

A Project entitled

*A contrastive study of the apology strategies of Chinese ESL undergraduates and South
and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong*

Submitted by

YIP Yik Lun

Submitted to The Education University of Hong Kong

for the degree of Bachelor of Education (Honours) – English Language (Secondary)

in *May 2019*

Declaration

I, Yip Yik Lun, declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Dr. Luk Pei Sui Zoe, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed _

Yip Yik Lun

1 May 2019

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence has received increasing attention as an integral component for acquisition of communicative competence in second language acquisition (SLA) since the 1980s (Kraft & Geluykens, 2007; Fraser, 2010; Zhu, 2012; Becker, 2014; Huang, 2014) as it is crucial in the conveying and comprehension of illocutionary force and politeness value in interaction (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989, p.10; Koo, 2001). Pragmatic competence is referred as the appropriate use of target language (TL) at all levels in accordance with the situational constraints in a given context (Tanaka & Kawade, 1982; Duff & Talmy, 2011). The study of pragmatics and SLA is also known as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), which refers to the study of the development of rules of language use in second language (L2) and their use by non-native speakers (NNS) (Kasper, 1992; as cited in; Salgado, 2011).

The speech act (SA) of apology is selected for investigation in this study. Apology is frequently used in daily encounter (Koo, 2001) and it is a post-event SA performed by the speaker to express regrets in the cause of the event (Blum-kulka & Olshtain, 1984). The realization of apology can be done by multiple potential ways (Koo, 2011) and it is a choice made by the speaker based on different social contextual factors, including social distance, relative power and obligation to apologize (Brown & Levinson, 1987), in a given situation (Rojo, 2005; Kraft & Geluykens, 2007). The appropriate use of one or more strategies in an apology is crucial in maintaining of social relationship (Wouk, 2006; Huang, 2014), which is one of the main functions of language (H. Sohn, 1999; as cited in; Koo, 2011). Therefore, it requires both grammatical competence and the pragmatic competence of a speaker to successfully perform the SA (Trosborg, 1987).

Also, the apology strategies can be used for politeness purpose to redress the addressee's face (Chang, 2008; Kraft & Geluykens, 2007), which consists of positive face and negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Simultaneously, it can also threaten the speaker's

face as a face-threatening act (FTA) (Huang, 2014). Numerous existing studies have investigated the differences in performing SA for politeness purpose between ESL learners and English native speakers (NS) in mainly North American and European contexts (Fraser, 1981; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981, 1993; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1989, 1990; Meier, 1998; Reiter, 2000; Rojo, 2005) with a few focusing on Malaysian and Iranian contexts (Behnam & Niroomand, 2011; Farashaiyan & Amirkhiz, 2011; Najeeb & Maros, & Nor, 2012) and showed substantial cross-cultural differences (Wouk, 2006; Bataineh & Bataineh, 2006; Salgado, 2011) in the use of apology, yet, very limited research has been done to examine politeness in ESL students in Hong Kong context. Therefore, it is worth examining the apology strategies used by Chinese ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong.

In addition, Hong Kong is a largely homogenous society consists of 92% Chinese and 8% non-Chinese ethnic minority groups (Census, 2016), in which 73% are South and Southeast Asians. Nonetheless, they often experience difficulties in integrating into the Hong Kong society due to language, education and cultural barriers (Ku, Chan, & Sandhu, 2005). It is believed that knowing the similarities and differences in politeness, focusing on the realization of apology strategies, between Chinese and the dominant ethnic minority groups can facilitate integration in the Hong Kong society by understanding the face needs and politeness preference.

This study aims to investigate the apology strategies used by Chinese ESL undergraduates, and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong. In this study, the relations between social contextual factors and the realization of apologies in Chinese ESL undergraduates, and South and Southeast ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong was examined to find out how social contextual factors contribute to the intercultural variation of realization of apologies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Face and Politeness

Politeness is a phenomenon found in all cultures, in one form or another (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Huang, 2014). Brown & Levinson (1987, p.13-14) examined politeness via the concept of face and proposed a face model. The face model refers politeness as a strategic device for saving *face*, which consists of i.) positive face representing “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” and ii.) negative face referring to “the want of every ‘competent member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.62-63).

The face model is considered to be a universal notion in any human society (Huang, 2014; Reiter, 2000; Ren, 2015) indicating the importance of face in interaction as it is emotionally invested, and can be lost, maintained, or enhanced (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p.66). It is also believed that different cultures have varying preference of the *faces* to be saved. Garcia (1989) investigated the apology strategies used by Venezuelan ESL and English native speakers (NS) in role plays and found that the Venezuelans preferred saving positive face by giving explanations and using in-group identity markers while the English NS preferred saving negative face by apologizing in self-effacing manner and showing deference to the addressee. Guan, Park, and Lee (2009) examined the effects of national culture and social distance on the use of apology and found that Chinese and Korean employed more positive-politeness devices including offering repairmen and justifying addressees’ feelings than American NS who employed more negative-politeness devices including offering apology and expressing embarrassment. Several cross-cultural pragmatic studies (Clyne, 2006; Moron, Cruz, Amaya, & Lopez, 2009; Lucy, 1992) suggested that western cultures generally prefer negative face while eastern cultures generally prefer positive face. Hence, cross-cultural differences are found in the use of SA due to the varying preference of politeness and face.

Research on politeness found that learning of politeness in TL can be difficult for L2 learners due to L1 influence and lack of TL pragmatic competence. That is, learners may use strategies and produce speech that sounds “inappropriate” to TL interlocutors or receive speech that sounds “inappropriate” to them. For example, an English NS asking “can you close the window?” in Russian as a request would be interpreted as an interrogative question asking if the hearer has the ability to pass the salt in Russian (Fernandez Amaya, 2008). Therefore, it is crucial to examine the acquisition of politeness in pragmatic competence to facilitate SLA and understand the process behind difficult politeness learning.

2.2 Apology

Apology is one of the SAs that can threaten a speaker’s and an addressee’s face (Chang, 2008; Kraft & Geluykens, 2007; Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Locher, 2004; Angouri & Locher 2012; as cited in; Huang, 2014). Apology is defined as a post-event SA performed “when social norms have been violated, whether the offence is real or potential” (Olshtain & Cohen, 1983, p. 20) by the speaker who admits at least a partial involvement in the cause of the event (Blum-kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p.206). It is also performed when a speaker wants to take responsibility on an annoying or damaging action which the speaker regrets (Aijmer, 2014, p.97). According to Reiter (2000), apology is generally perceived as a strategy of negative politeness as it expresses respect, deference and distance rather than friendliness while threatening the face of the speaker (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.67-68). Nonetheless, Holmes (1990, p.162) proposed that it can also simultaneously support speaker’s positive face through the simultaneous benefits exchanged redressing the speaker’s positive face need and the addressee’s face needs.

Apology is a type of “face-threatening acts” (FTAs) according to Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 69). FTA is a set of five strategies (fig.1) that the speaker can choose from to address

an FTA (Huang, 2014). A speaker can avoid FTA by using non-verbal hints (e.g. staring into addressee’s pen to ask for it without directly asking) or completely abandoning the subject. On the other hand, speaker can do the FTA either off record (i.e. indirectly) by using implicatures or verbal hints or on record (i.e. directly) with or without redressive action (e.g. baldly asking for a pen “I want your pen”). When a speaker chose to do the FTA on record with redressive action, either positive politeness redress or negative politeness redress will be chosen. The strategies (fig.1) are arranged from the least to most remedial action or redress. Huang (2014) proposed that the more threatening an FTA is, the politer (the higher numbered in fig.1) the strategy a speaker should employ to reduce the face threatening effect.

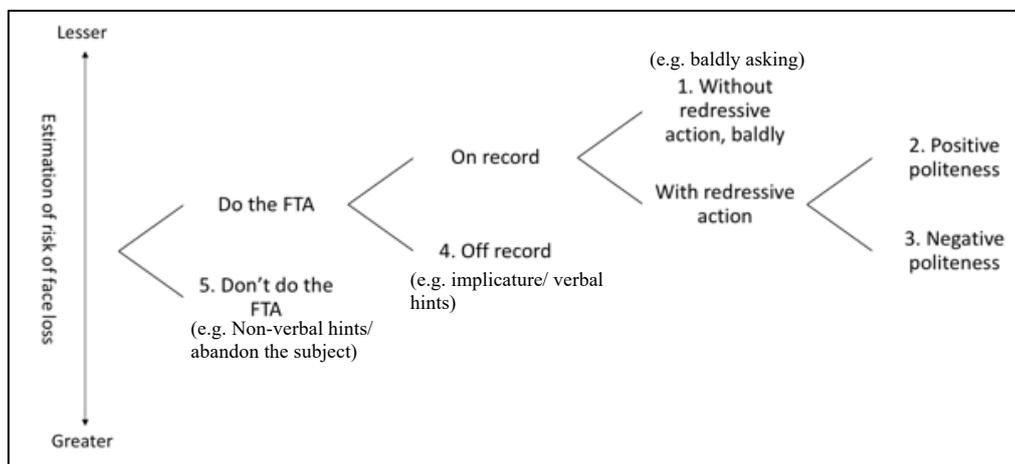


Fig. 1 Brown & Levinson's set of possible strategies for doing FTAs.

