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Evaluation of American and Taiwanese English Speakers’ Apologies

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Abstract

This study presents an evaluation of American and Taiwanese English speakers’ apologies. A total of 40 American and Taiwanese college students were selected and asked to fill out a discourse completion task (DCT) comprising eight apology exchanges in situations differing in social power and distance. Seventeen American English speakers were asked to give scores to and comments on students’ written apology exchanges based on their native speaker intuition and training as in-service teachers. The quantitative results indicated that speakers’ cultural backgrounds affected American English speakers’ judgment of apology. In addition, social power and distance between the interlocutors had an impact on American English speakers’ judgment of apology. The different cultural values were found to be a critical factor in perceiving acceptability of the apology. Overall, this study presents a sociopragmatic difference in American

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1 This study is part of Chen and Rau’s NSC project on The Development of the Speech Act Profile for L2 Learners (NSC 99-2410-H-167-009, 8/1/2010-7/31/2011). We acknowledge the English editorial assistance of Dr. Gerald A. Rau.
English speakers’ evaluation with regard to different apologetic behaviors between American and Taiwanese interlocutors.

Keywords: apology, cultural backgrounds, social power and distance

Introduction

Apology is ubiquitous across different cultures, but varies in its usage and functions. Basically, apology is called for when one’s act is perceived to cause harm or discomfort to another person. Among the many research projects on apologies in various languages, the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989) is one of the most authoritative works. The project investigated requests and apologies across seven languages and is targeted at examining the similarities and differences in the realization patterns of speech acts across languages. Different cultural backgrounds have different apology rules, which have the potential to cause foreigners to be seen as being communicatively incompetent for making or not making an apology in accordance with the host country culture (Guan, Park, & Lee, 2009; Olshaim, 1989; Suszczy, 1999; Yu, 1999). Thus, understanding cross-cultural differences in apology rules can be a way of facilitating one’s competence in communicating with others from various cultures.

As part of the growing awareness of how cultural differences affect communication, research on interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has received increasing attention in recent years. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) showed evidence that learners’ perception and production of speech acts differ greatly from native speakers. Hong (2008) examined the e-mail correspondence for class absence from students to professors, and found that two major factors, i.e., different cultural backgrounds and course attendance policies, influenced students’ apology strategies. The differences are attributed to varying perceptions of social distance, politeness, severity of offense, and obligation for apology.

Spencer-Oatey (1995) also found that the variables of power and distance have been widely researched within sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis to examine their effects on the production and interpretation of language. However, as power and distance relationships might be perceived differently in different cultural settings, any comparative studies on speech acts need to address this discrepancy. Hong (2008) indicates power relation is a measure of the interpersonal power or influence between interlocutors occupying upper (super-ordinate) and lower (subordinate) position. For example, the Asian educational system tends to be teacher-centered; university professors are perceived as authoritative and well-respected by students. On the other hand, American educational system tends to be student-centered; the relationship between the professor and the student is less hierarchical with a greater emphasis on solidarity as that between friends.

Although there has been a plethora of literature on apology strategies in western cultures, very little research has focused on L1 judgment of appropriateness of apology with respect to L2 cultures. In order to advance fundamental knowledge in cross-cultural pragmatics, this study examined how American English speakers judged apologies constructed by Chinese and American English speakers under identical situations. We examined whether the raters’ scores and responses showed that they would differentiate between apologies made by people of different cultural backgrounds.

Taking the results of the above-mentioned discussion into consideration, we formulated the following research question for this study: What factors affect the acceptability of apology? We investigated this research question by looking at (1) different cultural backgrounds and (2) interpersonal relationships, leading us to pose three hypotheses:
H1: Speakers’ different cultural backgrounds (i.e. Taiwanese vs. American) are likely to affect American English speakers’ judgment of apology.

H2: Social power and distance between the interlocutors is likely to affect American English speakers’ judgment of apology.

H3: Different cultural backgrounds (i.e. Taiwanese vs. American) are likely to interact with social power and distance to affect American English speakers’ judgment of apology.

Methods

Participants

Our participants consisted of (1) 20 Chinese learners of American English, (2) 20 American native speakers, and (3) 17 American raters. The 20 Chinese learners of American English were selected from three classes of the Applied Foreign Language Department of a university of technology in central Taiwan. Their English proficiency level was rated as intermediate. The 20 American English speakers were selected from universities in the USA. The 17 American raters in the study were carefully chosen in view of their education, teaching experience, and knowledge of non-western culture. All of them held a bachelor’s degree and were studying towards an MA degree in TESOL. All of them had taught English in higher education in Asia.

