Original Research Article

Gender and Communicative Styles in Apologising Among Students of the University of Bamenda

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Abstract: Lack of understanding of some social indicators, cultural values (values of apology) and the importance of face may lead to communication breakdown, discrimination and conflict. In this regard, this paper set out to identify apology strategies of male and female students of The University of Bamenda, to determine the attitude of male and female users of English in The University of Bamenda towards the use of face in social interactions, and to verify the extent to which culture influences their apology strategies. To carry out this study, 50 participants (made up of 25 boys and 25 girls among level 400 geography students from the faculty of arts) between the ages 20 and 35 were purposefully selected as respondents to our questionnaire. The findings indicated that the two genders have different strategies in offering apology and that the female gender apologises more than the male, this is demonstrated in the use of the difference theory. Also, most of the respondents felt that people are polite in most conversations to pass across their ideas or make the conversation good, this shows that most of them do not give pride of place to the issue of face in social interactions. Also, the findings indicated that culture and cultural practices influence social interaction between both genders. This, ties with a study conducted by Bataineh and Bataineh (2005) which was aimed at investigating the potential gender effects in American students' use of apologies within the framework of the two-culture theory. The researchers recommended that, the use of speech acts specifically in apology strategies in male and female communication styles should be given more attention by students, teachers, curriculum developers, policy makers and governments so as to enhance its teaching, knowledge and usage by young Cameroonian speakers of English.

Keywords: Gender, Communicative styles, apologising.

INTRODUCTION

There is a wide range of difference when it comes to male and female communicative styles especially in speech acts. These differences are greatly evident in the use of speech acts such as those of politeness, apology, sincerity, gossip, request and assertiveness. It is worth noting that as human beings, we live in a heterogeneous society which consists of different types of people including the male and female sexes. In order to be able to socialise with other people, we have to communicate in appropriate ways. Here, language plays an important role in communication as the main tool for interaction. According to Fromkin, et al. (2003), we live in a world of language. Language is an important part of people's daily lives, as it is a tool to communicate with each other.

Language therefore is used to transmit ideas, feelings and thoughts. Also, language acts as connection between people speaking the same language but also as a distance between people speaking a different language. Therefore, when people of the same culture communicate using a similar language, the end result is social cohesion, national understanding and most importantly peace. In specific situations, people use language to express feelings, to give information, to make apologies, to pass commands, to give instructions, to ask questions or to cause other people to do something. It is therefore important for the speaker to be understood correctly by the hearer. Austin (1962) presents language as a form of acting. By making an utterance the speakers expect that their intention be recognised by their

hearers. The circumstances surrounding utterances help the hearer to identify the speaker's intentions. If the intentions are not recognised or understood, it can lead to face threat, conflict and misunderstanding no matter how mild the conflict may seem. In the next paragraph, we are going to look at how apology varies cross-linguistically and cros-culturally.

Apology varies cross-linguistically and cross-culturally (Kalisz, 1993; Kachru, 1998; Chakrani, 2007; Meier, 2010) and is used frequently in human life (Salehi, 2014). Different speech and cultural communities can have different sets of available apology strategies between the two genders or use particular strategies unique to certain languages depending on the norms and values they maintain. Cameroon may not be an exception with its more than 240 ethno-cultural groups and 283 languages Simon (Ethnologue 2022). It should be noted that, members of particular cultures may have different judgements on what events necessitate apologies and what kind of apology strategies should be imbued in particular situations. As an example in the Indonesian context, Wouk (2006), while conducting a study in Lombok, found that Indonesians used multiple strategies, primarily over apology. The type of words used will also depend on the social circumstances (context) in which the speech act occurs. That is to whom you are speaking, the speaker's social relationship with the hearer and the topic of discussion.

Cameroon English speakers also make use of a number of pragmatic particles in informal or colloquial speech to express a wide range of attitudinal functions such as persuasion, impatience, politeness, etc. These particles include *na, eihn, ya*. For example, when a speaker says "you will come na" with a falling-rising intonation, this presupposes that he or she is asking somewhat for the interlocutor's assent. But, it is not generally the case that the interlocutor is under coercion to provide an answer. Mbangwana (2004, p. 905) argues for example that in Cameroon English there are occasional use by speakers of other forms of tag questions like na, not so, ein, is that, right and ok in addition to the stereotyped question tag isn't it which are quite typical of Cameroon English as well as of other varieties of English. Similarly, Simo Bobda (2002, p. 118) notes that na is a particle used in Cameroon English especially by the female gender with a wide range of meanings such as in the following examples:
1. You are my friend na? (= You are my friend, AREN'T YOU?)
2. Oh, shut up na. (= Oh, shut up, WILL YOU?)

A number of studies have been conducted in an attempt to account for male and female differences from a psychological perspective (Eisenmen 1997, Tannen 1990, Uchida 1992). The concept of genderlect, a term popularised by the linguist Deborah Tannen to represent dialects specific to gender and to demystify traditional communication struggles between the sexes, helps bridge the linguistic gap between women and men. The social differences between males and females are also of great relevance in gender studies. Based on "differences theory" Uchida (1992) concludes that the culture that male and female members of the same community develop may be quite different, which in turn can result in "different ways of speaking". In addition to genders' different ways of speaking which derive from the cultural attributes of the community in which people live, a number of other explanations, for instance, innate biological differences, have been investigated in an attempt to account for gender differences in language use in general and in apology manifestations in particular (Kramarae 1981; Uchida, 1992; Noller, 1993). In general, previous studies (for example, Holmes, 1995) have indicated that women are more apologetic than men, when all the necessary reservations and qualifications have been taken into account.