A speaker performs apology as a redressive FTA to save addressee’s positive or negative face while acknowledging the addressee’s need not be imposed upon or offended (Suszczyńska, 1999). Holmes (1990) believed that the process of apology is a critical component of social and relational harmony between speaker and addressee. Leech (2016, p.125) also pointed out that by providing benefits to the addressee at some cost of the speaker, an apology is “a convivial SA whose goal coincides with the social goal of maintaining harmony” between interlocutors.

In order to perform the act of apology, three preconditions must be held true as follows (Blum-kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p.206):

“For an event *X* involving speaker *S* and addressee *A*

- i.) *S* did *X* or abstained from doing *X* (or is about to do it).
- ii.) *X* is perceived by *S* only, by *A* only, by both *S* and *A*, or by a third party as a breach of a social norm.
- iii.) *X* is perceived by at least one of the parties involved as offending, harming, or affecting *A* in some way.”

2.2.1 Apology Strategies

Various strategy classifications are devised due to the considerable research on linguistic and communicative strategies used in apologies in North American and European contexts (Fraser, 1981; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981, 1993; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1989, 1990; Meier, 1998; Reiter, 2000; Rojo, 2005). In this study, an elaborated classification of apology strategies is used based on the widely-adopted 5 core strategies model proposed by Olshtain and Cohen (1983), the extensive model devised by Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper (1989) in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Research Project (CCSARP) and the extended illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) classification by Ogiemann (2009). In order to perform the act of apology, the speaker may use strategies to redress the face of addressee as follows:

a.) **Illocutionary force indicating device (IFID)** - formulaic routinized expressions used to perform a polite SA towards the addressee through explicit linguistics markers; a *negative politeness strategy* to avoid imposition or intruding on the hearer

Direct IFID Performatives:

i.) **Offering apology** (e.g., Accept my apology, I apologize...): to offer apology to addressee (“*apology*”)

Indirect IFID Formulaic Expressions:

- ii.) **Request for forgiveness** (e.g. Excuse me/ Forgive me): to request for forgiveness from addressee (*verb to request for forgiveness + me*)
- iii.) **Expressing regret** (e.g. I am sorry): to express speaker's emotion of regret (*I + verb to express emotion + adjective phrase to express regret*)
- b.) **Explanation or account** – Explaining and giving reasons for the offense (e.g. There's a traffic jam); a *negative politeness strategy* to account for the potential imposition or intruding on the hearer
- c.) **Expression of responsibility** - admitting negligence or lack of foresight or criticizing and blaming oneself to placate the addressee; a *negative politeness strategy* to avoid imposition and intruding on the hearer by paying deference
- i.) **Explicit self-blame** (e.g. It was my fault, I blame myself for...): to put the blame on oneself (*First person pronoun + "fault" / "blame"*)
- ii.) **Lack of intent** (e.g. I didn't mean to..., It wasn't my intent): to admit negligence without acknowledging the perceived intention (*"not" + phrases expressing intention*)
- iii.) **Expression of embarrassment** (e.g. I am so embarrassed): to express speakers' embarrassment on the subject
- d.) **Hearer justification** (e.g. you have the right to be angry, you should be mad...): to justify addressee's emotion for the hearer (*second person pronoun + verb or adjective phrase to express emotion*); a *positive politeness strategy* attending to hearer's emotion and feelings
- e.) **Promise of forbearance** - to promise the offensive act will never occur again (e.g. I promise I will not be late again) (*First person pronoun + future promise*); a *positive politeness strategy* indicating speaker's interest in maintaining the relationship

- f.) **Offer of repair or repayment** – offering repair or repayment to make up for the offence or inconvenience caused (e.g. I will pay for it) (*First person + future action for repayment*); a *positive politeness strategy* indicating speaker's interest in maintaining the relationship
- g.) **Distracting from the offense** (e.g. Am I late?, The bus is late, They made me do it...) – not taking responsibility by denying preconditions for apology or involvement in the cause of the event; a *negative politeness strategies* to dismiss imposition or intruding on the hearer

Linguistically, speaker can upgrade or down-tone the apologies by using adverbs (e.g. terribly, very, a bit) and other expressions including modality (e.g. maybe, might, could) and term of address (e.g. Sir/ Madam, kid, son, friend, Mister) (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989; Moron, Cruz, Amaya, & Lopez, 2009).

2.3 Culture and politeness

Despite numerous existing studies have investigated the differences in performing SA for politeness purpose between ESL learners and English native speakers (NS) in mainly North American and European contexts (Fraser, 1981; Cohen & Olshtain, 1981, 1993; Olshtain & Cohen, 1983; Holmes, 1989, 1990; Meier, 1998; Reiter, 2000; Rojo, 2005) with a few focusing on Malaysian and Iranian contexts (Behnam & Niroomand, 2011; Farashaiyan & Amirkhiz, 2011; Najeeb & Maros, & Nor, 2012), very limited research has been done to examine politeness in ESL students in Hong Kong context. Most of the existing studies in politeness strategies focus on requesting strategy in adults at business environment (Yeung, 1997; Lee, 2004; Kong, 2006). Also, research with in-depth analysis on the sub-cultural groups of the Chinese ESL learners and comparison between the Chinese and South and Southeast Asian

ESL learners in eastern-world contexts at tertiary education level are lacked. Therefore, this research is designed to investigate and contrast the strategies of apology of Chinese ESL learners, and South and Southeast Asian ESL learners.

It is particularly interesting to investigate the apology strategy in Hong Kong due to the fact that it is a city with specific British colonial history before 1997 and people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Local Hong Kong citizens grow up with both Chinese cultural background and western ideologies stemmed from the colonial history (Carroll, 2007) and rapid development (Tsang, 2007), and thus, is representing a mixed position between what the existing literature called “eastern-world culture” which is believed to emphasize positive politeness and “western-world culture” which is believed to emphasize negative politeness (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989; Reiter, 2000; Moron, Cruz, Amaya, & Lopez, 2009).

While many studies shown that politeness can differ across cultures, Haugh (2006) claimed that the notion of *keqi* (restraint) and *chengyi* (sincerity) are the more prominent elements constituting *limao* (politeness) in the Chinese society due to the emphasis on hierarchical relations in the society. This provides an alternative view on how Chinese ESL may perceive and understand politeness differently than English NS, and thus, using different types of apology strategies than English NS to express their forms of politeness.

In addition, Brown & Levinson (1987, p.74) posited three independent and culturally sensitivity variables, social distance (D), relative power (P) and absolute ranking of obligation (R) to measure the weightiness (W) or seriousness of an FTA to an individual under influence of the extralinguistic context. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) identified a total of six social contextual factors based on the Brown and Levinson’s formula (i.e. $W_x = D(\text{speaker, addressee}) + P(\text{speaker, addressee}) + R_x$), namely obligation to SA, face-loss of speaker, social distance, dominance (i.e. relative power), severity of offense and likelihood of SA acceptance

To further capture the social contextual factors of an FTA that contributes to the decision of apology strategies made by speakers, this study will incorporate the Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993)'s social contextual factors model to investigate the relations between social contextual factor and the realization of apology in Chinese ESL undergraduates, and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong.

3. Research questions

The research attempts to answer three research questions as follows:

- 1.) What are the similarities and differences in realization of apology strategies in Chinese ESL undergraduates, and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong?
- 2.) What are the relations between the social contextual factors and the realization of apologies in Chinese ESL undergraduates, and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong?
- 3.) How do the social contextual factors contribute to the cross-cultural variation in strategic realization of apologies in Chinese ESL undergraduates, and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong?

4. Methodology

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, the mixed-method was used to examine the use of apology strategies by ESL undergraduates of different ethnic groups in Hong Kong and the relations between social contextual factors, including power relationship (P), social distance (D), obligation to apologize (R), face-loss, severity of offence (W) and likelihood of SA acceptance, and realization of apologies.

