

## MASTER'S THESIS

### Cross-cultural pragmatics: a study of Chinese and Western children's use of requests and apologies

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**CROSS-CULTURAL PRAGMATICS: A STUDY OF  
CHINESE AND WESTERN CHILDREN'S USE OF  
REQUESTS AND APOLOGIES**

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## **Abstract**

Requests and apologies are common in daily conversation. This study attempts to compare the performance of different speech acts, including requests and apologies, between three groups of children aged 8-9 years and to achieve a better understanding of cross-cultural pragmatics. The sample population comprises Primary 3 Western native English speaking children, Chinese students from a local primary school and from an international school in Hong Kong. The Western children who have English as their first language while the Chinese students are second language learners of English who have Chinese as their mother tongue. Different social scenarios were given to the children in a cartoon oral production task (COPT). The Coding Manual from Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) was used to analyse the request and apology strategies. The results show that the Chinese primary school students prefer conventionally indirect request strategies, especially the Chinese children in the international school. The results also show that the Western children also prefer these strategies as well. Illocutionary Force Indicating Device (IFID) is most frequently used among the Chinese and the Western children and, at the same time, cultural differences are readily observable in their realization of requests and apologies.

## 摘要

請求 (Requests) 及道歉 (Apologies) 在日常對話中是非常普遍。本研究旨在比較三組年齡由八至九歲的學生的請求及道歉用語，進一步了解在跨文化語用學 (Cross-cultural pragmatics) 的影響。研究對象分別來自一所以英語作為第二語言的本地小學三年級學生及另外兩組來自同一所國際學校，並以英語作為母語的外籍及中國籍學生。透過運用 Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 的分類模式分析他們於不同生活情景中所表達的請求和道歉用語後，結果顯示本地小學的學生普遍均會作出常規型間接請求策略 (conventionally indirect request strategies)，尤其在國際學校中以英語作為母語的中國籍學生。結果同時顯示以英語作為母語的外籍學生也多運用常規型間接請求策略。直接道歉語 (Illocutionary Force Indicating Device) 均是三組學生最經常使用的道歉策略。同時，研究亦證明彼此文化的差異也導致不同的請求及道歉方式。

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