Material

In this study, the elicited written questionnaire was used because of the social variables investigated, which cannot be controlled in speech act performance during natural conversation (Beebe and Cummings, 1996). Thus, the major material in the study is the apology questionnaire used in the CCSARP. There are eight apology situations in the questionnaire (see Table 1). These situations are designed based on two independent variables: (1) social power and (2) social distance. The social power variable has three levels: high to low, equal, and low to high. The social distance variable has two binary levels: the interlocutors do not know each other or the interlocutors know each other. The six role constellations are: (1) High to Low, + Distant (+H, +D), (2) High to Low, -Distant (+H, -D), (3) Equal, +Distance (+E, +D), (4) Equal, -Distance (+E, -D), (5) Low to High, +Distance (+L, +D), and (6) Low to High, -Distance (+L, -D). The dependent variable is measured by scores of appropriateness by 17 American raters. The measurement is a Likert scale from 1 to 10, treated as an interval scale. Our major statistical procedure is a two-way 6 (+H, +D; +H, -D; +E, +D; +E, -D; +L, +D; +L, -D) x 2 (Taiwanese, American) ANOVA.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Apology Situations in the CCSARP</th>
<th>Apologizer (speaker), Apologizee (hearer)</th>
<th>&lt; Apology &gt; Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A staff manager, a student (+H, +D)</td>
<td>A staff manager has kept a student waiting for half an hour for a job interview.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A professor, a student (+H, -D)</td>
<td>A professor promised to return the student’s term paper but did not finish reading it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A driver, a stranger (+E, +D)</td>
<td>A driver in the parking lot backs into a stranger’s car.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. John, a stranger (+E, +D)</td>
<td>John’s bag falls down and hits another passenger when the bus brakes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A student, a friend (+E, -D)</td>
<td>A student is usually late for meetings with a friend to discuss joint projects.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Peter, a fellow worker (+E, -D)</td>
<td>Peter offended a fellow worker during a discussion at work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. A waiter, a customer (+L, +D)</td>
<td>The waiter brings the wrong meal to a customer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. A student, a professor (+L, -D)</td>
<td>A student borrowed her professor’s book, but forgot to bring it back to her professor.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Procedure
In this study, 20 Chinese learners of American English and 20 American native speakers were asked to write apology exchanges in English in response to each situation. Afterwards, a total of 320 situations were evaluated by the 17 American raters, who gave scores and comments on the above mentioned participants’ written dialogues in each situation.

Results
The results showed that there were differences in apology making between interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics on the scores given by American raters to Taiwanese and American speakers’ apologies. As can be seen in Table 2, the mean scores of the American speakers’ in all situations are higher than those of the Taiwanese EFL speakers. In addition, the statistical results of two-way ANOVA show that there is no interaction between cultural background and situation, but cultural background and situation both have main effects on American English speakers’ judgment of apologies. Furthermore, the mean score of the Taiwanese group in each situation with different social power x distance is lower than that of American group. This reveals that American speakers evaluated American ways of apology to be more appropriate than Chinese ways of apology in English. Moreover, there are cultural differences in making apologies between Taiwanese and American groups in the situation where the interlocutors’ relationship is +E, +D and in the situation where the interlocutors’ relationship is +L, -D. We will illustrate this finding in detail in discussion section.

Hypothesis 1
The first hypothesis predicts that the speakers’ different cultural backgrounds are likely to affect American English speakers’ judgment of apology. Table 3 presents a univariate (one-way) ANOVA on the scores given by the raters in the task. Specifically, the analysis shows a significant main effect for culture, F (1,38)=29.077, p=.000. This means that different cultural backgrounds, American vs. Taiwanese, had an influence on American English speakers’ judgment of apology. This result corresponds to Guan, Park, and Lee’s (2008) analysis of cross-cultural participants’ apology response behaviors, which also pointed out that different cultures showed differences in apology. Thus, our first hypothesis was supported.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations of the Different Cultural Background Groups for Each Situation with Different Social Power x Distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social power x distance</th>
<th>Cultural backgrounds</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American</td>
<td>16.86</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.18</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) +H, +D</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>14.40</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American</td>
<td>17.55</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.98</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) +H, -D</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>4.96</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American</td>
<td>16.95</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14.48</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) +E, +D</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>13.85</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American</td>
<td>17.60</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.73</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) +E, -D</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>14.36</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American</td>
<td>17.30</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15.83</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) +L, +D</td>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14.03</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3
The Results of One-way ANOVA with an Independent Measure for Cultural Backgrounds on Scores in Each Situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural background</td>
<td>143.704</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143.704</td>
<td>29.077</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>187.801</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4.942</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypotheses 2 and 3