4.1 Setting

The study was conducted in the 8 universities in Hong Kong, mainly in the Education University of Hong Kong, and online to recruit the participants (Chinese ESL undergraduates, South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates).

4.2 Participants and procedure

117 participants were recruited for this project, including 77 Hong Kong Chinese, 7 mainland Chinese, 1 East Asian, 16 South Asians including 9 Pakistanis and 7 Indians, and 16 Southeast Asians including 6 Filipinos, 3 Malaysians and 7 Vietnamese. They were all ESL undergraduates majoring in any subject, ranging from 19 years old to 24 years old, in Hong Kong with residence in Hong Kong for at least 4 years. As they were all undergraduates in Hong Kong universities, they had obtained at least level 3 in the HKDSE English Language or equivalent qualifications showing a medium to high language competence in English.

A three-part questionnaire was distributed to the participants to indicate their ethnicity and language background (Appendix I), respond to the given situations in the discourse-completion task (DCT) (Appendix II) and rate their social contextual beliefs (Appendix III). The data from the questionnaire was entered into SPSS and analyzed in Generalized Linear Mixed Model (GLMM).

4.3 Instruments

A three-part questionnaire was distributed to the participant on campus and online. It includes a language background survey (appendix I), a written apology discourse-completion task (DCT) questionnaire (appendix II), and a post-DCT questionnaire (appendix III).

The language background survey (Appendix I) collected information on the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, English proficiency level in terms of public examinations (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL, HKDSE, National Higher Education Entrance Examination), native language spoken, and time of residency in Hong Kong and other countries. The information facilitated screening of targeted participants in this project, so as to collect information on other factors (e.g. proficiency level and time of residency) that may influence participants' SA behavior in the apology DCT.

The DCT was a controlled elicitation procedure widely-used to discover the SA realization patterns of speakers (Blum-Kulka, 1980). The apology DCT (Appendix II) involved incomplete discourse sequences that indicate 12 socially differentiated situations (i.e. 2x3x2) in terms of 2 types of social distance (D), 3 types of relative power (P) and 2 levels of obligation to apologize (R) (fig.2). The 12 items were randomized for each participant in order to avoid influence of the item order on the response. A short scenario description was given in each discourse sequence to specify the setting and roles with distinctive 'social distance', 'relative power' and 'obligation to apologize' setup between interlocutors to elicit an apology response. Participants were asked to complete the dialogue in written form, and thus, the choice on targeted SA (apology) strategies in the given contexts could be observed. The strategies were then classified and coded with the *revised elaborated model*, which consists 11 apology strategies, mentioned in *section 2.2.1* in this paper.

A post-DCT questionnaire (Appendix III) was conducted upon completion of the apology DCT to ask the participants to rate their social contextual beliefs in 6 factors on a 7 points Likert-type scale in the 12 randomized DCT scenarios, namely i.) obligation to SA, ii.) face-loss of speaker, iii.) social distance between speaker and addressee, iv.) relative power of speaker to addressee, v.) severity of offense, and vi.) likelihood of SA acceptance. Therefore, the relations between social contextual factors and the realization of apology in participants

could be observed. This questionnaire (i.e. Part 3) was designed to be completed after the DCT due to the fact that the judgement and analysis involved in rating their beliefs on the statement may hinder participants from producing authentic response.

		Close social distance	Distant social distance
High power to low power	Higher obligation to apologize	<p><i>1) At school</i></p> <p>You are the elder sister/ brother.</p> <p>You have to pay the tuition fee for your younger sister Emerald today to meet the payment deadline, but you haven't done so yet.</p> <p>Emerald: I need the receipt.</p> <p>You: -----</p>	<p><i>2) At the school club</i></p> <p>You are the school club president.</p> <p>You forgot to attend an inter-school meeting yesterday. You blamed your secretary Kalen for not reminding you about the meeting. Just now, you have found the conference reminder emails at your mailbox.</p> <p>Kalen: I checked, and all the emails were sent.</p> <p>You: -----</p>
	Lower obligation to apologize	<p><i>3) At home</i></p> <p>You are the elder sister/ brother.</p> <p>Your younger sister Kimmy is having her birthday party at home today. When she arrives home, you find out that you have forgotten to send out the invitation cards.</p> <p>Kimmy: It's finally my party.</p> <p>You: -----</p>	<p><i>4) At home</i></p> <p>You are the elder cousin.</p> <p>You scolded your younger cousin Alan for stealing your snacks, but you found the snacks inside the drawer afterward.</p> <p>Alan: I didn't steal your snacks.</p> <p>You: -----</p>

Equal power	Higher obligation to apologize	<p>5) <i>On the street</i></p> <p>You are the boyfriend/ girlfriend.</p> <p>It is the first anniversary for you and your boyfriend/ girlfriend today, but you have forgotten to make a reservation for the anniversary dinner.</p> <p>Boyfriend/ girlfriend: I can't wait.</p> <p>You: -----</p>	<p>6) <i>At school</i></p> <p>You are a member of a group working on an assignment.</p> <p>Your group members completed their parts 2 weeks ago. Today is the day of submission deadline, but you haven't started to work on your part yet.</p> <p>Group member: Today is the deadline.</p> <p>You: -----</p>
	Lower obligation to apologize	<p>7) <i>At the movie theatre</i></p> <p>You are a friend.</p> <p>Your friend Sammy and you have a movie date today at 3pm, but you arrive at the movie theatre at 3.30pm.</p> <p>Sammy: The movie has started.</p> <p>You: -----</p>	<p>8) <i>At school</i></p> <p>You are a student.</p> <p>You have borrowed a book from your schoolmate Ryan for a month. You promised to return the book today after several reminders. You realize you have left the book at home when Ryan asks you about the book.</p> <p>Ryan: I need my book.</p> <p>You: -----</p>
Low power to high power	Higher obligation to apologize	<p>9) <i>At home</i></p> <p>You are the son/ daughter.</p> <p>You have promised to help your dad file the taxes by today, but you haven't done so yet.</p> <p>Dad: Today is the deadline for filing taxes.</p> <p>You: -----</p>	<p>10) <i>At the restaurant</i></p> <p>You are the receptionist.</p> <p>You have confirmed the reservation by mistake when the restaurant is full for the night.</p> <p>When the customer arrived:</p> <p>Customer: I have reserved a table for six.</p> <p>You: -----</p>
	Lower obligation to apologize	<p>11) <i>At home</i></p> <p>You are the son/ daughter.</p> <p>You have promised to help your mom shop for food today. When she comes</p>	<p>12) <i>At school office</i></p> <p>You are a research assistant.</p> <p>The professor gave you 2 weeks to gather the data, but you couldn't complete the work within the time given.</p>

	home she realizes the refrigerator is empty. Mother: I am hungry. You: -----	Professor: I want to see the data. You: -----
--	--	--

Fig.2 Table showing the socially differentiated situations in terms of social distance (D), relative power (P) and obligation to apologize (R).

5. Results

The DCT was conducted in 12 randomized controlled situations (2 social distance conditions x 3 relative power conditions x 2 levels of obligation to apologize, fig.2). A total number of 2710 apology strategies was used by 117 participants in the DCT (table 1). The top three most used apology strategies were i.) **A3** – expressing request (995 times), ii.) **F** – offer of repairmen (718 times), and iii.) **B** – explanation or account (590 times), which were used at least 6.6 times more than that of the other strategies. Due to the low occurrence of other strategies in participants’ DCT responses, reliable statistical results can only be drawn from strategy A3, B and F. Hence, the research project will focus on contrasting the apology strategies A3, B and F used by Chinese, and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates and examining the relations between the social contextual factors and the realization of apologize in terms of the three apology strategies selected.

New strategies were found in this study, namely help seeking (H) and soothing expressions (S), which are not reported in previous studies. For example, responses (Appendix IV) like “No worries!” or “Don’t worry.” were classified as S – soothing expression, a negative politeness strategy aiming to restore the freedom of actions of the addressee, while responses like “Can I have (more time)?” and “I need (your help)” were classified as H – help seeking, a positive politeness strategy aiming to express solidarity by indicating the desirable abilities and traits of the addressee. Hence, there are additional apology strategies found in this study.