Furthermore, people in all cultures have an awareness of self-image, or face (the public self-image that every person tries to protect) as they communicate. Protecting face is important for communicating and behaving successfully with others, even though it may not be accomplished consciously by participants. A face threatening act (FTA) on the other hand is one that would make someone possibly lose face, or damage it in some way. Face threatening acts occur regularly in everyday interaction, within genders and across genders in different geographical context. However, this face threatening acts are often softened by means of politeness. Politeness can be expressed through positive politeness (example 'please'-this is to try to make the other person like you) or negative politeness (example 'I know this is a terrible imposition'-this is to try to give the other person some space and not impose). Speaking a language and communicating effectively, means more than uttering a number of grammatically decent sentences. Individuals can bring both change and chaos in their society through utterances. This paper focuses on one of the issues concerned with the socio-linguistic discourse of male and female communicative styles on apology during conversations.

LITERATURE REVIEW
In this section, we shall examine issues related to previous works on gender and communicative styles in apologising among participants in a conversation. With regard to this, several works have been written by researchers such as; Aries (2006), Atanga (2007), Austin (1962), Bataineh & Bataineh (2005), Chakrani (2007), Coates (2004), Di Mare and Waldron (2006), Eisenman (1997), Fromkin, Rodman and Hymes (2003) Gray (1992), Holmes (1990), Kaliz (1993), Koike (1989), Kramarae (1981), Lowerie (1917), MacLachlan (2013), Maltz and Borker (1982), Mbangwana (2004), Meier (1998), Nkwetisama (2017), Nkwain (2011), Noller and White (1990), Salehi, (2014). It is therefore important to have an understanding of the various conclusions and methods given by other researchers in order to better

situate and to see how this work fills the gaps or the deficiencies of previous empirical works on male and female communicative styles in apologising.

Gender and Apology

To explain the pivotal concept in the field of language and gender, namely *gender*, Coates (2004, p. 4) clarifies that 'sex' refers to biological distinction whereas 'gender' refers to socially constructed categories based on sex. Cameron (2010, p. 733) supports this by explaining that for the purposes of linguistic and sociolinguistic studies, gender has often been defined not as biological maleness or femaleness, but rather as social differentiation of men and women in particular communities. Thus, gender-linked patterns of language use stem not only from men and women being naturally different, but from the way that difference is made significant in the organisation of social life and social relations. As earlier mentioned above, Coates (2004, p. vi) further explains that the definitions in sociolinguistic work in the field has changed a great deal from the concepts of 'language' and 'gender' of the early 1990's which at that time seemed clear-cut and unproblematic. Currently, gender is rather seen as something that we 'do', instead of seen as given. According to Cameron (2010, p. 733), therefore, in sociolinguistic studies on gender, language can be seen as one resource with which social actors build various kinds of masculinities and femininities, positioning themselves towards some gender and differentiating from another. In simple terms, gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys and men. Gender can also be seen as the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between femininity and masculinity depending on the context or situation.

Communicative style has to do with a specific or particular way of talking which is peculiar to someone or a group of people. According to Norton (1975), a communicative style is the method a person uses whether verbal or nonverbal with the intension to indicate how others should interpret a message. (Lakoff, 1973, p. 47), outline the differences in the way males and females are encouraged to use language. She isolated a set of language markers that she referred to as "women's language"- a style she thought was confined to women's use. She posited that women are more likely to employ the following types of syntactical and lexical items: tag questions, disclaimers, polite forms, few to no expletives, more discriminations in naming colours, intonational patterns that essentially make declarative sentences sound like questions, and so forth. Because this type of language use is frequently associated with women, it was (and still is to a certain extent) considered women's language.

Apology as a speech act varies cross-linguistically and cross-culturally (Kalisz, 1993; Kachru, 1998; Chakrani, 2007; Meier, 2010) and is used frequently in human life (Salehi, 2014). Different speech and cultural communities can have different sets of available apology strategies between the two genders or use particular strategies unique to certain languages depending on the norms and values they maintain. Gender according to Segal (2004, p.3) refers to a culturally based complex of norms, values and behaviours that a particular culture assigns to one biological sex or another. Male and female students of the University of Bamenda may have different judgements on what events necessitate apologies and what kind of apology strategies should be imbued in particular situations. As an example of apology strategies in the Indonesia context, Wouk (2006), while conducting a study in Lombok, found that Indonesians used multiple strategies. The type of words used depends on the social circumstances (context) in which the speech act occurs that is to whom you are speaking, the speaker's social relationship with the hearer and the topic of discussion.

A study on apology strategies by American students was conducted by Bataineh and Bataineh (2005). The aim of the study was to investigate the potential gender effects in American University students' use of apologies within the framework of the two-culture theory which claims that men and women are so different that they comprise strikingly different cultures. The researchers used a 10-item questionnaire based on Sugimoto's (1997) research. Their findings revealed that male and female respondents used the primary apology strategies of statement of remorse, accounts, compensation, and reparation. They also resorted to the use of non-apology strategies such as blaming victim and brushing off the incident as not important to exonerate themselves from blame. Their findings further revealed that, male and female respondents used the same primary strategies but in different frequencies. The issue of apologies indicates the high degree of interest in the social, cultural, political and moral implications of expressive speech act in various intellectual fields (Butler, 1997, MacLachlan, 2013, Murphy, 2011, Nobles, 2008 and Smith, 2008 and 2014). In sociolinguistic studies, gender is associated with social constructs that are influenced by socio-cultural conditions. By biological gender, people are labelled male and female. By social gender, people are classified by their roles in a community. Norms in a society also determine what can and what cannot be done by men and women, such as the type of job, roles in the family or university and environment, how to dress, and how to speak (in our case, how both men and women use language to apologise to the same gender and, also, to each other).

