in self justification strategies, though it is obvious that they would not do this in a spoken interaction.

To sum up, the research confirm Iragui's (1996) findings that native speakers use more intensifiers, politeness markers (mainly negative politeness strategies) and indirect responses, while non-native speakers use direct responses and do not show emphasis. That would be advisable for Polish students of English, future teachers of English, to be aware of sociopragmatic aspect of language use. Poles use different linguistic expressions in Polish and English in order to react to the same situation, which suggests that they do not identify themselves with L2. Poles, even if their English level is advanced and higher, perceive L2 as a foreign linguistic system. Thus, the perception of the world depends on the language used by the individuals. Men's and women's responses were comparable as far as the preferred strategies are concerned. Women's responses were longer and contained more techniques, but the general tendency was similar to that selected by men. Thus, women did not prove to be linguistically superior as far as sociopragmatic competence of L2 is concerned. Moreover, those were men who paid more attention to social power than women. Therefore, being context-aware does not guarantee being sociopragmatically competent, especially when the circumstances are unprecedented and cause emotions to arise. When feelings are put on the side track and conditions attending an event are familiar, the level of sociopragmatic competence of L2 is higher. Research on sociopragmatic competence of L2 may further lead to research on the linguistic image of the world.

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