Table 1. Number of strategies used by participants of different ethnic groups

	Chinese	Southeast Asian	South Asian	East Asian	Total
No. of participants	84	16	16	1	117
Strategies					
A1	33	12	18	1	64
A2	15	6	5	0	26
A3	707	155	124	9	995
B	415	91	79	5	590
C1	56	19	13	1	89
C2	4	1	0	0	5
C3	2	7	3	0	12
D	9	8	4	0	21
E	19	3	2	0	24
F	502	111	98	7	718
G	55	2	17	0	74
H	54	11	12	0	77
S	15	0	0	0	15
<i>Total</i>	<i>1886</i>	<i>426</i>	<i>375</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>2710</i>

To examine the relations between the social contextual factors and the realization of apology strategies in participants of different ethnic group, the Generalized Linear Mixed Model (GLMM) was used. Table 2 shows that significant relations are found between the realization of apology by expressing regrets (A3) and ethnicity [$F = 4.759, p = .001$], obligation to apologize [$F = 24.551, p = .000$], and the interaction of ethnicity and obligation factors [$F = 5.522, p = .000$].

For the use of explanation and account (B) to realize apology in participant, a significant influence of the factor ethnicity [$F = 3.088, p = .015$] and interaction of ethnicity and obligation factors [$F = 4.246, p = .001$] on the realization of strategy B was found (table 2).

For the effects of social contextual factors on the use of offering repayment (F), no significant effect was found between ethnicity and strategy F [$F = 2.019, p = .089, ns$]. Nonetheless, the remaining five social contextual factors, which includes social distance [$F =$

9.799, $p = .002$], relationship power [$F = 42.557, p = .000$], severity of offense [$F = 12,806, p = .000$], likelihood of apology acceptance [$F = 7.948, p = .005$] and face-loss [$F = 15.692, p = .000$], all show significant effects on the use of offering of repayment (F) (table 2). Hence, it is shown that the realization of different types of apology strategies are affected by varying social contextual factors.

Table 2. *The fixed effects of social contextual factors on the use of apology strategy in Generalized Linear Mixed Model (GLMM)*

Strategy	Social contextual factors	F	df1	df2	Sig.
A3 Corrected Model		22.935	9	1,394	0.000
	Ethnicity	4.759	4	1,394	0.001
	Obligation	24.551	1	1,394	0.000
	Ethnicity*Obligation	5.522	4	1,394	0.000
B Corrected Model		2.646	9	1,394	0.005
	Ethnicity	3.088	4	1,394	0.015
	Ethnicity*Obligation	4.246	5	1,394	0.001
F Corrected Model		9.824	9	1,394	0.000
	Ethnicity	2.019	4	1,394	0.089
	Distance	9.799	1	1,394	0.002
	Power	42.557	1	1,394	0.000
	Seriousness	12.806	1	1,394	0.000
	Acceptance	7.948	1	1,394	0.005
	Face-loss	15.692	1	1,394	0.000

6. Discussion

6.1 Similarities and differences in realization of apology strategies

The results showed that the top most used apology strategies by the 4 ethnic groups were ‘expressing regrets (A3)’, ‘give explanation or account (B)’ and ‘offering repayment (F)’. The similarity in the choices of apology strategies shows that there are some strategies more preferred or readily to be used than the others.

Various studies (Meier, 1995, Reiter, 2000; Dalmau & Gotor, 2007; Moron, Cruz, Amaya, & Lopez, 2009) indicated a high preference of using IFID to express apology in NS

and NNS, yet, it is worth noticing that the expression of regrets (A3) “(I am/feel) sorry.” was the most commonly used sub-strategy of IFID by both the Chinese ESL undergraduates, and the South and Southeast ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong in the study. Some of the regrets expressions used to realize apologies in the DCT are as follows:

- 1.) Chinese/ Situation 6: I’m terribly sorry about that. I can speak to the professor about this.
- 2.) Chinese/ Situation 3: Kimmy, I am sorry to tell you I forgot to send out the invitation cards.
- 3.) Chinese (Mainland)/ Situation 10: I’m sorry, we are full. We can put in you for another day.
- 4.) Southeast Asian/Situation 12: I am really sorry to tell you that the data isn't ready yet. Is it possible for me to send it to you after few more days?
- 5.) South Asian/ Situation 2: Sorry, my apology.
- 6.) East Asian/ Situation 8: Oh sorry forget about it again. I will bring it back tomorrow

Textbooks and language lessons often teach students to perform apology by saying “(I am) sorry” and it leads to the “over-learnt” and overgeneralization of this formulaic expression as a formula to a specific behaviour (Trosborg, 1995, p.406; Mir, 1992; as cited in Dalmau & Gotor, 2007). Apart from serving the function to announce bad news in an out-of-personal-control situation to abdicate responsibility (Owen, 1983; as cited in; Reiter, 2000) by realizing ‘(I am) sorry + that’, the apologies realized by ‘(I am) sorry to + verb phrase’ were used as an attention grabber (Reiter, 2000) to call for attention without addressing the real offense. Hence, participants often resorted to the use of regrets expressions (A3) in their apologies to constitute a ‘ritual’ apology, not a ‘real’ apology.

Although the total frequency of offering explanation (B) as a way to realize apology is similar across the ethnic groups, cross-cultural differences is observed. Explanations or accounts is a negative politeness strategy for the speaker to explain the reasons of the offence. Although there is no linguistically convention in the construction of an explanation (Reiter, 2000), the appropriateness of an explanation appears to be cultural specific. While high

similarity was found in the frequency of realizing explanation (B) by participants of different ethnic groups (table 3), difference in preference was observed in situation 5.

In situation 5 (table 3), Southeast and South Asians chose to offer an account more than that of the Chinese (including Hong Kong and mainland Chinese) by 70% to 102%. Chinese did not prefer to offer explanation as much as the Southeast and South Asians did. For instance, some responses collected are as follows:

- 1.) Chinese/Situation 5: Sorry. Let's go to another restaurant that's not so full.
- 2.) Chinese/ Situation 5: Sorry my dear, the restaurant that I want to bring you to cannot be reserved but I am sure that you will like it.
- 3.) Southeast Asian/ Situation 5: I am sorry. I thought we could just walk in no problem.
- 4.) South Asian/ Situation 5: I am sorry. I forgot to make a reservation. Please forgive me.

Reiter (2000) claimed that explanation allows the transfer of responsibility of the offence to the third party. That is to say, in the situation with equal power of speakers, close social distance and high obligation to apologize, Chinese ESL speakers do not find it as favourable to transfer the responsibility of offence than that of the Southeast and South Asians as Chinese perceives it as an excuse of wrongdoings rather than a sincere apology (Kramer-Moore & Moore, 2003) which is against the notion of politeness in the Chinese society on the *chengyi* (sincerity) aspect. It also greatly threatens the speakers' positive face, and thus, Chinese prefers using other strategies to realize the apology in such situation.

The offer of repair (F) depends on the type of damages made (Scobie & Scobie, 1998; Reiter, 2000; Wouk, 2006). It is believed that the more severe the damage is, the more likely the repayment is offered. However, the responses in situations 9 and 12 showed that the perception of severity can differ across cultures, leading to differences in the strategic realization of apology.

In situation 9, South (93%) and Southeast Asians (93%) showed similarity in choosing repayment as the apology strategy. However, the realization of offering repayment in Chinese (63%) was less than that of the South and Southeast Asians by around 30%. Meanwhile, in situation 12, South (12%) and Southeast Asian (18%) showed similarity in not favouring to choose repayment as the apology strategy, yet, Chinese showed a nearly doubled frequency (35%) in offering repayment as the apology strategy. Both situations showed a low-to-high power dynamic with the need to complete unfulfilled tasks, in which situation 9 signalled a closer relationships (i.e. father-daughter) than that of situation 12 (i.e. boss-employee/teacher-student). Some responses are as follows:

- 1.) Southeast Asian/ Situation 9: Sorry dad. Is it okay if I finish it tomorrow?
- 2.) South Asian/ Situation 9: So sorry dad. Let me do it now.
- 3.) Chinese/ Situation 9: Sorry. I will finish that immediately.
- 4.) Chinese/ Situation 9: Sorry. I forgot.
- 5.) Chinese/ Situation 12: Sorry the data are not with me now, can I show it to you later?
- 6.) Southeast Asian/ Situation 12: I feel embarrassed to tell you that I cannot finish collecting all the data. It was difficult to find the people. I should have told you earlier. I am sorry.
- 7.) South Asian/ Situation 12: Sorry professor. I think the data work needs more work

Comparing the realization of apology in both situations, it is found that the more distant the relationship is, the higher the likelihood for South and Southeast Asian not to offer a repayment but to use other strategies including giving explanation and IFIDs (examples 6,7). It is important to note that, there is no definite “correct” way in realizing an apology. The choice is made based on one’s linguistics and pragmatic competence. That is, the appropriateness a person perceived on using a strategy in a given context.