In addition, in a study conducted by Nkwetisama (2017) on English Language Teaching (ELT) and gender awareness, with the objective to examine two English Language Teaching course books using insight and perspective derived from Cunnings Worth (1995) and Sunderland (1994), claimed that, expressions and the ways people are depicted in ELT materials could portray possible injustices and imbalances that may pass on and reinforce stereotypical

judgements in the minds of students. Gender awareness seems to be so heightened in Cameroon to the extent that virtually all aspects of real life activities or actions take it (gender) into consideration. Society has tended to portray women in passive and trivial ways as the less intelligent, the less powerful, the helpless, the emotional, the irrational, the indecisive, as wives, children bearers and carers Nkwetisama (2017, p. 80). Since these are social mind-set constructs, the tendency is that these stereotypical societal stigmatisations that perpetuate gender discrimination could be found in English Language Teaching materials. Socially, constructed discriminatory linguistic practices are visible in words or expression such as *patriotism* which signifies a feeling of love, respect and duty towards ones country; which does not have a corresponding word like *matriotism,* Nkwetisama (2017). Also, Nkwetisama (2017, p. 80) added that, in Bamenda in the North West Region of Cameroon, business names like BEN AND BROS; AWA AND SONS exist and naming enterprises as such gives the impression that only the male constitute the families that own the businesses. Also, these societal and cultural norms are reflected in language usage especially as society influences language just the way language influences society.

Also, the investigation of gender and power relations in the Cameroonian parliament was conducted by Atanga (2007), who used the critical discourse analytical approach, with focus on social issues and seeks to expose unequal relations within institutions. Her investigation identifies different gendered discourses within the speeches of the Members of Parliament and government ministers. Consciously or unconsciously, participants within parliamentary debates draw on topics that construct women and men in specific ways, sometimes sustaining gender stereotypes or challenging existing conditions. The way men and women are constructed using language also is indicative of gender and power relations within this particular community.

Also, Atanga (2007) looked at the way men and women are constructed using traditional discourses of gender differentiation and how some of these discourses get challenged, appropriated or subverted using progressive gendered discourses that advocate equal opportunities, gender equality and gender partnership in development. It should be noted that, discourses have effects, and these include the fact that discourses construct social identities (with requisite roles and expectations) and social relations (Fairclough, 1992). Discourses can be gendered, such as when women are constructed as primarily belonging to the domestic sphere and men to the public sphere Atanga (2007). Therefore, the importance of the woman as the cradle of society is also emphasised through ritual performance in the Rutu chant. The dominant discourse the chant articulates is that of *woman as domestic* (Atanga 2007; 2010, Ellece 2007) which positions women firmly in the domestic sphere as child bearers and nurturers, not just of the babies they give birth to, but all the members of their community (In modern Botswana, this discourse Has been extended to include *woman as driver of charitable initiatives* through an annual Thari ya Sechaba-the cradle or nurturer of the nation) award for women who have contributed the most to their communities through charitable works.

The literature that deals with the gender effects on language reveals two contradictory views. The first point of view claims that men and women speak different languages due to the fact that they are members of different cultures (Maltz and Borker 1982; Tannen 1990; Gray 1992). However, the other theory claims that men and women behave in different ways because this approach puts men as the ones who control and dominate a conversation. Women then become the ones who are dominated (subordinate). This is a typical reflection of male and female students in a multicultural community like the University of Bamenda which is the focus of our study. On the aspect of cultural differences which is based on the claim that men and women come from two different subcultures, Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990) present the "difference" approach which is based on the theory of cultural differences proposed. Central to this approach is the claim that men and women come from two different subcultures. Taking the case of a setting like the University of Bamenda, we discover that though the students are Cameroonians, they come from different subcultures who also have slight differences in their behaviours and in their ways of offering apologies especially in relation to their different genders. A culture of more than 240 ethno-cultural groups, and 283 languages Simon (2022-Ethnologue 21st edition). The differences of these two subcultures lead to the differences of communicative competence of men and women. In fact, this approach does not concentrate on the imbalance of power distribution of men and women, but more on differences in internal norms of men and women at the time of interaction especially on interaction that involves apology strategies. Tannen (1990; 1994; 1995), elaborating on the different-culture approach, claims that men and women methods of communication are very different. Tannen (1990, p. 18) perceives conversation between men and women to be "a cross-cultural communication" as they belong to different linguistic communities.

Gender, Language and Culture

Male and female communicative styles in the use of apology strategies, are also influenced by culture. Culture is communication and vice versa because, it influences social practices in general and discourse in particular especially discourse on apology strategies. Moreover, cultural factors play an important role in the development of diverse ways of talking and communicating between the males and the females. It can be said that there exists a certain, rule-governed linguistic behaviours such as appreciating, rejecting, requesting, gossiping and apologising that allows us to deal with similar situations in similar ways across cultures (Mey, 1998). People do not produce the grammatical utterances and

words merely to express themselves; they perform actions via these utterances. Semanticists and pragmatists have scrutinised different interpretations and uses of language. For example, Koike (1989, p. 279) defines pragmatic competence as "the speaker's knowledge and use of rules of appropriateness and politeness which indicate the way the speaker will understand and formulate speech acts (SAs)." Obviously, communicative acts or Speech Acts are among the most attractive areas in pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The aspect of speech acts is about what people set out to accomplish when they choose to speak. Searle (1975) believed that all linguistic communication involves linguistic speech acts.

According to Searle (1975) a language is performing speech acts such as making statement, giving command, asking question, apologising or making promises. Searle's approach holds that speech acts are only explained by special conventions that are neither semantic nor pragmatic (in the sense of Grice's maxims of conversation). Austin (1962) also studied the issue of speech acts. He pointed out that people use language to achieve certain kinds of acts generally recognised as speech acts which are distinct from physical acts like drinking or mental acts like thinking.

Apology and Politeness

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is the way to convey the utterance as polite as possible which in this case is needed to minimise conflict with others. One of the forms of communication which expresses politeness is apology. Among different forms of communication, apology is one of the most often forms carrying politeness. Apology is related to politeness because polite utterances are often used in asking (requesting, offering, complaining and apologising).

Apology Strategies in Cameroon

As far as Cameroon is concerned, Nkwain (2011) examined the polite linguistic behaviour of speakers of Cameroon Pidgin English, drawing from Brown and Levinson. His data came from a 45-item questionnaire in which his informants were to indicate what expressions they would, for example, use to address people of various statuses, make an offer, compliment someone, agree with someone. Nkwain's (2011) study revealed that these informants made use of 42 politeness strategies that is, 15 positive strategies, 10 negative strategies, 7 bald-on-record strategies and 10 off-record strategies. Nkwain's (2011) positive strategies which include address terms and titles, providing justifications, complimenting, flattery and the like, are said to minimise threats to the hearer's positive face and make him/her feel good about his/her possessions, interests, and aspirations.