The second hypothesis predicts that social power by distance would have an effect on American English speakers’ judgment of apology. Table 4 shows there is a significant difference in social power x distance, F (5,190) = 4.157, p = .001. As Table 4 shows that the interaction between cultural backgrounds and social power by distance is not significant (p = .369), and Figure 1 shows that there is no interaction between these two independent variables, we can concentrate on the interpretation of the main effects.

Figure 1. No interaction between cultural background and social power by distance.

Scores of appropriateness of American apologies are always higher than those of Taiwanese no matter which situation of social power by distance is considered, as illustrated in Table 2. This reveals that American speakers evaluated American ways of apology to be more appropriate than Chinese ways of apology in English in every situation. Furthermore, Figure 1 shows that there is an obvious gap among the mean scores of the Taiwanese group’s appropriateness in making apology in different situations, whereas the American group’s mean scores in different situations all cluster together. This reveals that Americans’ proficiency in apology-making is less affected by the factors of social power and distance. On the other hand, the Taiwanese scores in situations with social
power by distance have significant differences. In particular, scores of the Taiwanese are very low in situations with (+E, +D), and (+L, -D). This probably means that when Taiwanese English speakers face an equal and distant relationship (e.g., a stranger) or ones with a hierarchical but close relationship (e.g., a familiar professor), they tend not to make apologies acceptable to American English speakers.

Table 4
The Results of Two-way (2x6) ANOVA with Repeated Measures on Two Independent Variables for Cultural Backgrounds and Social Power by Distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Backgrounds</td>
<td>862.225</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>862.225</td>
<td>29.077</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Power x Distance</td>
<td>127.075</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25.415</td>
<td>4.157</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Backgrounds x</td>
<td>33.205</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.641</td>
<td>1.086</td>
<td>.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Power and Distance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Differences Between American and Taiwanese Apologies**

Referring back to the differences between American and Taiwanese apologies, as shown in Table 2, the mean scores of the American group across the six relationships are not that different (16.33–17.60), but the Taiwanese group has a wider range (11.73–14.40). There is a noticeable gap between the relationships indicated by (3), (6) and (1), (2), (4), (5).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test whether the six relationships would affect the performance of apology making in the two groups. Table 5 shows a significant difference in American raters' evaluation of Taiwanese speakers' apology across the six relationships, F(5,19)=3.775, p=.004, but there is no significant difference in American speakers' apology across the six levels, F(5,19)=0.945, p=.456.

Table 5
The Results of One-way ANOVA for American Rater's Evaluation of Situations with Social Power x Distance for Taiwanese vs. Americans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiwanese</td>
<td>136.453</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.344</td>
<td>3.775</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>859.780</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45.252</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>23.560</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.712</td>
<td>0.945</td>
<td>.456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>267.023</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.054</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A series of post hoc comparisons were conducted to find where the differences lie. Table 6 shows the mean scores of situation 6 with +L, -D and situation 3 with +E, +D, are much lower than those of the other situations, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Table 6.
Post hoc Comparisons of One-way ANOVA for Evaluation on Taiwanese Speakers in Various Situations of Social Power x Distance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) +H,+D</td>
<td>13.50</td>
<td>14.40</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>13.85</td>
<td>14.36</td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) +H,-D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-2.400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.400*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) +E,+D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.675*</td>
<td>0.275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) +E,-D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.125*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) +L,+D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.630*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) +L,-D</td>
<td>-1.775</td>
<td>-2.675</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
<td>-2.125</td>
<td>-2.630</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multimedia-Based Multicultural Instruction and Research

Compared with other situations, situation 6 with +L, -D has the lowest evaluation. This probably means that when a Taiwanese speaker is apologizing to someone higher in status but well known to the speaker, their performance tends to be considered less appropriate by American native speakers. This finding corresponds to Hong’s (2008) finding which compared the native speakers of Chinese (NS-C) with native speakers of English (NS-E) in assessing levels of severity of offense, obligation for apology, and politeness degree in a social power relation. In a case of student-teacher relationship (low to high), NS-C perceives this relationship hierarchical, whereas the NS-E characterizes this relation as almost equal.

