Cross-Culture Apology Analysis:  
A Comparison of Taiwanese and English Speakers  

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Abstract  

In every society there are polite rituals. Apologies are associated with IFIDs (illocutionary force indicating devices) and it is necessarily to be done when something is annoying or damaging to someone. Apologies have several social functions because it is not only served as speakers’ supportive maxim, but also the hearer-supportive maxim. Thus words per se do not carry any fixed meaning; we have to understand and interpret the utterance in terms of a wider scope of social contexts. When this is the case, we have to take specific culture and context into account. The purpose of this study is to investigate the similarities and difference of realization patterns of apology among the four different groups of subjects. We notice that universal manifestations of apology strategy selections. In other words, people would realize the apology in the same way under the condition of the same contextual features, same degree of offence, same social factors no matter what language you speak. The most obvious difference found in the study is that Americans use at least two strategies for apologizing; where as Taiwanese would use only one strategy to certain extent. It is crystal clear that sociopragmatic factors are closely related to the subjects’ realization patterns of apology, such as social status, social distance, and severity of offense. In general, sociolinguistic frame play a vital role in apology because people have to understand how apologies are used in the opening and closing of the conversation as well as their social and pragmatic functions.