Negative strategies address the hearer's negative face by avoiding imposition; these include: apologising, making promises, evoking compassion, polite interrogations, polite verifiers etc. Third, off-record strategies are used to minimise threat to the hearer's face wants through the use of speech acts with dual meaning, they include various tactics some of which are: giving advice, ironical utterances, euphemistic usage, teasing insults, implicit negative assertions and silence. Lastly, bald-on record strategies are explicit speech acts which do not minimise threats to the hearer's face wants and foster solidarity ties. They are said to include: refusing requests and offers, managing mishearing and misunderstanding, greeting and farewell, attention-getting exclamations and gratifying, and the use of diminutive quantifiers. The first type of apologising mitigators Nkwain (2011) collected was said to be accompanied by excuses following wrongdoing. This is realised by the following words and expressions: *ashia* (sorry), *A bek* (I beg), *plis* (please), *we'eh* (an exclamation expressing regret). The second type called excusing was said to be used by the speaker to express what he feels; this type which represented 35.62% of the 2504 cases in the data, was realised by expressions like: *no vex* (don't be angry), *no wori* (do not worry yourself), *chus me* (forgive me), *A no go du-am egen* (I will never do it again). Lastly, the third type called expressing regret and swearing which represented 9.31% of 2504 cases, was said to be explicit remorse following wrongdoing; it was realised by the use of expressions such as: *onli if A fo no…*(had it been I knew…), *Na weti ivin du mi-eh* (what even came over me?), *A swe to God se* (I swear in God's name that…).

Therefore, cultural factors have been identified as an important factor that may play a role in the influence of the gender on communication and social interaction (Di Mare & Waldron, 2006), and more specifically in the area of apologies (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008; Itoi et al., 1996; Tata, 2000). Culture has been defined in various ways; however, a majority of the literature pertaining to apology refers to cultural factors in terms of context (Di Mare & Waldron, 2006). It has been suggested that apologies may have different meanings in different context and to different people patterning to their different cultures and environments (Meyerhoff, 1997). For instance, conceptions of apology may differ for collectivist cultures, such as Japan, Mexico, Cameroon, and individualist cultures such as the United States of America (USA) and Australia (Itoi et al., 1996; Sugimoto, 1997; Takaku, 2000). Therefore, apology findings in gender, are likely to differ according to the cultural context. Theorists examining gender differences in communication and related areas have identified cultural factors as important mediating factors on the influence of gender (Example,. Aries, 2006; Di Mare & Waldron, 2006; Mortenson, 2002). Mortenson argues that focusing predominantly on one culture simplifies the effect of gender and may ignore the fact that gender roles can vary according to culture. For example, gender roles in patriarchal societies such as Cameroon, Japan (Itoi et al., 1996) and Jordan (Bataineh & Bataineh, 2008) may differ from

gender roles in societies where gender differentiation has decreased, such as the USA (Di Mare & Waldron, 2006). This may also have a high influence on which gender apologises more taking into cognisance gender roles in different societies.

Cultural factors may play an important role in both apologies and in gender roles prescribed for males and females. Several studies provide support for the notion that gender differences in apologising may be mediated by cultural factors. Itoi et al (1996) found that gender differences in frequency and type of apology were greater for Japanese participants than for American participants. Specifically, females were significantly more likely than males to offer an apology in the Japanese sample only. In contrast, there were no gender differences in the American sample. Differences in denying an offence were found in the opposite direction, with American males more likely to refuse any wrongdoing than American females. Japanese males and females rated the likelihood of refusal similarly. These are evidences to show that, apology strategies differ according to cultures and cultural practices especially when it comes to the male and female genders.

METHODOLOGY

The participants of the study, the instrument used and the data analysis procedure are discussed. The area of this study was Northwest region in Cameroon, specifically English speakers from Bamenda particularly students of the University of Bamenda. This is a Cosmopolitan area where people come from diverse cultures, backgrounds and have different behaviours and attitudes especially in the use of different speech acts; our focus in this paper is on apology strategies. The researchers chose this area because people in this area come from different cultures and backgrounds, and they will who definitely have different perspectives on gender and communicative styles as far as apologising is concerned. This is important in that this study also looks at the influence of culture on male and female communicative styles in the use of apology. The study comprised 50 participants who were purposely selected students from the University of Bamenda, aged 20 to 35 years. All 50 (25 males and 25 females) participants were level 400 geography students from the Faculty of Arts.

Furthermore, the instrument and procedure used was the issuing of questionnaires where areas of focus were centred at looking at the importance of face in every social interaction with the goal of reducing face threatening acts, identifying apology strategies of male and female students of the University of Bamenda and verifying the extent to which culture influences their apology strategies. A questionnaire was chosen since some of the variables for this study such as views, opinions, perceptions and feelings of the students could not be directly observed. Such information is best collected by questionnaires (Touliatus & Compton, 1998). Questionnaire was also chosen not only because they are less expensive but also because the target population is literate and are unlikely to have difficulties responding to questionnaire items. The instrument further helped the researchers to collect the data that was needed for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the researchers presented the results gotten from the questionnaires, interpreted them and discussed them in relation to the objectives of the paper.

Demographic Information

In this section, informants were required to indicate their genders and age ranges. The results gotten are discussed below.

Table 1: Respondents' gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	25	50%
Male	25	50%
Total	50	100%

Source; personal computation

The results on table 1 shows that, both the male and female gender were involved in the data sample. There were 25 males and 25 females which is a 50/50 percentage of the population sample. This was done on purpose so that the findings of this research should be representative enough.