On the other hand, the closer the relationship is, the higher the likelihood for Chinese not to offer a repayment. As the Chinese society emphasizes on the hierarchy of relationships, a closer relationship means the higher room for tolerance of wrongdoings without harming the harmony of the relationship (Haugh, 2006). So, a father is more likely to forgive than a

professor and the father will not be as angry as the professor does in a similar case. Hence, Chinese is more likely to offer a repayment in a distant relationship situation to redress the positive face of both parties.

Overall, a combination of one to three strategies were often observed in participants' realization of apology giving rise to the high occurrence of the strategies A3, B and F in the DCT. However, cross-cultural differences in the realization of apology exist as this is a choice made based on a speaker's pragmatic competence.

Table 3. *The use of apology strategies in given situations by participants of different ethnic groups.*

Situation	A3					B					F				
	Chinese	Chinese (mainland)	Southeast Asian	South Asian	East Asian	Chinese	Chinese (mainland)	Southeast Asian	South Asian	East Asian	Chinese	Chinese (mainland)	Southeast Asian	South Asian	East Asian
1	44 (57.14%)	5 (71.43%)	11 (68.75%)	8 (50.00%)	1 (100.00%)	37 (48.05%)	3 (42.86%)	8 (50.00%)	7 (43.75%)	0 (0.00%)	51 (66.23%)	5 (71.43%)	12 (75.00%)	10 (62.50%)	0 (0.00%)
2	56 (72.73%)	4 (57.14%)	13 (81.25%)	8 (50.00%)	1 (100.00%)	44 (57.14%)	4 (57.14%)	8 (50.00%)	7 (43.75%)	1 (100.00%)	2 (2.60%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
3	55 (71.43%)	6 (85.71%)	8 (50.00%)	8 (50.00%)	1 (100.00%)	36 (46.75%)	3 (42.86%)	9 (56.25%)	6 (37.50%)	1 (100.00%)	37 (48.05%)	5 (71.43%)	8 (50.00%)	6 (37.50%)	1 (100.00%)
4	63 (81.82%)	6 (85.71%)	15 (93.75%)	12 (75.00%)	1 (100.00%)	8 (10.39%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (6.25%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)	13 (16.88%)	1 (14.29%)	1 (6.25%)	2 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)
5	41 (53.25%)	5 (71.43%)	15 (93.75%)	10 (62.50%)	1 (100.00%)	28 (36.36%)	1 (14.29%)	10 (62.50%)	8 (50.00%)	1 (100.00%)	49 (63.64%)	4 (57.14%)	12 (75.00%)	9 (56.25%)	1 (100.00%)
6	54 (70.13%)	5 (71.43%)	16 (100.00%)	13 (81.25%)	1 (100.00%)	29 (37.66%)	9 (128.57%)	7 (43.75%)	6 (37.50%)	0 (0.00%)	59 (76.62%)	3 (42.86%)	12 (75.00%)	13 (81.25%)	1 (100.00%)
7	68 (88.31%)	4 (57.14%)	14 (87.50%)	13 (81.25%)	1 (100.00%)	14 (18.18%)	2 (28.57%)	4 (25.00%)	5 (31.25%)	0 (0.00%)	22 (28.57%)	3 (42.86%)	4 (25.00%)	5 (31.25%)	0 (0.00%)
8	60 (77.92%)	5 (71.43%)	12 (75.00%)	11 (68.75%)	1 (100.00%)	49 (63.64%)	3 (42.86%)	10 (62.50%)	9 (56.25%)	1 (100.00%)	52 (67.53%)	6 (85.71%)	15 (93.75%)	13 (81.25%)	1 (100.00%)
9	40 (51.95%)	3 (42.86%)	16 (100.00%)	9 (56.25%)	0 (0.00%)	21 (27.27%)	3 (42.86%)	6 (37.50%)	3 (18.75%)	0 (0.00%)	60 (77.92%)	4 (57.14%)	15 (93.75%)	15 (93.75%)	1 (100.00%)
10	64 (83.12%)	6 (85.71%)	12 (75.00%)	10 (62.50%)	0 (0.00%)	51 (66.23%)	5 (71.43%)	9 (56.25%)	7 (43.75%)	0 (0.00%)	41 (53.25%)	5 (71.43%)	15 (93.75%)	10 (62.50%)	0 (0.00%)
11	40 (51.95%)	5 (71.43%)	14 (87.50%)	8 (50.00%)	0 (0.00%)	39 (50.65%)	3 (42.86%)	10 (62.50%)	9 (56.25%)	1 (100.00%)	49 (63.64%)	5 (71.43%)	12 (75.00%)	12 (75.00%)	1 (100.00%)
12	63 (81.82%)	5 (71.43%)	9 (56.25%)	14 (87.50%)	1 (100.00%)	26 (33.77%)	2 (28.57%)	9 (56.25%)	9 (56.25%)	0 (0.00%)	23 (29.87%)	3 (42.86%)	2 (12.50%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (100.00%)
Total		707 (842%)	155 (969%)	124 (775%)	9 (900%)	415 (494%)	92 (569%)	79 (494%)	5 (500%)		502 (598%)	111 (694%)	98 (613%)	7 (700%)	

6.2 Relations between the social contextual factors and the realization of apologies

Examining the relationship between the social contextual factors and the realization of apology strategies, GLMM was performed in SPSS. Figures 3, 4, and 5 show that ethnicity affects the use of strategies comparing to the baseline of Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates. While the ethnicity of Chinese predicts lower possibility of use of strategies A3, B and F than that of Southeast Asians, the ethnicity of South Asian predicts lower possibility of use of strategies B and F and higher possibility of use of strategy A3 than that of Southeast Asians. Also, the ethnicity of East Asian predicts lower possibility of use of strategies A3 and B but higher possibility of use of strategies F than that of Southeast Asians. It is also shown that obligation to apologize has varying effects on the use of strategies A3 and B by different ethnic groups. Hence, the realization of apology differs across the ethnic groups.

Also, it is found that obligation to apologize positively relates to the use of strategy A3 (fig.3). That is, the higher the obligation to apologize a speaker feels, the more likely the strategy A3 is used. In addition, there is interaction effect between the obligation and ethnicity of the participant in predicting the use of both strategies A3 and B. In contrast to Southeast Asian baseline, the effect of obligation on Chinese to realize strategies A3 and B is more positive, while the effect of obligation on South Asian to realize apology is more negative in A3 and more positive in B. Therefore, people of different ethnic groups have varying views on obligation to apologize resulting in the differences in preference for apology strategies in a given context.

Meanwhile, figure 5 shows that social distance, severity of offense, and likelihood of SA acceptance are positively related to the presence of strategy F. However, relationship power and face-loss are negatively related to the presence of strategy F. That is, a repayment is offered as the apology when the speaker feels more distant to the addressee, high severity of offence, high likelihood of SA acceptance, less powerful than the addressee, or higher level of face-loss

in a situation. The results align with the existing studies (Meier, 1998; Reiter, 2000; Rojo, 2005), which support the findings of Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) made based on Brown and Levinson's formula ($W_x = D(\text{speaker, addressee}) + P(\text{speaker, addressee}) + R_x$). Therefore, the six social contextual factors are related to and have varying effects on the realization of apology of people from different ethnic groups.

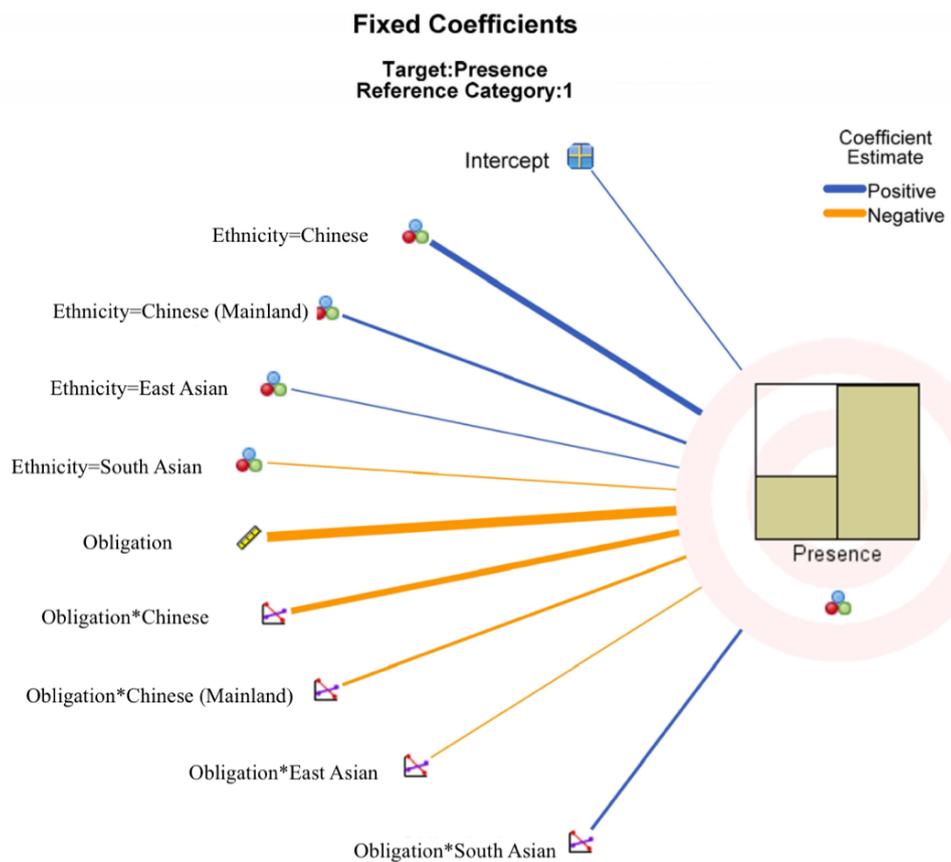


Fig.3 Graph showing the fixed coefficients of social contextual factors for the presence of strategy A3.

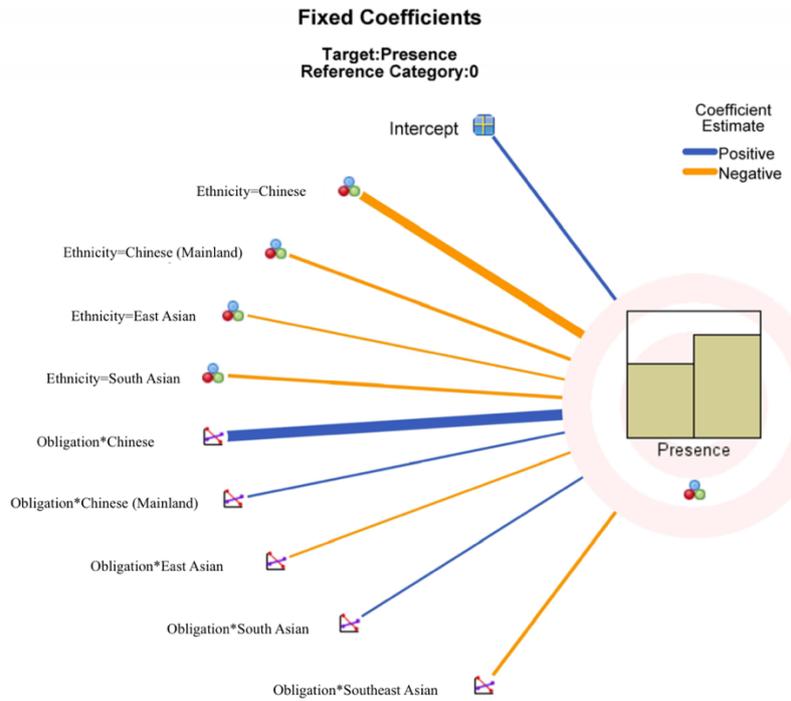


Fig.4 Graph showing the fixed coefficients of social contextual factors for the absence of strategy B.

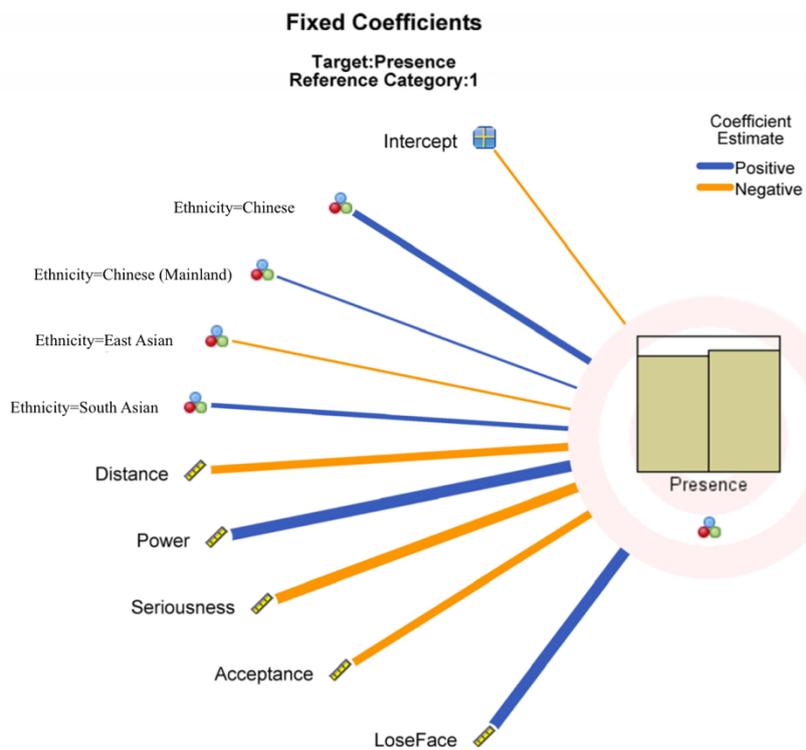


Fig.5 Graph showing the fixed coefficients of social contextual factors for the presence of strategy F.

6.3 Contribution of the social contextual factors to the cross-cultural variation in strategic realization of apologies

As mentioned above, this study finds and support the claim that cross-cultural differences exist in the strategic realization of apology and situations that elicit apology (Barnlund & Yoshioka, 1990; Guan, Park, & Lee, 2009). Although Chinese, South and Southeast Asians are all considered to be the “eastern culture” in most literature (Guan, Park, & Lee, 2009; 1989; Reiter, 2000; Moron, Cruz, Amaya, & Lopez, 2009), discrepancies in communicative behaviours are found.

It is found that all ethnicity groups have high frequencies (table 3) in expressing regrets (A3) as it is seen as the integral part for a ritualistic apology. Comparing the percentage of use of strategies B and F, Chinese participants showed weaker preference in using F, which is a positive politeness strategy, than that of the South and Southeast Asians, while the percentage of use of strategy B, which is negative politeness strategy, by Chinese was similar to that of the South and Southeast Asian. This weak preference of Chinese ESL undergraduates in redressing the negative politeness in interactions indicated the characteristics of the individualism and collectivism cultures mixed in Hong Kong. As individualism culture finds the distinction of in-group and out-group member to be less salient, individualist tends to focus on personal matter and forming personal apologies (e.g. I am sorry. I missed the bus) to redress negative politeness (Triandis, 2001), as oppose to that of the collectivist who forms relational apologies (e.g. Can we do this tomorrow?) to redress positive politeness. However, Chinese, Hong Kong Chinese in particular, is also influenced by the strong social pressure to express politeness (*limao*) by showing restraint and sincerity to others in the hierarchical society. Therefore, weak preference in negative politeness approach is found in the Chinese ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong.

South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates showed stronger preference in redressing the positive face of addressee than that of the Chinese students, yet, they also used different strategies quite frequently to perform the apology. As Eastern cultures have a relatively high concern for face issues even in less serious situation (Han & Cai, 2010), there is less room to increase face concerns when the responsibility is already high, and thus, different strategies are needed in varying combination to redress and maintain the face of addressee. This also explains why severity of offense is influential to the realization of apology. The more serious the offense is, the more likely the person offer repayment (table 2, fig.5)as participants consider most situations to be 'serious' in offense. Therefore, they choose to express their apologies in an elaborated or mixed-methods manner.

Furthermore, South and Southeast Asian culture is ranked distinctly lower in individualism and distinctly higher in power distance than other Asian and Western Cultures (Guan, Park, & Lee, 2009). They value in-group members due to the tight relationships perceived (Han & Cai, 2010; Moron, Cruz, Amaya, & Lopez, 2009; Reiter, 2000), resulting in the reduced concerns for autonomy and self-image in order to effectively maintain the interdependent relationship with others (i.e. the offended person). Therefore, the obligation to apologize is high for South and Southeast Asian ESL students and this perception affect their preference of apology strategies.

Social distance and power relationships are also key factors influencing the realization of apologies. The results suggested that the more distant and powerful the offended person is, the more likely the participant offers repayment as an apology strategy, due to the discrepancy in perception of normality of apology for a stranger in comparison with that of a friend (Guan, Park, & Lee, 2009; Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). That is, apologizing to a stranger is perceived to be more normal than apologizing to a friend as it is in fact easier to redress the face of a stranger than a friend. Also, a distant and low-to-high power social relationship give

rise to higher concern for self-negative face (Han & Cai, 2010). Offering a repayment is saving the speaker's negative face as speaker is the one determining and offering the future action to be done while redressing addressee's positive face by showing the willingness to invest in the maintaining of relationship. Therefore, social distance and power relationships affect the SA realization.

