

to the person who is inferior to us. To strangers, we must be very polite to show deference and to intimates, we must try to use all kinds of strategies to maintain the harmonious relations.

There are two potential problems in this research. First, the subjects used are too limited. There are only 200 students participated in this research and they are from the same university. Maybe, they are not quite representative. So, in the future research, more participants should be chosen and they'd better be chosen from different universities. Second, the contexts provided are too limited. There are only five contexts in the questionnaire. So, in the future research, more contexts should be designed to strengthen the scientific nature of the study.

6. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the subjects from Xi'an University of Technology in this research and the members of her research team, Xiaomei Huang, Ying Zheng, and Zhaohui Deng, and also thanks the editor and the anonymous reviewers for their comments which improved this work greatly.

7. References

- [1] P. Brown and S. C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 61-188.
- [2] D. Tannen, "Talking from 9 to 5". *Women and Men in the Workplace: Language, Sex and Power*. New York: Avon Books, 1994, pp.51.
- [3] J. Holmes, "Apologies in New Zealand English," *Language in Society*, 19, pp. 155–199, 1990.
- [4] W. L. Benoit, *Accounts, excuses, and apologies*, 2nd ed. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2015.
- [5] R. S. Bisel and A. S. Messersmith. "Organizational and supervisory apology effectiveness: Apology giving in work settings," *Business Communication Quarterly*, vol. 4, pp. 425–448, 2012.
- [6] W. T. Coombs, *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*, 1st ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007.
- [7] Olshtain and Cohen, "Apology: a speech act set," in *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*, N. Wolfson and E. Judd, Ed. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1983.
- [8] B. Fraser, "On apologizing," in *Conversational Routine*, C. Florian, Ed. The Netherlands: Mouton, 1981.
- [9] J. Holmes, "Gender differences and apologies: one aspect of communicative competence," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 2, pp. 209, 1989.
- [10] M. L. Bergman and G. Kasper, "Perception and performance in native and nonnative apology," in *Interlanguage Pragmatics*, K. Gabriele and B. K. Shoshana, Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- [11] Cels. Sanderijn, "Saying sorry: Ethical leadership and the act of public apology," *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28, pp. 759-779, April 2017.
- [12] A. Yang and J. Bentley, "A balance theory approach to stakeholder network and apology strategy," *Public Relations Review*, 43, pp. 267-277, February 2017.
- [13] J. Barling, *The science of leadership: Lessons from research for organizational leaders*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- [14] A. Maclachan, "The state of sorry: Official apologies and their absence," *Journal of Human Rights*, vol. 9, pp. 373–385, 2010.
- [15] C. E. Johnson, *Meeting the ethical challenges of leadership: Casting light or shadow*, 3rd ed. Los Angeles: SAGE, 2009.
- [16] B. Kellerman, "When should a leader apologize and when not?," *Harvard Business Review*, vol. 4, pp. 72–81, 2006.