Table 2: Ages of respondents

Age range	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
20-25	Male	7	14%
	Female	10	20%

26-30	Male	10	20%
	Female	8	16%
31-35	Male	8	16%
	Female	7	14%
Total		50	100%

Source; personal computation

After collecting information about their gender, our respondents were required to indicate their age ranges. The results on table 2, shows the age range of the respondents. 17 respondents (7 males and 10 females) which made up 34% (14% + 20%) out the total sample were of the age group 20 to 25, 18 respondents (10 males and 8 females who made up 36% (20% + 16%) were of the age group 26 to 30 and 15 (8 males and 7 females) who made up 30 % (16% + 14%) were of the age group 31 to 40.

Opinions on differences in speaking between men and women

This section was aimed at getting the different opinions from the respondents on whether or not men and women speak differently.

Table 3: Opinions on differences in speaking between men and women

Responses	Male		Female	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Strongly disagree.	3	6%	2	4%
Disagree	7	14%	4	8%
Agree	10	20%	12	24%
Strongly agree	5	10%	7	14%
Total	25	50%	25	50%

The results on table 3 show the different opinions on whether men and women speak differently. From the findings, 5 respondents (3 males and 2 females) who made up a total of 10% (6% + 4%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. Hence, they are saying that men and women do not speak alike. 11 respondents (7 males and 4 females) who made up 22% (14% + 8%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement meanwhile, 12 respondents (5 males and 7 females) who made up 24% (10% + 14%) strongly agreed with the fact that men and women speak differently and a greater proportion of 22 respondents (10 males and 12 females) which carries 44% (20% + 24%) agreed that men and women speak differently. Looking at the table above, one can quickly rush to the conclusion that men do not speak the same like women and these differences can be in manner of application of the different speech acts with specificity on apology which is the core of this paper.

Respondents' opinions on a more apologetic gender in conversations

This section was aimed at getting the different opinions of the respondents on the gender that is more apologetic.
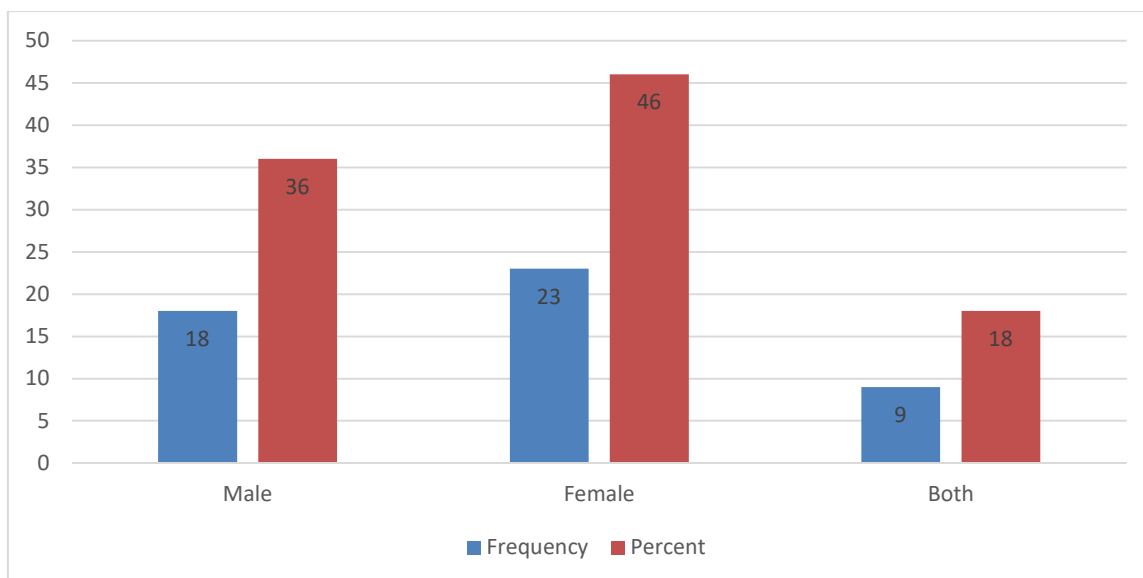

Figure 1: A more apologetic gender in conversations

The Y-axis represents the frequencies and the percentages meanwhile the X-axis show the various responses. The results obtained from the bar chart above shows that, 9 respondents who made up 18% of the total respondents are of the view that both men are women do apologies on equal bases, 18 respondents who made up 36% were of the view that men do it more than women and a greater share of the respondents 23 respondents who made up 46% were of the view that women are more apologetic than men. The gap between this opinions indicates that, the female gender apologises more than the males according to the responses.

Different ways of apologising
This question was meant to get the opinions of the informants on different apology strategies.

How to apologise
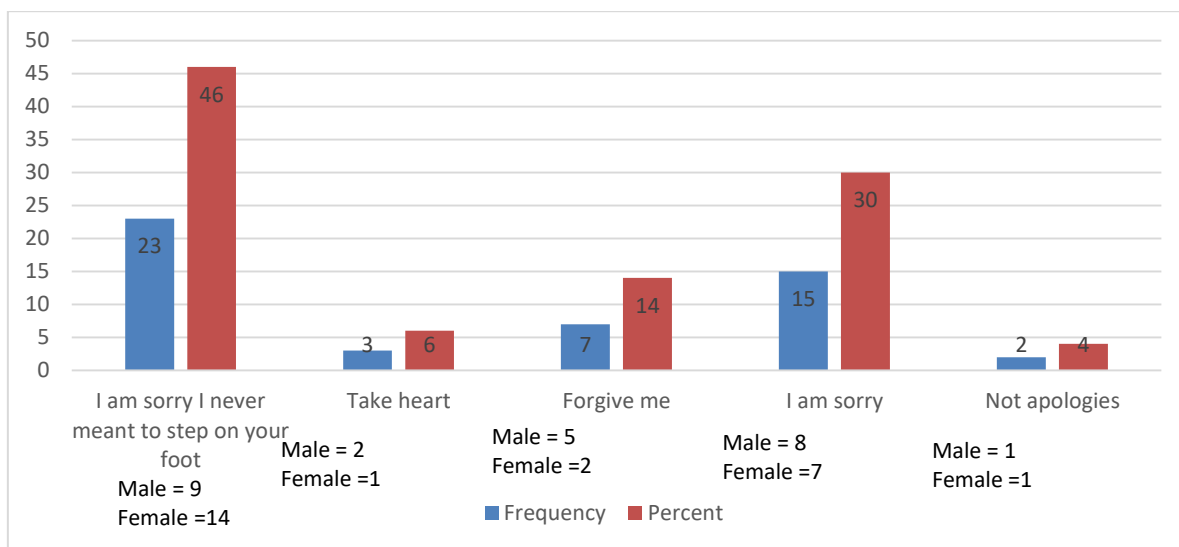
Figure 2: How to apologise

The results on figure 2 are a summary of the various responses. 2 respondents (1 male and 1 female) who made up 4% (2% + 2%) of the sample said they will not apologise. 15 respondents (8 males and 7 females) who made up 30% (16% + 14%) said they will say they are sorry, 7 respondents (5 males and 2 females) who made up 14% (10% + 4%) will say forgive me and 3 informants (2 males and 1 female) who made up 6% (4% + 2%) will say take heart and 23 informants (9 males and 14 females) who made up 46% (18% + 28%) will say I am sorry I never meant to step on your foot.

Reasons for politeness and determining sincerity in apologies
The two sections below required respondents to provide their opinions on the reasons people tend to be polite in conversations and how to determine when someone apologises with all sincerity.

**Table 4: Reasons for peoples' politeness in conversations**

Responses	Male		Female	
	Frequency	**Percentage**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
In order to be sincere	3	6%	7	14%
To be able to pass across their ideas	10	20%	9	18%
To safe a face	3	6%	3	6%
To make the conversation good	9	18%	6	12%
Total	25	50%	25	50%

In this section, respondents were required to provide their opinions on the reasons people tend to be polite in conversations. The following results were gotten. Table 4 shows that, 10 informants (3 males and 7 females) who made up 20% (6% + 14%) said people tend to be polite in order to be sincere. 19 informants (10 males and 9 females) who made up 38% (20% +18%) said people tend to be polite to be able to pass across their ideas meanwhile 6 informants (3 males and 3 females) who made up 12% (6% + 6%) said to safe a face and 15 informants (9 males and 6 females) who made up 30% (18% + 12%) were of the view that people are polite to make a conversation good. From the results, many people turn to be polite in order to pass across their ideas or keep a good conversation. This is just an indication that,

speakers do not pay attention to the aspect of face in many conversations especially as that option carries less responses. This highly confirms the objective that guides this study.

**How to determine when someone apologises with all sincerity**
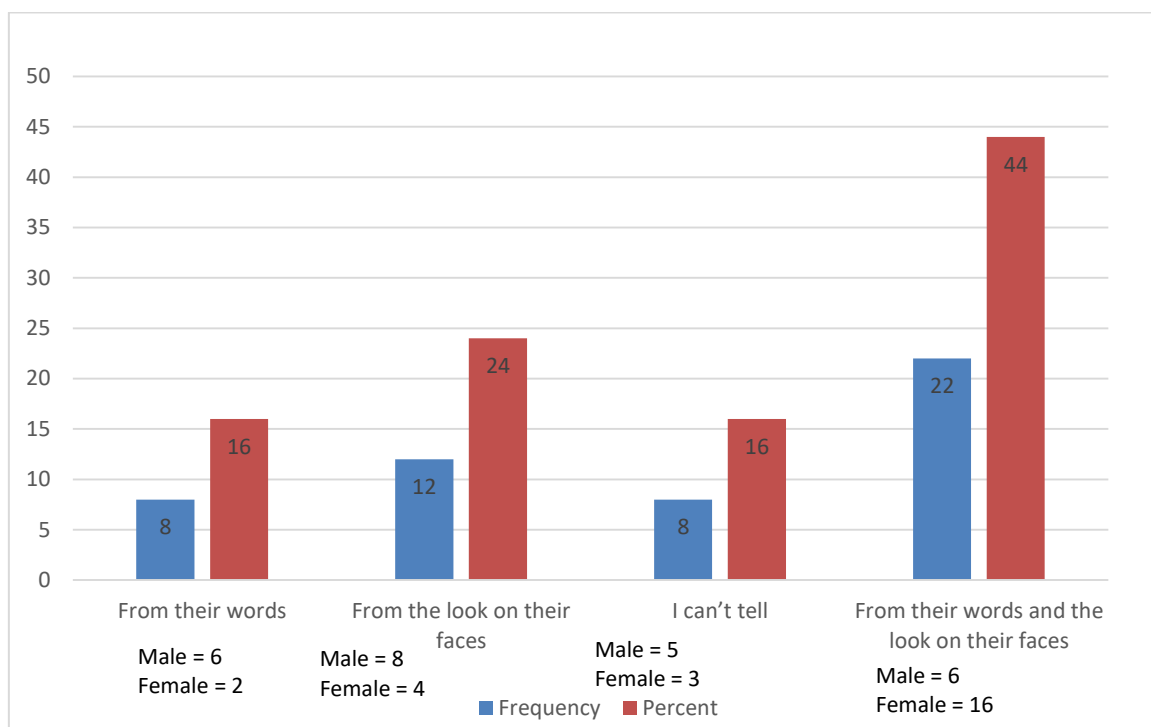
Figure 3: How to determine when someone apologises with all sincerity

Here, we set out to get informants' opinions on how to determine when someone apologises with all sincerity. Figure 3 shows that, 8 informants (6 males and 2 females) representing 16% (12% + 4%) of the total respondents were of the view that from the words they use, you can perceive how sincere they are when making an apology. 12 informants (8 males and 4 females) representing 24% (16% + 8%) were of the view that you can tell if some is sincere in their apology from the looks on their faces, 8 informants (5 males and 3 females) representing 16% (10% + 6%) said they could not tell when someone is sincere in their apology. 22 informants (6 males and 16 females) representing 44% (12% + 32%) said that from the looks on someone's face and from their words you can tell if they are sincere in their apology or not. From the findings, the majority shows that, one can determine when someone apologises to him/her with all sincerity from their words and the looks on their faces.

Cross gender apology and influence of culture on communicative style

The two sections below aimed at getting respondents' opinions on whether they would apologise if the person they insulted were from another gender and whether or not culture influences male and female communicative styles.

Apologising to the other gender
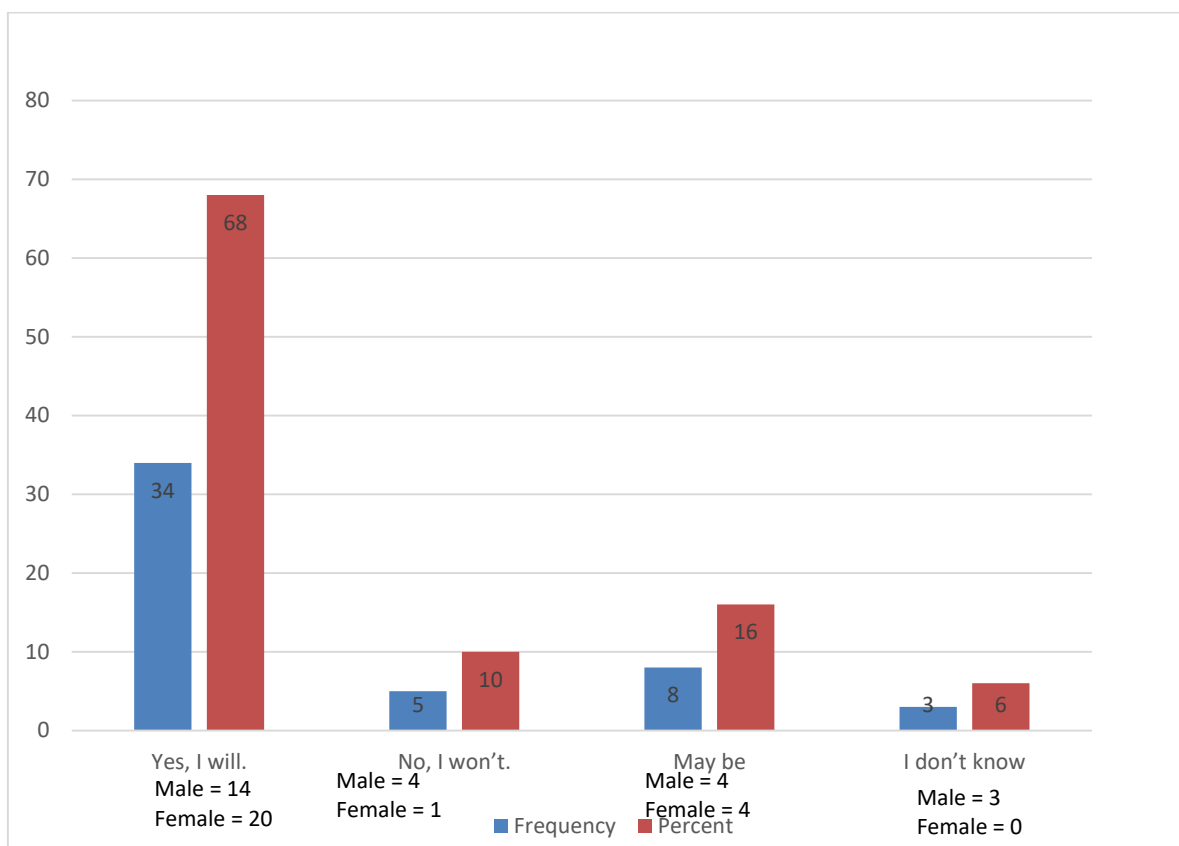
Figure 4: Apologising to the other gender

Respondents were asked whether they would apologise if the person they insulted were from another gender. From figure 4, 3 respondents (3 males and 0 female) representing 6% (6% + 0%) of the sample said that they do not know if they will apologise if the person they insulted was from another gender. 8 respondents (4 males and 4 females) representing 16% (8% + 8%) said maybe they will apologise, 5 respondents (4 males and 1 female) representing 10% (8% + 2 %) said they will not apologise if the person they insult was from another gender. The greatest part of the sample which was 34 respondents (14 males and 20 females) representing 68% (28% + 40%) said yes, they will apologise if the person they insulted be from another gender. From the findings, we observed that 24% are not willing to apologise to the other gender hence there is a problem when it comes to apologising to the opposite sex.

Table 5: The influence of culture on male and female communicative styles

Responses	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly disagree	6	12%	4	8%
Disagree	4	8%	7	14%
Agree	8	16%	5	10%
Strongly agree	7	14%	9	18%
Total	25	50%	25	50%

This question required the opinions from the informants on whether or not culture influences male and female communicative styles. The following results obtained from table 5 indicates that, 10 informants (6 males and 4 females) representing 20% (12% + 8%) of the sample took the strongly disagreed option, those who disagreed were 11 informants (4 males and 7 females) representing 22% (8% + 14 %), those who agreed were 13 informants (8 males and 5 females) representing 26% (16% + 10%) of the sample and those who strongly agreed were 16 informants (7 males and 9 females) representing 32% (14% + 18%) of the sample.

Do public figures apologise? If yes, how do they apologise?

According to the findings, the following results were gotten.

Male 1: Public figures hardly apologise but if they must do it, they always do privately with a future promise. Most of them will often like to say **I am sorry for the mistakes, I intend to correct everything in the future.**

Female 1: Some of them do apologise and they will love to make it public by going on social media. Those who apologise usually say; **I am sorry, I wasn't in my right frame of mind.**

Male 2: They rarely do it publicly but I believe they do it private and if they may do they **will say they are sorry**.

Female 2: Yes they do. They will go live on social media and say **they are sorry after explaining a lot of things.**

Do you think they are sincere in their apology?

Male 3: No
Female 3: No
Male 4: No
Female 4: Yes

Our findings showed that public figures are sometimes sincere in their apology as female 4 answered but the majority according to responses said public figures are not sincere in their apology. Therefore they will only apologies because of their reputation or image.