Discussion

In this section, we provide examples of situations 3 and 6 to illustrate how American and Chinese speakers of English make apologies differently. The following examples illustrate how cultural background affects apology making in situation (3), a +E,+D relationship. The American and Taiwanese speakers’ written apology exchanges are shown in Examples (1) and (2), respectively. Each dialogue is followed by comments made by an American English teacher.

Example 1
One American speaker’s written apology exchanges in a situation with +E, +D.

A driver in the parking lot backs into a stranger’s car.

Driver: Oh S#*t!
Stranger: I hope you have insurance.

Scores for content (0-10): 10  Scores for form (0-10): 10
Comments: This obviously has some bad language, but is also very true to what a native speaker might say.

Example 2
One Taiwanese speaker’s written apology exchanges in a situation with +E, +D.

A driver in the parking lot backs into a stranger’s car.

Driver: I’m so sorry. I am not deliberately to back into your car. I give you my phone number. After fixing the car, you’ll call me and I’ll pay the bill.
Stranger: OK. If my car has something wrong, I’ll call you.

Scores for content (0-10): 9 for a different context than America. 4 if it were in America
Scores for form (0-10): 8
Comments: Here is a cultural difference. If this happened in America, and there was a lot of damage, you’d call the cops and trade names and insurance company information. If there wasn’t a lot of damage or the other driver decides it’s ok (s/he might be driving illegally or without insurance), then it is up to him/her to decide if you call the cops. And be careful: don’t take credit even if it was your fault (your insurance company will be mad at you and/or the other driver could sue you even if they were really not hurt).

Examples 1 and 2 show that cultural background is indeed an important factor affecting American English speakers’ judgment of apology. The native Chinese speakers opted to start out their apologies with an explicit intention to mitigate the imposition on the offended person as a result of an offense. Their intention to repair the damage that has been caused by the behavior is set forth with an explicit apologetic formula as “I am sorry.” Contrary to the Chinese group, the majority of the American group did not consider it necessary to express apologies at the beginning of their utterance. Besides, in the western
society, making an apology is not without consequences; often, an apology carries with it a legal liability. If the first speaker apologizes to the interlocutor, s/he is assuming responsibility and has the duty to pay for the damage in a car accident.

Situation 6 (+L, -D) is another typical case where the Chinese style of apology tends to be evaluated negatively by American English speakers. Examples 3 and 4 illustrate how American and Chinese would make apologies for the same situation, respectively.

Example 3
One American speaker’s written apology exchanges in a situation with +L, -D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A student borrowed her professor’s book, which she promised to return that day, but forgot to bring it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student: I’m sorry professor but I forgot to bring your book with me today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor: That’s alright, you can return it next time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scores for content (0-10): 10  Scores for form (0-10): 10
Comments: No errors.

Example 4
One Taiwanese speaker’s written apology exchanges in a situation with +L, -D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A student borrowed her professor’s book, which she promised to return that day, but forgot to bring it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student: I’m so sorry. I forget to bring your book to you. I hope you can forgive me. I promise I’ll return it to you tomorrow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor: It’s all right. You remember bring it to me next day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scores for content (0-10): 7  Scores for form (0-10): 5
Comments: the student wouldn’t ask for forgiveness. The mistake is too little and the relationship is too distant. The promise to correct the situation is enough. I’m so sorry. I forgot to bring the book back. I promise I’ll return it tomorrow.

It’s all right. Tomorrow is fine.

From examples 3 and 4, we observe the main factor affecting American raters’ negative evaluation involves the Chinese manner of making apologies to teachers. As Confucianism has penetrated cultural values in Asian societies, teachers are well-respected in Chinese society. On the other hand, the teacher-student relationship in Western culture seems to be perceived more as a relationship between friends (Hong, 2008).