In addition, the results showed that the more likely the acceptance of apology and the less the face-loss is, the more likely for the speaker to realize apology through offering repayment. These two factors contribute to the realization of apology as they indicate the probability (Koo, 2001) of a successful apology in saving the face of the interlocutors.

7. Implication and limitation

This study implies the potential cross-cultural miscommunications between Chinese ESL undergraduates and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates in Hong Kong due to varying preference to different types of politeness and face to save. What is believed to be appropriate in a culture may be seen as inappropriate in another culture. For instance, in the case of situation 12, when apologizing for the late completion of work, the results suggested that Chinese is likely to find it more appropriate to offer repayment right away instead of providing explanation which makes the apology insincere. However, South and Southeast Asians prefer to offer or obtain an explanation in order to justify their actions. The discrepancies in the perception of SA appropriateness will lead to miscommunications when a person of one culture perceive the person from another culture to be 'impolite' due to the varying realization of apologies. Therefore, pragmatic competence is as important as linguistic competence in the process of effective communication.

To better facilitate the integration of South and Southeast Asians into the Hong Kong society, it is crucial for people to realize the importance of pragmatic competence in

interactions, as well as the awareness on understanding how other cultures may perceive the same event differently or have varying preferences to realize a SA.

Although this research is carefully prepared, there are some unavoidable limitations. Firstly, the study gathered most of the data from undergraduates by convenience and snowball sampling. Conclusion from this experiment cannot be generalized to all Chinese, and South and Southeast ESL learners. Secondly, situational characteristics, frequency of occurrence of the situations perceived, personal experience and nature of damaged (Okumura & Wei, 2000; Hall, 1998) occurred in the DCT may also affect the results. Hence, a more representable research, with more differentiated situations in DCT, targeting at ESL learners of different ethnicity and ages will be needed.

8. Conclusion

This research project supports the claims that cross-cultural variation exists in the realization of apology based on six social contextual factors. The similarities and differences in the use of the three most used apology strategies, namely regrets expression, giving explanation or accounts, and offering repayment, were examine in relations to the social contextual factors. In conclusion, ethnicity, obligation to apologize, social distance, relationship power, severity of offense, likelihood of acceptance of SA and level of face-loss affect the realization of apologies in Chinese ESL undergraduates and South and Southeast Asian ESL undergraduates.

References

- Aijmer, K. (2014). *Conversational routines in English: Convention and creativity*. Routledge.
- Barnlund, D. C., & Yoshioka, M. (1990). Apologies: Japanese and American styles. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, 193–206
- Bataineh, R. F. & Bstsinrh, R. F. (2006). Apology strategies of Jordanian EFL university students. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(11), 1901-1927.
- Becker, J. A. (2014). Processes in the acquisition of pragmatic competence. In *Children's language* (pp. 21-38). Psychology Press.
- Behnam, B., & Niroomand, M. (2011). An Investigation of Iranian EFL Learners' Use of Politeness Strategies and Power Relations in Disagreement across Different Proficiency Levels. *English language teaching*, 4(4), 204-220.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1980). Learning to Say What You Mean in a Second Language; a Study of the Speech Act Performance of Learners of Hebrew as a Second Language.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (Vol. 31). Ablex Pub.
- Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied linguistics*, 5(3), 196-213.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (Vol. 4). Cambridge university press. *
- Cai, L., & Wang, Y. (2013). Interlanguage pragmatics in SLA. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 3(1), 142.
- Carroll, J. M. (2007). *A concise history of Hong Kong*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Census (2016). *Snapshot of Hong Kong Population*. Retrieved from <https://www.byensus2016.gov.hk/en/bc-snapshot.html>
- Chang, W. L. M. (2008). Australian and Chinese perceptions of (im) politeness in an intercultural apology.
- Cheng, S. (2005). An exploratory cross-sectional study of interlanguage pragmatic development of expressions of gratitude by Chinese learners of English. *Theses and Dissertations*, 104.
- Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A. (1990). A focus theory of normative conduct: Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 1015– 1026.
- Clyne, M. (2006). Some thoughts on pragmatics, sociolinguistic variation, and intercultural communication. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 3(1), 95-105.
- Cohen, A. D., & Olshtain, E. (1981). Developing a measure of sociocultural competence: The

- case of apology. *Language learning*, 31(1), 113-134.
- Cohen, A. D., & Olshtain, E. (1993). The production of speech acts by EFL learners. *Tesol Quarterly*, 27(1), 33-56.
- Dalmau, M. S., & Gotor, H. C. (2007). From “Sorry very much” to “I’m ever so sorry”:
Acquisitional patterns in L2 apologies by Catalan learners of English. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 4(2), 287-315.
- Duff, P. A., & Talmy, S. (2011). Language socialization approaches to second language acquisition. *Alternative approaches to second language acquisition*, 95-116.
- Farashaiyan, A., & Amirkhiz, S. (2011). A descriptive-comparative analysis of apology strategies: The case of Iranian EFL and Malaysian ESL university students. *English Language Teaching*, 4(1), 224.
- Fernández Amaya, L. (2008). Teaching culture: is it possible to avoid pragmatic failure?. *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, 21, 11-24.
- Fraser, B. (1981). On apologizing. *Conversational routine*, 259-271.
- Fraser, B. (2010). Pragmatic competence: The case of hedging. *New approaches to hedging*, 1534.
- Garcia, C. (1989). Apologizing in English: Politeness strategies used by native and non-native speakers. *Multilingua-Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 8(1), 3-20.
- Guan, X., Park, H. S., & Lee, H. E. (2009). Cross-cultural differences in apology. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33(1), 32-45.
- Hall, E. T. (1998). The power of hidden culture. In M. J. Bennett (Ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Han, B., & Cai, D. A. (2010). Face goals in apology: A cross-cultural comparison of Chinese and US Americans. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 20(1), 101-123
- Haugh, M. (2006). Emic Perspectives on the Positive–Negative Politeness Distinction. *Culture, Language and Representation* 3: 17–26.
- Holmes, J. (1989). Sex differences and apologies: One aspect of communicative competence. *Applied linguistics*, 10(2), 194-213.
- Holmes, J. (1990). Apologies in New Zealand English 1. *Language in society*, 19(2), 155-199.
- Hong, W. (2008). Effects of cultural background of college students on apology strategies. *International journal of the sociology of language*, 2008(189), 149-163.
- Huang, Y. (2014). *Pragmatics* (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Kasper, G. & Blum-Kulka, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Interlanguage Pragmatics*. New York, NY:

Oxford University Press.

- Kong, K. C. (2006). Accounts as a politeness strategy in the internal directive documents of a business firm in Hong Kong. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 16(1), 77-101.
- Koo, D. (2001). *Realization of Two Acts of Heritage Learners of Korean: Request and Apology Strategies*. Ann Arbor, MI: Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company.
- Kraft, B. & Geluykens, R. (Eds.). (2007). *Cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage English*. Muenchen: LINCOM EUROPA
- Kramer-Moore, D., & Moore, M. (2003). Pardon me for breathing: Seven types of apology. *et Cetera*, 60(2), 160.
- Ku, H. B., Chan, K. W., & Sandhu, K. K. (2005). A research report on the education of South Asian ethnic minority groups in Hong Kong. Hong Kong: Centre for Social Policy Studies, Department of Applied Social Sciences, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.
- Kuhi, D., & Jadidi, M. (2012). A study of Iranian EFL Learners' understanding and production of politeness in three speech acts: request, refusal, and apology. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(12), 2624.
- Lee, C. F. (2004). Written requests in emails sent by adult Chinese learners of English. *Language culture and curriculum*, 17(1), 58-72.
- Leech, G. N. (2016). *Principles of pragmatics*. Routledge.
- Lucy, J. A. (1992). *Language diversity and thought: A reformulation of the linguistic relativity hypothesis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Meier, A. J. (1998). Apologies: What do we know?. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(2), 215-231.
- Mey, J. L. (1993). *Pragmatics: An introduction*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell.
- Moron, R. G., Cruz, M. P., Amaya, L. F., & Lopez, M. H. (Ed.). (2009). *Pragmatics Applied to Language Teaching and Learning*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Najeeb, Z. M., Maros, M., & Nor, N. F. M. (2012). Politeness in e-mails of Arab students in Malaysia. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 12(1).
- Ogiermann, E. (2009). *On apologising in negative and positive politeness cultures* (Vol. 191). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Okumura, K., & Wei, L. (2000). The concept of self and apology strategies in two cultures. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication*, 10(1), 1-24.
- Olshtain, E., & Cohen, A. (1983). Apology: A speech act set. *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition*, 18-35.

- Reiter, R. M. (2000). *Linguistic politeness in Britain and Uruguay: A contrastive study of requests and apologies* (Vol. 83). John Benjamins Publishing.
- Ren, W. (2015). *L2 Pragmatic Development in Study Abroad Contexts*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Rojo, L. (2005). “Te quería comentar un problemilla...” The Speech Act of Apologies in Peninsular Spanish: A pilot study. *Hipertexto, 1*, 63-80.
- Salgado, E. F. (2011). *The Pragmatics of Requests and Apologies*. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins North America
- Suszczynska, M. 1999. Apologizing in English, Polish and Hungarian: Different languages, different strategies. *Journal of Pragmatics 31*: 1053–1065.
- Tanaka, S., & Kawade, S. (1982). Politeness strategies and second language acquisition. *Studies in second language acquisition, 5*(1), 18-33.
- Trosborg, A. (1987). Apology strategies in native/non-native. *Journal of Pragmatics, 11*, 147-167.
- Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage Pragmatics: Requests, Complaints and Apologies*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Triandis, H. C. (2001). Individualism and collectivism: Past, present, and future. *The handbook of culture and psychology, 35-50*.
- Tsang, S. (2007). *A modern history of Hong Kong*. IB Tauris.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Society and discourse: How social contexts influence text and talk*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wolfson, N. (1988). *The bulge: A theory of speech behavior and social distance*. In J. Fine (Ed.), *Second language discourse: A textbook of current research* (pp. 21-38). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Wong, N. Y., & Bagozzi, R. P. (2005). Emotional intensity as a function of psychological distance and cultural orientation. *Journal of Business Research, 58*, 533–542.
- Wouk, F. (2006). The language of apologizing in Lombok, Indonesia. *Journal of Pragmatics, 38*, 1457-1486.
- Yeung, L. N. (1997). Polite requests in English and Chinese business correspondence in Hong Kong. *Journal of Pragmatics, 27*(4), 505-522.
- Zhu, W. (2012). Polite requestive strategies in emails: An investigation of pragmatic competence of Chinese EFL learners. *RELC Journal, 43*(2), 217-238.

Appendix I – Language background survey

Age: _____ Gender: F M X Ethnicity: _____
Language spoken at home/ native language: _____
Medium of instruction in secondary school: Cantonese English Mandarin Others: _____
Public exam attainment (if any): _____
(e.g. IELTS/TOEFL/Cambridge ESOL/GaoKao)
Time of residency in Hong Kong:
 1-3 year(s) 4-6 years 7-9 years 10-12 years 13-15 years 16-18 years 18+ years
Time of residency in other countries (please specify the time of residency and the country e.g. U.K.-3 years):

Appendix II – Apology DCT Questionnaire

What will you say in the following situations? Please write down your response.

1.) *At school* - You are a member of a group working on an assignment.

Your group members completed their parts 2 weeks ago. Today is the day of submission deadline, but you haven't started to work on your part yet.

Group member: Today is the deadline.

You: _____

2.) *At home* – You are the son/ daughter.

You have promised to help your dad file the taxes by today, but you haven't done so yet.

Dad: Today is the deadline for filing taxes.

You: _____

3.) *At school office* – You are a research assistant.

The professor gave you 2 weeks to gather the data, but you couldn't complete the work within the given time.

Professor: I want to see the raw data.

You: _____

4.) *At home* – You are the elder sister/ brother.

Your younger sister Kimmy is having her birthday party at your home today. When she arrives at your home, you find out that you forget to send out the invitation cards.

Kimmy: It's finally my party.

You: _____

5.) *At school club* – You are the school club president.

You forgot to go to an interschool meeting yesterday. You scolded your secretary Kalen for not reminding you about the meeting today morning. Just now, you have found the conference reminder emails at your mail box.

Kalen: I checked, and all the emails were sent.

You: _____

6.) *At the movie theatre* – You are a friend.

Your friend Sammy and you have a movie date today at 3pm, but you arrive the movie theatre at 3.30pm.

Sammy: The movie has started.

You: _____

7.) *At the restaurant* – You are the receptionist.

You confirmed a reservation of a customer by mistake when the restaurant is full for the night.

When the customer arrived:

Customer: I have reserved a table for six.

You: _____

8.) *At school* – You are the elder sister/ brother.

You have to pay the tuition fee for your younger sister Emerald today to meet the payment deadline, but you forget to go to the bank.

Emerald: I need the receipt.

You: _____

9.) *At home* – You are the elder cousin.

You scolded your younger cousin Alan for stealing your snacks, but you found the snacks inside the drawer afterwards.

Alan: I didn't steal your snacks.

You: _____

10.) *On the street* – You are the boyfriend/ girlfriend.

It is the first anniversary for you and your boyfriend/ girlfriend today, but you have forgotten to make a reservation for the anniversary dinner.

Boyfriend/ girlfriend: I can't wait.

You: _____

11.) *At school* – You are a student.

You have borrowed a book from your schoolmate Ryan for a month. You promised to return the book today after several reminders. You realize you have left the book at home when your friend asks you about the book.

Ryan: I need my book.

You: _____

12.) *At home* – You are a son/ daughter.

You have promised to help your mom shop for food today. When she comes home, she realizes the refrigerator is empty.

Mother: I am hungry.

You: _____

e-version: <https://forms.gle/Qyd1cFMPnw3bZn8G9>

Appendix III – Post-DCT questionnaire

What do you think about the situations? Please circle your answer.

1- Strongly Disagree 7 - Strongly Agree

1.) <i>At school</i> - You are a member of a group working on an assignment. Your group members completed their parts 2 weeks ago. Today is the day of submission deadline, but you haven't started to work on your part yet.							
a) You are close with the group member.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than the group member.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) The group member is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2.) <i>At home</i> – You are the son/ daughter. You have promised to help your dad file the taxes by today, but you forget to do so.							
a) You are close with dad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than dad.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Dad is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.) <i>At school office</i> – You are a research assistant. The professor gave you 2 weeks to gather the data, but you couldn't complete the work within the given time.							
a) You are close with the professor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than the professor.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) The professor is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.) <i>At home</i> – You are the elder sister/ brother. Your younger sister Kimmy is having her birthday party at your home today. When she arrives at your home, you find out that you forget to send out the invitation cards.							
a) You are close with Kimmy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than Kimmy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Kimmy is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.) <i>At school club</i> – You are the school club president. You forgot to go to an interschool meeting yesterday. You scolded your secretary Kalen for not reminding you about the meeting today morning. Just now, you have found the conference reminder emails at your mail box.							
a) You are close with Kalen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than Kalen.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Kalen is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.) <i>At the movie theatre</i> – You are a friend. Your friend Sammy and you have a movie date today at 3pm, but you arrive the movie theatre at 3.30pm.							
a) You are close with Sammy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than Sammy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Sammy is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.) <i>At the restaurant</i> – You are the receptionist. You confirmed a reservation of a customer by mistake when the restaurant is full for the night.							
a) You are close with the customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

b) You have more power than the customer.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) The customer is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8.) <i>At school</i> – You are the elder sister/ brother. You have to pay the tuition fee for your younger sister Emerald today to meet the payment deadline, but you forget to go to the bank.							
a) You are close with Miki.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than Miki.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Miki is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.) <i>At home</i> – You are the elder cousin. You scolded your younger cousin Alan for stealing your snacks, but you found the snacks inside the drawer afterwards.							
a) You are close with Alan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than Alan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Alan is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.) <i>On the street</i> – You are the boyfriend/ girlfriend. It is the first anniversary for you and your boyfriend/ girlfriend today, but you have forgotten to make a reservation for the anniversary dinner.							
a) You are close with your boyfriend/ girlfriend.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than your boyfriend/ girlfriend.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Your boyfriend/ girlfriend is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.) <i>At school</i> – You are a student. You have borrowed a book from your schoolmate Ryan for a month. You promised to return the book today after several reminders. You realize you have left the book at home when your friend asks you about the book.							
a) You are close with Haye.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than Haye.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Haye is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.) <i>At home</i> – You are a son/ daughter. You have promised to help your mom shop for food today. When she comes home, she realizes the refrigerator is empty.							
a) You are close with mom.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b) You have more power than mom.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c) It is a serious offense.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d) You need to apologize.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e) Mom is likely to accept your apology.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f) You lose face in this situation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
----- That's the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your response. -----							