Imagine you are a male and your father asked you to wash his car, but you forgot. Now he is so angry. If this situation were real, what would you say? To the females, your mother asked you to wash dishes before leaving for work, but you forgot. No she is angry. If this situation were real, what would you say?

Male 5: Please Dad I am sorry
Male 6: Sorry dad, it went off my mind
Female 5: I am so sorry mama, the tap has not been flowing since morning
Female 6: I promise to wash them very early tomorrow morning mama.

From these responses we see some level of complaint or a secondary reason from female 5 and her use of the word so to place emphasis on her how serious how apology is. The males on their parts will go straight to giving a simple form of apology without further explanations.

If you borrowed a book from your friend and did not return it on time and you have come to return it three weeks after the promised date, what would you say?

Female 7: I understand you are angry at me. I sorry mami
Male 7: I apologise for bringing your book late
Female 8: Circumstances beyond my control delayed my returning the book early. I am sorry.
Male 8: Do not be angry with me my G.

Our results showed that both the males and females will apologise but the females will mostly attached reason(s) for their delay while they males will go straight to giving a brief apology.

You come 45 minutes late to the class of a lecturer who hates late coming. If this scenario was real, what would you say?

Female 9: Sorry for coming late sir
Male 9: Excuse me for coming late sir
Male 10: Sorry sir, there was traffic
Female 10: Please sir can I come in?

We see from the different responses the different apology strategies by both genders. While one of the males will complain of traffic, the females will simply apologise and one request if she can come in. This is just proof that, gender has effects on male and female communicative styles especially in apologies.

You brought your assignment two weeks after submission and your teacher is not happy about it. If this scenario was real, what will you say?

Male 11: Sir please accepts my assignment and forgives me
Female 11: Sir, please have mercy on me
Male 12: Sir, I got the question for the assignment late
Female 12: Sir, the internet was slow these days and going to the library took more time**.**

We can deduce from these responses that both genders at one point will give excuses while female 11 tries to appeal to the teacher's conscience by saying please have mercy on me.

Someone ask you money and you want to reply in a polite way that you do not have. What will you say?

Male 13: Oh sorry, my wallet is empty
Female 13: Weh, sorry I do not have
Male 14: I am dry
Female 14: I cannot even remember the last time I held 500

DISCUSSION

From the findings, it was realised that, men and women speak differently. This is highly demonstrated with the 68% combined responses from both genders that is, 12 respondents (5 males and 7 females) who made up 24% (10% + 14%) strongly agreed with the fact that men and women speak differently and a greater proportion of 22 respondents (10 males and 12 females) which carries 44% (20% + 24%) agreed that men and women speak differently. This closely relates with Uchida (1992) conclusions on the difference theory. Uchida (1992) concludes that, the culture that male and female members of the same community develop may be quite different, which in turn can result in different ways of speaking. Also, (Maltz and Borker 1992; Tannen 1990; Gray 1992) added that, men and women speak different languages due to the fact that they are members of different cultures. Therefore, our findings clearly ties with the literature under review. Most of the respondents also said that the female gender apologises more than the male. The result from figure 1 shows that the female gender is 46% more apologetic than the male gender. Also, in relation to offering apologies, females may often give reasons or give additional information for the purpose of clarity all in a bit to safe face. The result reflects Turiman et al (2013) study on that are men more apologetic than women? They found that, women tend to apologies more than the men thereby supporting our findings.

Also, majority of the respondents said that public figures hardly apologise. Majority of the male respondents felt that public figures hardly apologies while a limited number of female respondents said that some of them do apologise but will mostly justify their actions for example, I am sorry, I wasn't in my right frame of mind. We also see that, gender plays an important role in apology strategies. Female respondents tend to mostly attached further explanations to their apologies while the males go directly into apologising or they give simple apology strategies. In addition, culture and cultural practices influence social interaction between the male and female genders. This is demonstrated by the greater percentage of respondents (32% who strongly agreed and 26% who agreed) that culture plays a big role in influencing male and female communicative styles in apology. This highly confirm the objectives that guides this study and reflects Bataineh and Bataineh (2005) study on potential gender effects in American University students' use of apologies within the framework of the two-culture theory. They found out that, male and female respondents used the same primary strategies but in different frequencies because the issue of apologies indicates the high degree of interest in the social and cultural implications. Also. Maltz and Borker (1982) and Tannen (1990) talked on the aspect of cultural differences which is based on the fact that men and women come from two different subcultures.

The importance of face in any social interaction between the male and female genders is primordial to the understanding of their various communicative styles especially in offering apologies. Most of the respondents in the questionnaire felt that people are polite in most conversations to pass across their ideas (demonstrated by the 38% responses in relation to this) or make the conversation good (30% respondents said this). This is proof that, a lot of them do not give pride of place to the issues of face in social interactions. This confirms the objectives of the study. It is worth noting that, a majority accepts that they can apologise to the other gender. This is seen from the 68% who said they will apologise to the other gender. Also, most of the respondents said that someone can determine sincerity in apologising from the person's words and the looks on their faces. This is demonstrated a majority 22 informants (6 males and 16 females) representing 44% (12% + 32%).

Furthermore, the two genders have different apology strategies. While one of the males will complain of traffic in a situation of submitting an assignment late, the females will simply apologise and one request if she can enter the class. This is just proof that, gender has effects on male and female communicative styles especially in apologies. Therefore, the use of speech acts specifically in apology strategies in male and female communication styles, need to be given more attention especially in the Cameroonian setting by both students, teachers, curriculum developers, policy makers and governments so as to enhance its teaching, knowledge and usage by young Cameroonian speakers of English.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis above, one can say that, the two genders have different communicative styles in offering apology strategies. Cultural values and beliefs do not influence male and female communicative styles according to the

respondents. Since most people tend to be polite in conversations inorder to pass across their ideas or make the conversation good, this shows the less importance attached to the issue of face in every conversation.

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