Our study has confirmed Guan, Park, and Lee’s (2009) findings that people from different cultures have varying perceptions of a potentially apologetic situation. Specifically, for collectivists such as Chinese and Koreans, propensities toward apology are higher for an in-group member than for an out-group member, whereas for individualists such as Americans, propensities are not affected by the relationship type. Thus, the distinction between an in-group and an out-group member

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i.e., relationship type) and the cultural dimension of individualism vs. collectivism can account for the cultural differences among Chinese, Koreans, and Americans. Furthermore, Scollon and Scollon (2001) propose that the Chinese relationship is rooted in the person and his/her intimate society and culture, but the western concept of the self is rooted in an individual. Therefore, Americans and Chinese have developed different culturally-informed attitudes towards apology making.

Conclusion

The present study has extended previous research on apology in cross-cultural pragmatics by identifying specific areas of difference in apology making between American and Chinese speakers of English. The findings indicate speakers’ cultural backgrounds may affect American English speakers’ judgment of apology. Also, the factors of social power and distance affect American English speaker’s judgment of apology. In addition, we found two situations where Taiwanese speakers’ apologies were perceived very negatively by American raters.

As different cultural values may affect the different perceptions of social power and distance in apology situations, a better understanding of cross-cultural differences in apologizing can help improve an individual’s communicative competence in interacting with others from different cultures. In addition, it can help minimize misunderstandings in intercultural communication.

One limitation of this study lies in the reduction of categories in quantitative analysis. The variables of social power and social distance only had two levels for the convenience of research design. In reality, human relationships are much more complicated than this. There are at least four dimensions of social distance ranging from the least intimate to the most intimate: strangers, acquaintances, friends, and relatives.

Inclusion of these dimensions into the statistical design would better represent real-life human relationships. Additionally, further investigation is needed to compare what apologetic strategies to use for interlocutors from different cultural backgrounds and why interlocutors intend to respond in certain ways.

In conclusion, this study presents a difference with regard to apologetic behaviors between American and Taiwanese interlocutors due to sociopragmatic and cultural conventions.

References


Appendix: DCT (Discourse Completion Task)

Directions:
You will be given 8 apology situations. For each situation, imagine you are the person described in the situation and then both give and respond to apologies appropriately in the blanks. Please write everything that you would say in this given situation. This is not a test of your grammar and spelling. Please do not look up in the dictionary. There are also no standard responses to the situations.

1. A staff manager has kept a student waiting for half an hour for a job interview because he was called away to an unexpected meeting.

Staff manager: Sorry, I was called away to an unexpected meeting. Ok, let's start interview.
Student: Ok, I'm ready.

Scores for content (0-10): 4 Scores for form (0-10): 8

Comments:

2. A university professor promised to return the student's term paper that day but did not finish reading it.

Professor: Sorry, I have not finished reading your paper. I will give you by this week.
Student: Ok, I can't wait to receive my paper.

Scores for content (0-10): 6 Scores for form (0-10): 6
3. A student borrowed her professor’s book, which she promised to return that day, but forgot to bring it.

Student: Professor, I forget to bring your book. Can I bring it to you tomorrow?
Professor: Ok, I will wait you at 12 a.m. in this office.

Scores for content (0-10): 5 Scores for form (0-10): 7

Comments:

4. A notoriously unpunctual student is late again for a meeting with a friend with whom she is working on a paper.

Student: I am late again. Please forgive me!
Friend: Why are you always unpunctual? Can you explain it?

Scores for content (0-10): 6 Scores for form (0-10): 7

Comments:

5. John has placed a shopping bag on the luggage rack of a crowded bus. When the bus brakes, the bag falls down and hits another passenger.

John: Oh! I’m so sorry.
Passenger: Never mind. It’s just an accident.

Scores for content (0-10): 9 Scores for form (0-10): 9

Comments:

6. A driver in the parking lot backs into a stranger’s car.

Driver: I’m sorry. Are you ok?
Stranger: I’m fine. You should watch out another car next time.

Scores for content (0-10): 5 Scores for form (0-10): 8

Comments:

7. The waiter in an expensive restaurant brings fried chicken instead of pork to a surprised customer.

Waiter: Sorry, sir. I will exchange meal quickly.
Customer: Ok.

Scores for content (0-10): 4 Scores for form (0-10): 7

Comments:

8. Peter offended a fellow worker during a discussion at work. After the meeting, the fellow worker comments on the incident.

Peter: Sorry, I will look out my talk. Do you forgive me?
Fellow worker: Yeah. I forgive you because we are great partners.

Scores for content (0-10): 3 Scores for form (0-10): 5

Comments: